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The Accidental Feral. Big Daddy.

Tue, 2014-03-04 15:38 — Robin Olson

Northern Georgia's had a rough winter. With snow, ice and freezing cold temperatures that vastly skew from what's considered normal, the feral cat population has had an even tougher time surviving.

These cats are not accustomed to the colder temps and may not be as successful as their northern counterparts in finding adequate shelter. Their coats may not be as thick and their struggle to have a full belly leaves them even more vulnerable.

For a lucky few cats there's Warren and his wife, Terri, who I've written about in the past. They get out there and trap, neuter, and some times return the feral cats they trap. They help the pregnant cats and the kittens find homes. They are very passionate about their rescues and have even hoped to open their own sanctuary one day.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Big Daddy the day after being trapped.

It's not unusual for Warren to stay up late at night, watching a trap, hoping the cat will enter it so he can get it properly taken care of. Most of the time the process is straightforward. The cats are vetted, spayed or neutered, given some time to recover, then he brings them back to their colony where he and his wife will make sure they get fed.

That's why when Warren noticed a big tabby, limping, clearly injured, who also looked a heck of a lot like one of the kittens Warren rescued (*read about Dexter's amazing and scary journey [HERE](#) (1)*), he knew he had to trap him and get him to a vet. **The problem was, what could he do for this kitty, AFTER getting vetted? Surely it would be difficult to treat a fractious cat, which could mean Warren could get hurt or the cat might not recover from his injury if he couldn't get him medicated or change bandages.**

First things first...get the cat trapped.

Warren got his supplies ready and opened up the trap. **He saw the cat who he called, Big Daddy, not far away, watching him. As soon as Warren opened a can of food, in a flash, there was Big Daddy by his side, pushing Warren away so he could get at the tempting morsels.** Shocked, Warren carefully, lured the cat into the trap, fearful he could be harmed at any moment if the cat was separated from his food for too long. Clearly the cat was starving and didn't care if he was in a cage or not.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Getting fueled up (again!).

Warren quietly closed the trap door and rushed Big Daddy to the Vet. Big Daddy wasn't thrilled to be in the car but there was something odd about him. **For a feral cat, he wasn't crouched into a tight ball. He wasn't hissing. He wasn't struggling to break free from the trap. He was just eating.**

The plan was to leave Big Daddy with the Vet for a few days while Warren was here in New York City at a trade show. **I was with Warren when the call came in on the cat. He had an abscess from a bite wound, but they felt it would heal. Against Warren's orders they gave him Convenia, assuming that since the cat was feral it was the best they could do,** [even though *Convenia* ^[2] is NOT for bite wounds but because it's injectable and there are no pills, people tend to use it so they don't have to pill their cat. The problem is-once injected it stays in the body for MONTHS. If there's an allergic reaction you can't get it out of the body. It's really only good for certain bacterial issues regarding the SKIN. Using it after a dental or for some other reason is not safe and contra-indicated.]

They went ahead and ear-tipped him even though Warren said not to because he wasn't sure the cat might not be feral. When we found that out we were both very angry. If Big Daddy ended up being a cat we could socialize, then ear-tipping him could further reduce his chances for adoption.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. What a face!

They neutered him and vaccinated him. **They snap tested him and discovered he was positive for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus ^[3] or FIV.** We weren't surprised, but it meant that letting him back outside was not an option, but now what would we do with him? Warren feared he might have to euthanize the cat if he couldn't go back to the colony or if he was too fractious to find a forever home.

Warren came home and discovered his hunch was right. **Big Daddy wasn't feral, but how friendly was he? Did he have behavior problems?** If so, how severe were they? When Warren approached Big D's crate, Big Daddy stepped forward and seemed interested in sniffing Warren's hand. Worried he would get bitten, Warren cautiously offered the back of his hand. **Big Daddy head-butted it.**



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Waiting for the next part of his journey to begin.

Warren slowly petted the cat. He seemed to like it and immediately began to purr. This poor cat, who Warren knew had to have been outside for a year or more, hadn't forgotten the love he'd known from humans. He was willing to trust again, right away, which surprised us all.

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Over the past few weeks, Warren and Terri have been working with Big Daddy, assessing his behavior to see if he'd qualify to be adopted. Big D nipped at Warren a few times, but Terri said he never nipped her. Why? Turns out Warren needed to learn that Big Daddy didn't care for being petted like he was a dog—oops! (*Warren admitted to not realizing that right away since he'd known dogs most of his life*). Once Warren made a slight change in how he petted Big D the nipping stopped.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Loves that brush.

Big Daddy's met a few other cats. He's interested, but neutral. A further test revealed another surprise-Big Daddy LOVES to be brushed!

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Big D's leg is healing nicely and he's relatively content in his big crate in the garage, but yearns to be out of it and in Warren's house. Sadly, Warren's other cats won't welcome a newcomer and ultimately Big Daddy needs a home of his own.

This very sweet, affectionate, gentle giant weighs 15 pounds and is about 4 years old. He's physically he's a large kitty. Aside from having FIV, his health is good. He does not have issues with his gums, teeth or digestion, which can happen to FIV cats. With a GOOD DIET and I mean **NO DRY FOOD**, low carb, grain-free canned food or better yet, dehydrated raw or really any raw diet, he will do well.

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There are Vets who vilify cats with FIV and say they can't be with non-FIV cats, but in my own experience with my cat, Bob, he was with not only my 7 cats, but countless kittens and none of them ever got sick. Bob would have had to BITE them so seriously his teeth would have had to sink into flesh to transmit the disease. Yet, there is a vet who just said she felt it was passed through a litter pan, which defies logic.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Meeting Murphy.

The bottom line is Big Daddy is no feral cat. He's a big, sweet, super-cute, kitty who just wants to give and get love—who can be a friend to other cats. He's a cat who got dealt a tough hand now that he has FIV, but that doesn't mean he can't have a forever home. This accidental feral needs a forever home and we're hoping that maybe it's yours.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. What a cutie pie!

Warren definitely has Big Daddy's back. Because he cares for him so much **Warren will cover transportation costs to an approved home or non-profit, no-kill rescue group or shelter. He will also TAKE BIG DADDY BACK, should the adoption or rescue placement not work out.** Ideally this home will be in northern Georgia, but if it's anywhere along the east coast of the USA, we can get Big Daddy to your door. If you live outside the east coast, let's talk.



©2014 Warren Royal. Used with permission. Big Daddy with our Rescuer-Daddy, Warren.

If you're a non-profit, no kill rescue and would like to take Big Daddy on and find him a forever home, Big Daddy will come with a \$250.00 sponsorship and he's already completely vetted.

If you'd like to adopt Big Daddy, go to our rescue group, Kitten Associates, and fill out a Pre Adoption Application ^[4] and I will forward them to Warren.

If you have any questions or are with a rescue and can help Big Daddy find his home, just email me at info@kittenassociates.org ^[5].

Please share this socially if you believe, as I do, that Big Daddy deserves a great home. Thank you!

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Comments

Tue, 2014-03-04 16:17 — Donna Mahony (not verified)

Hi Big Daddy ^[14]

Hi Big Daddy,

I'm Zelda, a 14 year old dog and I live with Gizmo, he's 13, and Captain, he's big like you but he's orange and also about 13 years old.

We had a family meeting and hoped we could work things out to have you join us but, to be honest, Gizmo and Captain are old and grumpy. They'd pick on you. I'd love to have you. There would be more of that yummy canned stuff you guys get to eat. My Mom, Donna Mahony..(she's a friend of Warrens) lets me lick the bowls....mmmmm mmmm good! I drool just thinking of it.

So anyhow, I'm writing to tell you not to lose hope. I'm adopted and so are Gizmo and Captain. We've all been with Mom for more than 10 years. You seem like a wonderful cat and will soon find your forever home too! Hang in there, be kind and rub on humans and purr to them...they love that!!

We'll all be praying for you!

Love from Zelda, Gizmo, Captain and our Mom - Donna Mahony

Tue, 2014-03-04 20:05 — Warren Royal (not verified)

Zelda ^[15]

Zelda- thank you for your sweet and thoughtful note! Your mom Donna has told me about you and your brothers. I'm so happy to hear your story- we hope to find a great home like yours for our sweet boy too. We've helped a lot of good cats over the years- but Big Daddy is really a special one. As your mom said: he's "a king among cats". Thank you!

Wed, 2014-03-05 15:58 — Michelle (not verified)

Oh my goodness is he ^[16]

Oh my goodness is he gorgeous! I just love the big boys, and that face just sucks me right in. Good thing he's not in FL! :-)

When I adopted my first two FIV+ boys, they also had ear tips and I didn't care one bit. I would, however, change Vets over the Convenia and ear tip issue. I've never had a problem getting a true feral to take meds in some super yummy canned food. I've always had them compounded into a flavored liquid to make it even easier.

I've also had FIV+ boys mixed with my negative cats, and in over ten years, have never had an issue.

There's somebody out there for that boy, but it just may take a little time to find the perfect home. Considering the bite wound and his FIV+ status, though, he should be retested for FeLV. It was too soon for it to show up on a test if he was just infected. They do have the Single FeLV tests that are cheaper than the combo tests.

Thu, 2014-03-06 05:34 — Athena (not verified)

Such a cutie! ^[17]

I want to first thank you all for the care you take of, with, and for, these cats. I have always had a very close and spiritual connection with cats, particularly "feral" ones. My spouse and I have 8 kitties of our own, plus a colony that lives under our house/shed that is around the 5-6 mark in numbers. I came to the relationship with my 3 sweet boys, who my father and I rescued in 2007 while their mother, a first time mother and stray, was pregnant with them and their 3 sisters. It was the most heart wrenching thing to have to send their mother and sisters to the local shelter, but ultimately our situation only allowed us to care for so many. To this day, I wonder where they ended up, and look for them in every black-furred face I see, wondering if they would even remember me and their brothers these 5 and a half years later. My spouse came with one kitty, a girl, that he adopted from a shelter. A year or so ago now we had two brothers that lived under our shed. One, the smaller, would always come up and sit in the shed with my spouse while he worked on the motorcycles. He never said much, and never really wanted touched. He just sat, and watched. We fed him and his brother [who absolutely refused to come near us], and ultimately decided we already had 4 cats, and we couldn't split him and his brother up. So we'd take care of them, but leave them be. The local TomCat, a big grey, ended up fighting the little one and severely injuring him. Having had him adjusted to us touching him while he drank milk, we knew we had no choice. We had to bring him inside. We fed him, hydrated him, gave him his own space and blanket away from the other cats [Who he already knew from chatting through the screen door lol].

When the infected areas refused to get better [They had filled with pus], we had to open the wounds up a little and remove the infection. For whatever reason, this feral kitty with no real reason to trust anything in the world, let us do it. He didn't have the energy to fight us, and he knew it. Within a week, he was up walking around a little, testing his body movement again. This time, he had no desire to go outside. We tried to let him, he looked outside, looked up at us, and sat down right in front of the open door. He chose us, apparently lol.

That was to be it; Until we had our daughter with us over the summer, and she wanted to go "thrift shopping". On a whim, we went. As we pulled up, a tiny little kitty ran across the parking lot with a newborn in tow; Eyes not even open yet. She disappeared into the tanning salon's outside trash bin, and didn't come out. We looked, and there she was with two little kittens, herself itty bitty. We sat for an hour with her, she was perfectly fine with me touching her AND her kittens; There is a large colony near by that she clearly was annexed from [Colony has roughly 30 cats there at any given time; A mysterious man comes and feeds them when he can]. We couldn't in good nature leave her there in a trash bin. The goodwill employees outside at hte time said she was around here quite a bit, they fed her when they had some food donated. They even gave us the towel, food, and box, they had been using to feed her if we decided to take her with us.

We did, and now we have a happy indoor colony of 8; And our "outside" family of 5. :> We turn no kitties away, and we respect their areas and space. When they allow us, we pet them and check for problems, but otherwise leave them to do what they do best: Thrive.

And come summer when they are actually content to leave their homes, we'll be getting them all fixed and notched and put right back where they belong. :)

Reading this story makes me have more hope for humanity. So many look down on us for "Having so many cats". They just don't understand that feral cats are nto to be feared. They're dangerous, but no more so than a lap dog if you respect them and let them make movements in their own time.

Thu, 2014-03-06 17:02 — [Robin Olson](#) [18]

You're Amazing! [19]

Thank you so much for sharing your story with us, Athena. It's people like you who stick their neck out to help a cat in need that make this world a much better place! :-)

Sat, 2014-03-08 09:00 — [Riverfront Cats \(not verified\)](#) [20]

He is gorgeous [21]

Big Daddy is such handsome boy. Thank you for all the work you're doing to finding a home. More people need to know that is ok to adopt FIV+ cats. As you explained, he is just another sweet boy who just wants to give and receive love. We will be praying for him, hoping he gets adopted soon. Good Luck Big Daddy!

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- [2] <http://catinfo.org/?link=convenia>
- [3] <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/cat-care/feline-immunodeficiency-virus-fiv>
- [4] <http://kittenassociates.org/node/add/adoption-application>
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