

Fostering Scruffy

In 2014 we lost both of our cats to illness, Archie in March and Nero in August. The whole family was devastated by the loss of “our boys”, they had been a constant in our lives for the last 10 years and we miss them dearly. Our sense of grief from losing “the boys” was such that we never thought it possible we could have another four legged friend in the house again. But with time you start to feel less of the sadness and are able to reflect more on the good memories.

In December 2014 I was doing my usual daily look around facebook and via a local Shoreham-by-sea group, I stumbled upon an appeal from WADARS who urgently needed a foster home for a black & white cat named Scruffy, who was really nervous and unhappy in the cattery, so much so the WADARS staff were unsure if he would be suitable for rehoming in a domestic situation. They needed someone with experience of cats to see if once in a safe and quiet environment, Scruffy



Wadars

URGENT FOSTER HOME NEEDED PLEASE SHARE- Scruffy would really love a foster home while we assess his suitability for rehoming. He is sadly terrified in the cattery environment and is actually shaking from fear 😞 Due to his anxiety he would need to be fostered in a quiet home with no other animals or children, so he could have some one on one care and attention to help him overcome his fears. If you think you could help scruffy please call Elaine on



would come out from his fear and anxiety and be able to find his “forever home”.

I looked at his picture and read the advert 3 or 4 times every day for 4 days to see if anyone had replied and given this cat a foster home. I think I secretly was hoping no one would reply because I wanted to be the one to do this but at the same time I needed to see if the rest of the family were ready as well. So, by the end of the week there was still no indication on the facebook post that a home had been found just lots of well wishes and comments about what a lovely looking cat he was. I phoned my wife on the Friday lunch time and sent her the picture and asked: what do you think? My wife said he looked lovely and that we should go for it and so I phoned Elaine at WADARS and asked if Scruffy still needed a foster home.

He did.

A few days later Elaine came to my home to give it (and me) the once over. She explained what was needed for Scruffy and how it might pan out. I told her that we just wanted to give this cat a chance because they all deserve a chance. So it was arranged that I would collect Scruffy from the cattery on the 29th of December.

I then drove straight to pets at home and got everything we needed for our house guest. Litter trays, litter, toys, scratching box, food, treats.....

On the 29th I met Elaine at the cattery for the handover. Scruffy must have known I was coming for him because he had got himself into his cat carrier all by himself. All I could see when I looked into the carrier was a black & white ball of fur at the back. In the car on the way home I started talking to him like I used to with our boys and he gave me the odd meow back so I was pleased with that.



Once in the living room, which was the only part of the house he was going to see initially, I put his carrier down next to his litter tray and opened the door. After a few seconds he jumped out and started to have a look around the room, completely ignoring me! After a quick survey of the room he dived behind one of the sofas and that, I thought, would be the last I would see of him for the day or maybe longer?

Well, two hours later Scruffy came out from behind the sofa and decided to say hello to me, after a cautious stroke of the head he announced to me that he was hungry and off to the kitchen we went. After eating a full pouch he had another look around the room and went back behind the sofa for the rest of

the day. That evening I sent Elaine a text to let her know all about day one. Little steps.

The next day I came down to see what he had done during the night, he had used his litter tray and it appeared that he had swept up all the litter that had escaped to the side of his tray, what a clean and clever boy. After having his breakfast he went back behind the sofa again. Around lunchtime he emerged from behind the sofa for what would turn out to be the last time. What happened next made me feel such happiness. The bonding moment. He decided to jump up on the sofa next to me for a fuss, purring so loudly. Something I hadn't heard in long time and had missed. After that he sat on the arm of the sofa quite content. I was so pleased with him. By the end of the day he had cautiously introduced himself to the rest of the family too.

Obviously, Scruffy was still very nervous, didn't like sudden movements or getting close to your feet, hissing at them as you walked past but gradually as the days went on the hissing went away and was replaced by growing confidence. By the end of the week he had explored the rest of the house and we had removed all the precautionary litter trays as he was such a clean and tidy boy. I kept Elaine up to date with his progress with daily texts and pictures.

I have to admit, I found it hard to believe that this was the cat that Elaine had told me about and that I had seen in the facebook appeal.



On the day Elaine was due to make her first visit to see for herself how well he was doing, I decided to push the Hoover around the living room (as you do). Scruffy does not like the Hoover. He hid behind the sofa for most of her visit with me telling her about this cat with the growing personality and confidence which was nowhere to be seen! Eventually I managed to lure him out with one of his toys and so she could now see for herself how well he was doing.

Scruffy was now learning how to play, he loves his scratching box thing and chasing the red laser dot around the carpet. He is estimated to be 5 years old but he plays like a much younger cat. We have a box for his toys in the living room and every night we put his bits and pieces away in the box. He has now

started to get his toys out the box himself when he wants to play, most mornings we get up to find he's had one of them out during the night.

Each and every day we see a bit more of his personality and he continues to grow in confidence. After a month, we had that anxious moment in all cat owners lives when you let the cat out for the first time, "will he come back" you find yourself thinking. Well, he did after half an hour and he now goes out most nights for an hour or so but always comes back in time for bed.



It was now obvious to all of us that Scruffy would be suitable for rehoming and this made us all feel such a sense of achievement. We had also decided, without actually speaking about it, that Scruffy had found his forever home with us and that there was no way we were going to give him back! I told Elaine about us wanting to keep him and she was so pleased. I also told her we would be prepared to foster again if the need arose. We knew from the start that the outcome might have been different for Scruffy and with another cat it might take weeks or months of patient care to see any improvement or sadly perhaps none at all.

None of these possible outcomes would change the way I feel about fostering again, this was one of the best things I have done in my life and I am very proud to have made a difference to this cats life, he has certainly made a difference to ours. I would like to hope that our story could convince even one more person to foster a cat or a dog because there are always going to be the Scruffy's of the world that need someone's time, care and patience to help them to find a forever home.



Tony & Scruffy