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15 Months Later. The Shocking Conclusion.

Tue, 2015-06-02 16:40 — Robin Olson

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A year later...just about June 2015

I just re-read the posts from last year. I'm glad I sat on it for so long because the lesson I've learned has ripened while Blitzen has become sick again, seemingly out of the blue.

Firstly, I'm working this year. I'm very grateful that my [graphic design business](#) ^[2] is staying busy and I've got a small handful of clients and some very interesting work ranging from designing bobblehead carton graphics to re-designing a web site for a New York State agency.

I've had to cut back on blogging, as you know, but the good news is I'm starting to plan a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds so *Covered in Cat Hair* will be published as a series of rescue stories. Our first will focus on Freya! I also have plans for taking [Kitten Associates](#) ^[3] to the "next level" so our rescues won't be forgotten and we'll continue to do what we do going forward in bigger and better ways.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *Blitzen ponders what to do about the monster-sized turkey on our deck.*

Regarding Blitzen, further observation made me realize he does NOT have Feline Hyperesthesia. He never had enough signs to make me get him to the Vet. Last year I wrote about his thick, soft coat. Guess what? That was the culprit. Blitzen gets micro mats in his coat because it's so very thick. They run along his back. If they get big enough he gets irritated. His back will ripple. He will sit up, alerted to the strange feeling, then run off and groom himself.

Once we started combing out his fur every few days, his symptoms stopped .

The more troubling problem has returned and with that, too, I've begun to see it in a different light. Blitzen's had a relapse of the horrible ulcers and rash on his head and mouth. I assumed he could not have this happen again since we already dealt with tucking away all the loose pull cords from the window blinds. Less than two weeks ago, Blitzen was getting a checkup and he looked good, aside from a tiny pinprick-sized bloody spot on his head. Dr. Mary said he really needed a dental cleaning so I told her I'd make sure that happens soon. We did some blood work on him and it looked great.

What I didn't realize is that the tiny wound was not from playing with Freya, it was the beginning of a serious allergic reaction forming on his face, in front of his ears. One day I looked over at him and saw a circular, scabby wound. It was about the size of a pencil eraser, maybe ¼" in diameter. I more carefully examined his head and realized the fur was gone and the skin was quite pink-a sign of an allergic reaction.

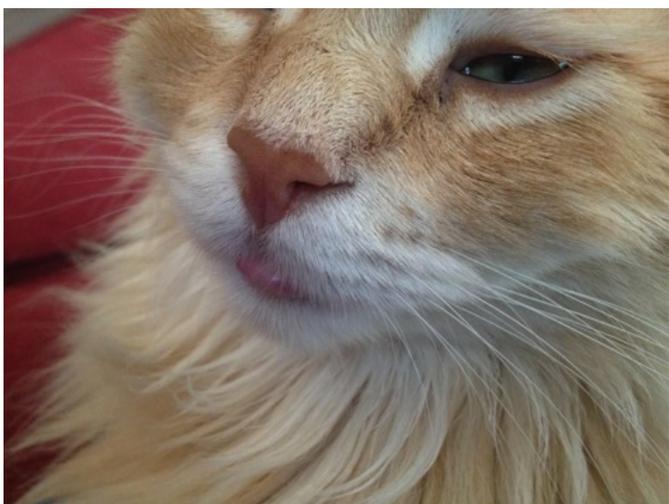


©2015 Robin AF Olson. Notice how pink the skin is between his eye and ear.

I couldn't get my mind around what was going on. I treated the wound, but it got a bit worse. Blitzen's lower lip became swollen and I made an appointment with the Vet right away. I couldn't sort out what he was getting into to cause this to happen so I made sure he only got his homemade raw food, nothing commercially prepared.

Yesterday we were due to go to the Vet, but I started to think about what they would do. They would give him steroids, which is a big no-no in my book or antibiotics, again another no-no when he wasn't getting an infection. Honestly, what would they do other than those things or maybe add Benadryl, which didn't seem to help the last time. I cancelled the appointment deciding to give it a few days.

Today I had a breakthrough, totally by accident. Our dopey cat DOOD was once again bothering our senior girl, Petunia. I got up to intervene when I saw Blitzen. **He was jumping down from a table with a long gluey strand of saliva, cascading out of his mouth.** I thought he was choking and called Sam to assist me with him.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Blitzen's not pouting. His lip is swollen.

He was all right. I syringed a small amount of water into Blitzen's mouth to rinse out the over-production of spit. Sam and I returned to the scene of the grime and Sam called out that Blitzen must have been chewing on "the string."

"What string?"

"The pull cord from the blind over here in the corner."

We'd missed it. There was another pull cord that was very tough to get to, but somehow Blitzen had been chewing on it. It was brown-stained and wet. We stopped what we were doing and did another patrol around the house, tying up every low pull cord so this could NEVER happen again.

But there's something important I've learned to ask myself when my cats get sick: "What is the underlying problem here? What is driving Blitzen to chew these cords?"

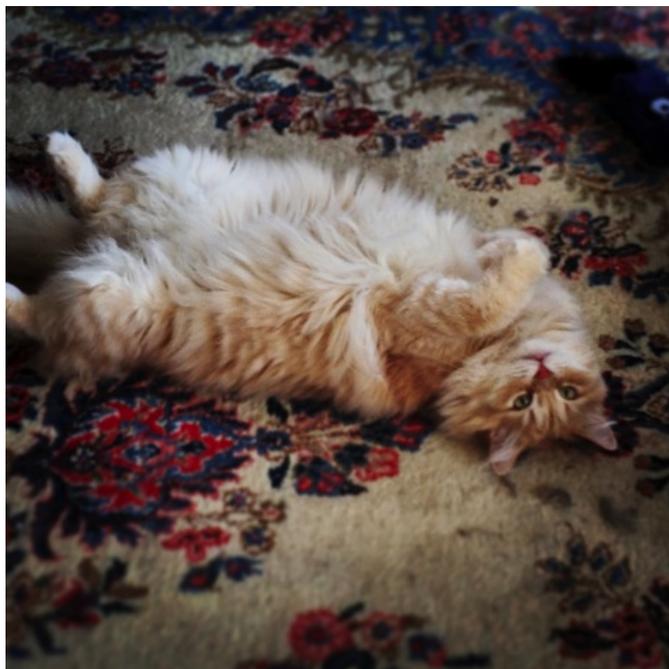
The answer was very simple. Blitzen needs his teeth cleaned. I already knew his gums were irritated and he has a funky tooth. I thought about what I'd do if I were Blitzen and sure as heck I'd find a way to soothe my gums and those thick pull cords would do the trick. **Last year when I brought Blitzen to the Vet I'm pretty sure his gums were irritated**

but we felt it was due to the allergic reaction, not the other way around.

I called our Vet and moved his appointment up to Tuesday. I also told them that Dr. Mary should call me first. **I knew if she saw him she'd possibly not want to do the sedation, but I feel very certain once we get his teeth taken care of everything else will fall into place. I bet this has been going on for over a year. Do I feel like a jerk, a bad cat-mama? YES!**

As always, I hope that what I've learned/screwed up will help you avoid doing to your cat. Be a careful observer. If you don't blog about your cats, then get a notepad and make some notes if it's not an emergency situation. As [Pam Johnson-Bennet](#) ^[4] taught me, **"THINK LIKE A CAT."** It will make an enormous difference in your cat's life.

DISCLAIMER: *I would never assume I know more than my Vet so in the end I will respect Dr. Mary's decision on whether or not she can go ahead with Blitzzen's dental even with sores on his lip and head. I would also remind all of you, which I've illustrated here, even with careful observation, you may be wrong and what you think is ailing your cat has yet to be known, diagnosed or understood. Try to stay open-minded and also, as great as the internet is, it's not the be-all and end-all for diagnosing your cat's ailments.*



©2015 Robin AF Olson. My sweet boy.

UPDATE: Since I finished writing this post Blitzzen has made the trip to see Dr. Mary. She just called me. **It was horrible news.**

Blitzen had to have 4 teeth removed. He was also MISSING three teeth. They already had been reabsorbed into his gums. No wonder he was so focused on chewing the cords. Rubbing and gnawing them probably gave him the only relief for his VERY painful mouth.

I'm going to add raw meaty bones to his diet once his mouth heals as coincidentally, just today I learned how important they are to give your cat's teeth a cleaning. Currently, we only feed ground raw meat, bones and organs with some supplements. Our cats NEED to GNAW to strengthen their jaw muscles and keep those teeth strong. **With Blitzzen only being five years old, this is a terrible shock to me, leaving me feeling deeply ashamed he suffered for the past year and a half. If I don't right this ship he will have no teeth and that can't happen.**

Lesson learned.

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Comments

Tue, 2015-06-02 19:50 — Melissa (not verified)

Teeth ^[11]

Cat teeth can be very fickle things. I have had cats that were seemingly predisposed to having bad teeth and gum irritation. I have 2 brothers that are both with minimal teeth left. While their issues were not the same as Blitzens, I think that you have to give yourself a little leeway because some cats just genetically have bad teeth.

You, like all of us, do the best we can. Unfortunately, feline dentals sometimes get put off until the need is great. Don't kick yourself too hard. Cats can get by without teeth easily. I'm sure he will be right as rain in no time. :)

Tue, 2015-06-02 21:14 — Cat mom too (not verified)

Not a bad kitty mom. It's ^[12]

Not a bad kitty mom. It's easy to miss signs. We have three boys from the same litter and then an older female from the same mom. She disappeared one day which is odd considering they are all inside cats and always have been. No outside for them at all. Anyway, we finally found her about 2 hours after really deciding she was missing. Her face was grotesquely swollen. Since she was hiding somewhere it was really dark and away from everything we were convinced we were losing her. Took her to the vet and found she had an infected salivary gland. After the diagnosis and starting treatment we started looking back on her recent behavior. She had been chewing things that she normally didn't. Wouldn't eat her food, though it was dry food, her favorite. You can't see them all, trust me. You're doing an amazing job, especially with Freya. I've been following her misadventures since you introduced her. I've cried over her situation and laughed at the funny things she does. Don't beat yourself up. You've got this!

Wed, 2015-06-03 13:26 — [Connie & The Crew](#) (not verified) ^[13]

bones ^[14]

Yes, gnawing on bones is important, and I don't do it nearly enough. Sadly the less I do it the less likely they are to chew on them when I do bring them out. When my youngest was a year old he used to eat the wings down completely.. now we are left with the joints which saddens me because there is some of the best nutrition in those..

I think I'll stop at the store on the way home and pick up a couple of wings for The Crew

Wed, 2015-06-03 13:28 — jmuwj (not verified)

RE: BLITZEN ^[15]

Awww, poor Blitzen! But it's good that you know what you've got to work with in regards to his dental health, and that you're on top of it now. He looks great, except for his sore spot. Gorgeous pic of him looking at the turkey, too, btw! All the very best to him! and to you, too!

Fri, 2015-06-05 18:19 — Cindy (not verified)

Dental Problems ^[16]

Don't feel bad if all his teeth must be pulled. I had a beloved rescue kitty a few years back who came with bad teeth and it wasn't too long before she developed stomatitis. A veterinary dentist pulled most of her teeth and within a year the rest had to go. However, she did just fine on a diet of all canned food (and treats of finely cut "mommy" food such as chicken, turkey, etc.)

Purrs and head bonks to you for all you do for the kitties.

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