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THE JOURNEY

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The Humane Society of the Southeast

January 2019

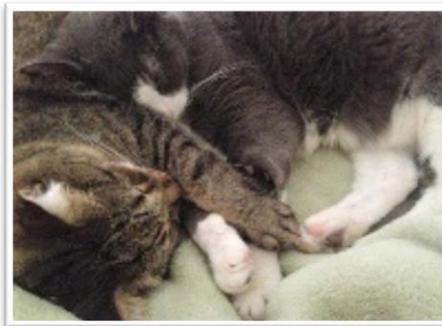
“A Voice for the Voiceless.”

Number 8

NUGGET & MOUSE

By Melissa Hudson-Fazi

I once knew a feline named Nuggy
Who thought he was a speedbuggy
Always having a ball
Racing in the hall
Pausing to taste the wall
Finding lots of time
For a bush to climb
With his swag
Playing a game of tag
While hiding in a bag



He helped unlock
The kitten from gridlock
Despite his fears
All through the years
Mouse became the guide
Never leaving Nugget's side
As a pair they were satisfied
Into best friends they grew
That they would always be true

Always a fellow
To greet hello
In all his glory
Never at all sorry
About always telling a story
Acting like a nut
Giving lots of head butts
You know he's there
Willing to share
And show that he cares
Quite unorthodox
Home was any box



Even though he was blind
Had the presence of mind
To always be kind
A scared little cat Mouse
Also came to the house
He was a feral
From under a barrel
It was a place full of peril
Social he was not
He was soon taught
Nugget was his rock

Volunteer Donate Adopt

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since June of 1995, I have 'officially' worked in the rescue world via an employee at an animal shelter, as executive and general board member, along with being director of dog/cat committees with other rescue organizations...although, the most rewarding part of rescue is being a 'foster guardian'. This has always been my passion.

Along the way, I have seen, met and even adopted my share of 'special needs' animals; cats: compact, orange tabby, Einstein (Hydrocephalus – 'water on the brain'), beautiful blue; Yeti (birth abnormalities inside/out); fluffy grey, Wolfman (Cerebellar Hypoplasia –'drunken kitty syndrome') and of course, tiny calico, Bella (Eyelid Atresia -born without eyelids) -not to mention, the many other 'undesirables/unwants/untamed'.



The 4 cats mentioned above (Bella, being the only one still currently here with us {photo on left}, showed such gratitude through their undeniable devotion and trust. I am unsure if it had to do with their 'handicap', but each one had a presence of pure innocence. Everyone meeting them became instantly infatuated with their adoring and comical demeanor and, of course, their 'handicap'.

These cats all thrived in their environment, only knowing life 'as normal', becoming acclimated to their surroundings, familiarizing themselves to a pattern 'as normal'. We, of course, helped a little with that, but they learned a routine all on their own.

Sadly, due to their illnesses, their lives were all too brief (at most, 3 years of age) but I WOULD do it again and again because what they shared with us was truly an exceptional love like no other.

So, I am asking you, please do not disregard an animal that may look/act 'strange or odd'. They might just take the biggest part of your heart. I know -- they did mine!

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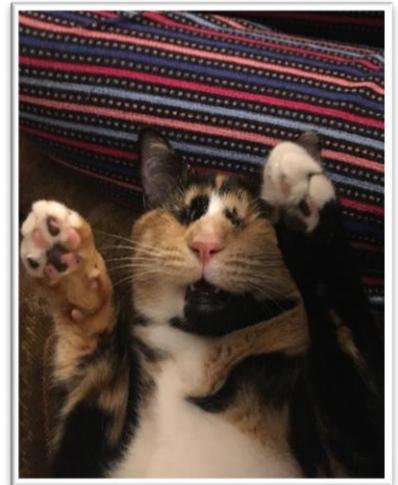
MILES & INDIE

By Laurie Lyn Burton



I adopted Miles (Left) and Indie (Right) a year ago from The Humane Society of the Southeast and it has been one of the most rewarding and best decisions I have ever made. I was moving into my first apartment and knew I wanted to adopt two cats to live with me. When I began my search for the right cats to bring into my life, I decided to go the online route and narrow it down to senior cats or those least likely to get adopted. I searched on Adopt a Pet.com for adoptable cats close to where I live in Valley, AL and Indie's face grabbed my attention because she had no eyes and that instantly spoke to my heart. I

had never had a blind cat and didn't know what to expect but my heart was telling me to put in the application to adopt her. I adopted another cat at the same time named Miles who is blind in one eye. This was my first time adopting from a humane society and it's something I had always wanted to do. It's a special feeling to open your home to an animal in need and support people who are helping animals. The opportunity for Miles and Indie to be featured in this newsletter is very exciting for me because it's an opportunity to educate people who may not know that special needs animals can be just as loving and amazing as normal ones.



Although there are some minor challenges of having a blind cat, Indie plays, loves her snuggles, climbs her cat tree, and jumps on the bed just like a normal cat. She is full of personality and playfulness and always keeps me laughing! She amazes me every day.

I would say from my experience with Indie that the adjusting time was longer. With her not being able to see, she had to learn to get used to my voice and all the new things around her. A much more challenging feat without vision. I have learned things like not leaving the toilet lid open (she will jump on the lid sometimes and might have jumped in the actual toilet once) and to avoid placing things in the middle of the floor that she's not expecting to be there. She has tripped over my shoes and bumped into walls but she quickly memorized my apartment and gets around just fine now. Another challenge was learning to talk to her before touching her so she'd know I was there. Indie has a unique way of meeting and greeting new people, by first smelling your hand, which is usually followed by a gentle head butt. The head butt means she's comfortable with your touch and she's ready to be friends. I'm always sure to let new people know how she makes friends so that she's not frightened of an unfamiliar person.



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MILES & INDIE (Continued)

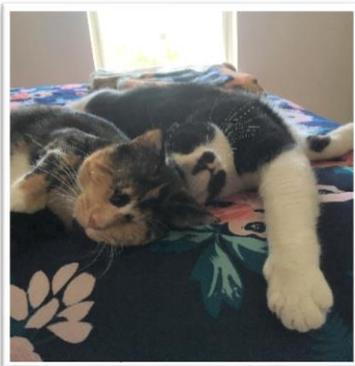
Going to the vet can be challenging. On top of the normal stress associated with vet visits, not being able to see makes her a little more nervous. Once we're in the exam room I put my hand in the carrier with her and talk to her so she knows her mom is there. This always helps put her a little more at ease.

Playtime calls for some creativity, but I've found she plays best with toys that make some sort of sound. I use a lot of wand toys with strings that I can scratch across the carpet or across her paws so she can hear and feel it and still chase things. She will also play with a sheet. I'll pull the sheet away from her and she can hear it and really likes to pounce and play in it while I'm pulling. It's a lot like playing with a cat when you move your hand under the covers. She LOVES crinkle balls and will carry them in her mouth and bat them around the room. She even likes to stalk, chase (without running into anything!), and pounce on her friend, Miles, when she hears him coming around a corner.



She enjoys cat tents and tunnels, and will even hide in the tunnel to stalk me when she hears me walking around and even jumps out at me! She has all the play drive of a normal cat which is amazing, since cats rely so much on their vision to hunt and stalk things. Her lack of sight doesn't inhibit her at all. My other cat Miles is blind in one eye and perfectly visual in the other, so he has no issues even without the other eye. He took about a week to adjust and then felt right at home. He is such an affectionate teddy bear of a cat and his mom is always telling him how handsome he is! He may have the advantage of sight over Indie but they still play together and get along very well!

Initially, I had some concerns that Indie may not be able to do simple things such as find her litter box, her food and water, or simply learn her way around. I'm happy to say she's a pro at all of those things and more. If anyone gives me a funny look or asks questions when they learn my cat is totally blind, I happily tell them it's not much different from having a sighted cat. She is my sweet, loving little girl who functions just fine in her world.



Indie and Miles have taught me so much in the first year of having them. They've made me realize that it's important to give unfamiliar experiences a chance if you feel it in your heart, and how rewarding those experiences can be. Indie teaches me every day that she and other special needs animals are worth saving and deserve a chance. Learning to adjust to life with a blind cat has taught me to be more patient and to slow down in situations I may not understand completely. Miles and Indie have inspired me to speak out about special needs animals whenever possible and to advocate for them. I could not imagine my life without them and it makes me feel so good to give them their forever home. I always want to provide them the best life possible and hope we have

many years together. I hope I can help other special needs animals by speaking out through this newsletter and that others will consider giving these animals a chance.

FIV: IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS



FIV, or feline immunodeficiency virus, is in the same family of viruses as [feline leukemia virus](#) (FeLV), although its subfamily, the lentivirus, is different. Lentiviruses are responsible for diseases in many types of animals, including acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in humans, caused by HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). FIV is often referred to as feline AIDS.

Immunodeficiency viruses are specific for the species they infect, and there is no evidence that FIV infects people or HIV infects cats.

FIV-infected cats are found throughout the world. According to the Cornell Feline Health Center, "In the United States, approximately 1.5-3% of healthy cats are infected with FIV."

How Do Cats Become Infected with FIV?

The primary mode of transmission of FIV is through bite wounds. Outdoor cats, especially territorial tomcats, are at the greatest risk of becoming infected. Casual contact among cats sharing food and water dishes is not a significant mode of transmission. Unlike with HIV, sexual contact is probably not a significant way for FIV to be transmitted either. Though it is rare, the virus may be passed from a mother cat to her kitten. Kittens may also be aborted or stillborn if the mother is infected.

What Happens If a Cat Gets FIV?

After infection with FIV, the virus enters the cat's bloodstream. Fever and swollen lymph nodes may be the first signs noted in the early phase of infection, but this can be transient and is easy to miss. The primary target of the virus is the cells of the immune system.

Malfunction of the body's immune system due to FIV infection leads to the development of secondary opportunistic infections, which can cause severe illness and death. This can happen quickly, or infected cats can be normal for months to years before the virus becomes active and the cat shows signs of disease.

FIV infection has been associated with a wide variety of disorders including but not limited to:

- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Ulcers of the tongue and inflamed gums
- Progressive weight loss
- Poor hair coat and skin disease
- Diarrhea
- Anemia
- Eye and nervous system disease
- Cancer

These illnesses all get a foothold by taking advantage of the immune system dysfunction that FIV causes. Microorganisms that are present commonly in the environment are easily controlled by a cat with a normal immune system, but they can cause significant disease in cats with an FIV-damaged immune system.

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FIV: IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (Continued)

Diagnosis of FIV in Cats

Diagnosis of FIV in cats is made through blood testing. These tests look for antibodies to FIV in the blood. Identification of FIV-infected cats through testing allows the veterinarian to develop a long-term management plan for cats that are positive. A blood sample is taken from the cat, and the test can be performed in most veterinary offices. Results are usually available within ten minutes. A combination test for FeLV and FIV is available in most facilities.

When testing a cat for FIV, confirming a positive antibody test result is crucial, especially in cats that aren't showing signs of illness, since a portion of uninfected cats may have false positive results. A second test using a different technique can be done in the laboratory to confirm the first positive test. If there is a discrepancy between the two tests, then the cat will need to be retested in about 12 weeks.

False negative tests can occur, though this is rare. It can happen when a cat has a late-stage infection and the immune system is so exhausted that antibodies to FIV are no longer being produced at detectable levels.

Which Cats Should Be Tested for FIV?

Your veterinarian may test cats for FIV in the following cases:

- Kittens four months of age or older.
 - Kittens may have positive test results without actually being infected with the virus because of antibodies that were transferred from a vaccinated or infected mother cat. If kittens that are 6 months old or younger test positive for FIV, retesting should be done every 60 days until they are 6 months old to clarify their true FIV status.
- New cats or kittens being brought into a home should be tested before the negative resident cats are exposed to them.
- A cat that has been bitten by a cat of unknown FIV status should be tested 60 days after the bite occurs.
- Any cat allowed outdoors that develops an illness possibly consistent with FIV should be tested, even if they tested negative in the past
- Cats allowed outdoors should be tested once a year unless they have been vaccinated (vaccination can interfere with the test results). Consult with your veterinarian in this case.

Is FIV in Cats Treatable?

There is no cure for FIV infection. Although the disease is considered fatal, many infected cats can live for years in relatively good health. Once infections move in, medications can be given to control those secondary conditions. Because of the immune system suppression, longer and more aggressive treatment may be needed for these cats than would be the case for FIV-negative cats with the same infections.

There are no medications or therapies that have been proven to prevent the transition from asymptomatic to symptomatic infection of FIV.

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FIV: IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (Continued)

Caring for Your FIV-Positive Cat

Knowing the best ways to care for your FIV-positive cat may help prolong the period of quality time he has before he becomes sick. Following are some important steps to take in the care of the FIV-positive cat:

- Raw, uncooked foods should be avoided in FIV-infected cats due to their increased susceptibility to foodborne bacteria.
- The cat's environment should be kept as clean as possible to cut down on the presence of microorganisms that may cause the immunosuppressed cat trouble.
- FIV-infected cats need to see the veterinarian more frequently than well cats. Wellness visits every 6 months are recommended for these cats. A thorough physical examination, complete blood count, blood chemistry, urinalysis, and fecal examination should be performed as recommended by your veterinarian.
- FIV-positive cats should receive veterinary attention promptly at the first indication of sickness. Accurate and fast identification of a secondary illness is extremely important for successful treatment.
- Vaccination programs to prevent infection by other diseases should be maintained in asymptomatic cats as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Sexually intact cats that have FIV should be altered (neutered) to reduce the stress associated with estrus and mating behaviors.
- If you are unable to quarantine infected cats from healthy cats in your home, confine the infected cat indoors, or bear the costs of the veterinary care that ill cats require, consult with your veterinarian.

If your FIV-positive cat dies and you are bringing a new cat home, complete a careful cleaning process first. While the virus that causes FIV doesn't live long outside of an infected cat's body, the secondary agents that caused the cat's ultimate death may be present at high enough counts in the environment to cause illness in other cats. Replace food and water bowls, bedding, and litter boxes, and clean carpets and floors with an appropriate general cleaner.

Prevention of FIV in Cats

Preventing infection with FIV is the key because there is no way to get rid of it once a cat has it. Cats bitten by infected cats are at highest risk of developing FIV. Keeping your cat indoors alone or with tested negative cats will prevent the type of contact necessary for infection. If you introduce a new cat to your home, an FIV test should be carried out first in order to make sure that the new cat is FIV-negative before he is introduced to the resident cats.

A vaccine for FIV is available but does not prevent infection in all vaccinated cats (it is 60-80% effective after 3 doses). After vaccination, the results of certain diagnostic tests may show positive, so discuss with your veterinarian whether FIV vaccination is appropriate for your cat.

CAT LANGUAGE



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