



FALL 2024



# CAT CORNER

The Merced SPCA Newsletter

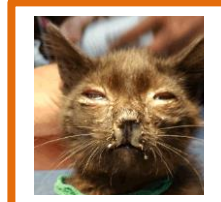


## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Cynthia Kelly

### Feline Leukemia

#### A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW



In This Issue

## OUR RESCUE SUCCESSES

### WHY TNR WORKS

I assumed the role of Merced SPCA President in November 2023. Little did I know at that time that 2024 would bring many challenges to our organization—some good, and some heartbreaking—that would alter the way we care for our cats.

We've had our shares of ups and downs- especially with our fosters and community cats. We've saved many and lost many from deadly virus that has begun to ravage our colonies. Throughout it all, our volunteers have remained resolute- even during utter devastation- to ensuring that Merced's community cats are treated with compassion and respect.

In January 2024, we started to notice that quite a few of our community colonies were decreasing in size. Our cats were disappearing. In addition, some of the remaining cats were getting sick. After trapping a few and taking them in for vet care, the cause was revealed: **Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)**. It is the leading cause of viral death in cats, killing 85% of infected felines within three years of diagnosis. The virus commonly causes anemia or lymphoma, and because it suppresses the immune system, it can also predispose cats to deadly infections. **It's also 100% preventable with regular vaccines.**

After several months, the infection rate of FeLV in community cats, and now in pets, has risen at an alarming rate in Merced. We had to euthanize almost forty colony cats so far this year due to FeLV, compared to only six during all of 2023. We are trying to stay ahead of the infection, but unfortunately, it's continuing to spread. It's a bitter pill to swallow for those of us who have dedicated our lives to supporting, nurturing, and caring for our colonies. They are our families: our children, our babies.

We've begun to fight back. We just held our first vaccination clinic in an effort to protect our community's pets against such an awful, destructive, and preventable illness. We've started monitoring and trapping sick cats immediately and removing them from our colonies. We're working with our vets to try to understand this illness and devise strategies that will reduce the spread. Unfortunately for our infected colony cats, euthanasia is the only option. It is our final act of love and compassion to them, as we would never allow them to suffer needlessly. We're determined to make sure the FeLV does not win this battle or the war.

This is why we continue to "do what we do" at the Merced SPCA. There are so many cats and kittens that need our help and care. Without our selfless volunteers, none of this would be possible. Your donations continue to support our local efforts of trap, neuter and release, community cat colony care and animal rescue. Without your generous support, we wouldn't be able to help the many cats and kittens in Merced.

Please visit us at [www.mercedspca](http://www.mercedspca) today and make a donation that will save their lives.

Trap-neuter-return (**TNR**) is an effective and humane way to control feral cat population. TNR works because feral cats are territorial and bonded to their environment. Sterilized cats defend their territory against newcomers, who then move on to other areas where they can be caught and sterilized.

#### Proven TNR results:

**Stabilizes the colony:** TNR prevents new litters from being born, which stabilizes the colony's size.

**Reduces nuisance behaviors:** TNR reduces fighting, yowling, and spraying, which are often associated with feral cats. Improves relationships with residents: TNR improves the relationship between cats and the people who live nearby.

**Reduces the number of cats euthanized:** TNR reduces the number of cats that enter shelters, which results in lower euthanasia rates.

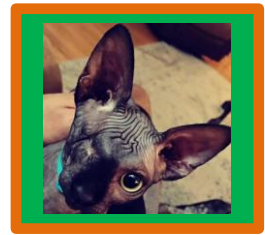
**Increases adoption rates:** TNR increases the number of cats that are adopted from shelters. Prevents the spread of disease: TNR prevents the spread of diseases associated with reproduction, like certain cancers.

**Provides natural rodent control:** TNR helps control rodent populations, especially in urban areas.

# OUR RESCUE SUCCESSES

## **Sammie in Jammies (IG: @sammieinjammies)**

Sammie was surrendered to us in April at two weeks-old with a severe upper respiratory and eye infection. His eye needed to be removed, but he was too young to survive the surgery. The vets gave him a 30% chance of living long enough to get the surgery. In two weeks, Sammie doubled his weight and was cleared for eye removal. He became so popular on our social media, that we decided he needed his own page and Sammie in Jammies was born on Instagram. Out of forty applications for his adoption, we chose Chris and Eric to be his dads. At six months-old, Sammie is now the king of his castle!



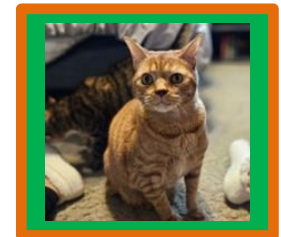
## **Miracle**

Miracle was trapped in one of our colonies on December 17, 2023, and became our “Christmas Miracle”. She was an extremely sick one month-old kitten that needed critical care. Miracle became the favorite of the vet staff (she spent 14 days in the hospital), and they could often be found with her in their pockets as they went about their day or making her the “cool cat” of the office. Miracle went to rescue on February 19, 2024, and was adopted two days later February 21, 2024.



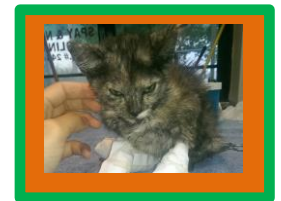
## **Chunk**

We were called in to rescue five adult cats in March after their owner had passed away. Three of the cats were sent to rescue and adopted, one died of old age and then only Chunk was left. Chunk is an x-large, 15-year-old male with arthritis, kidney disease and dental issues. No rescue would take him, and we couldn’t find anyone who wanted to adopt this sweet old boy. One of our amazing fosters stepped up and decided she would give Chunk a forever home. Chunk is in “fospice,” where he’ll stay with his foster mom until he crosses the Rainbow Bridge. She says that he is the biggest cuddle bug with the best smile she’s ever seen.



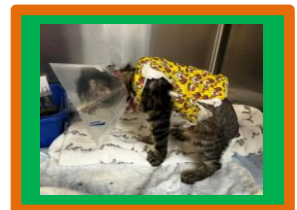
## **Phoenix**

In July, a desperate call came in about a cat that had been thrown on a BBQ grill. Our volunteers immediately rushed to the rescue and made sure that the kitten received emergency medical care. Phoenix was in dire shape with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns and was placed with our medical foster. After two weeks in foster care, she was transferred to one of our rescue partners that specialized in critical injuries and burn care. She’s made a full recovery and was adopted in August to a loving couple who immediately fell in love with her.



## **Firenza**

In August, our veterinarian contacted us about a sweet 4-month-old kitten that was in critical condition. She had an exceptionally large, open wound across her back, her ears had been burned off and her tail was degloved. Not much was known about how she suffered such horrific injuries, but we immediately stepped in to provide her care. After surgery to close her wounds and amputate her tail, she spent 3 weeks in foster care, then she went off to NineLives in Redwood City and is waiting for her forever home.



## **In Memoriam**

Donations received on behalf of loved ones or those fur babies who have journeyed over the Rainbow Bridge



*Christie Dunbar for Shadow Dunbar*  
*Margorie Hamm for Gregory “Poppa” Hamm and Scout*  
*Jesslynn Armstrong for Red Robin Armstrong*

## **HELP US HELP THEM**

Scan the QR codes to donate today!



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The Merced SPCA is a local chapter and not affiliated with any national programs. We are an organization of volunteers that believes that we can build a community where people value animals and treat them with respect and kindness. To become a member of Merced SPCA, please contact us. Donations can be made online or mailed to: Merced SPCA P.O. Box 929, Merced, CA 95341 or *email us at [merced.spca@yahoo.com](mailto:merced.spca@yahoo.com)*

