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## Foster Cat Journal: The Curious Case of Cara Melle

Fri, 2011-02-18 11:21 — Robin Olson

Cara sits in a cage at Dr. Larry's clinic. She's been there most of the week. She hates being confined and alone. She stands on her hind legs and desperately reaches between the metal bars at the Vet Techs that pass by. From time to time, they take her out of the cage and give her some attention, some loving, some time to de-stress, but most of the day she is curled up on her cat bed, waiting.



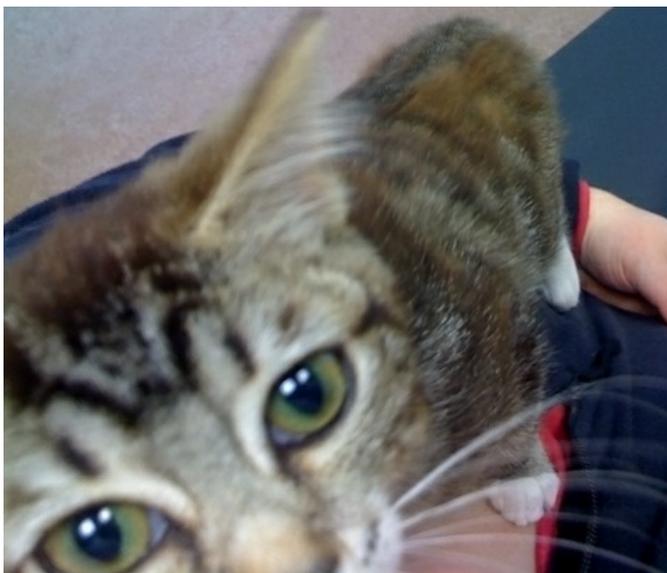
©2011 Debbie Bachman.

**Cara hasn't gone a day without vomiting up her food, at least once or twice.** What's causing her to vomit, we still don't know. Dr. Larry performed the Barium Study, where they get Cara to eat some barium mixed into her cat food. As she swallows, they set a timer and begin taking x-rays of her, every so often. The timer shows up on the x-ray so they can follow the progression of food as it passes into her stomach, then into her intestines.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. The xray shows something is a bit off in Cara's stomach.

They look for abnormalities. At "Hour 2," they saw something, but it wasn't very revealing. In Cara's stomach, there's a slight, rounded area. It can be seen on an xray prior to the study being done. During the study, you can see Cara's intestines, lit up, bright white, **but near the red arrow is the pouch with some barium, that eventually passes, but has been held up in the digestion process for a short period of time.**



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Cara loves to snuggle under my chin.

When I visit Cara, each afternoon, Dr. Larry or his associate, Dr. Andrew, talk to me about what they think is wrong. Cara is TINY for her 16 weeks of age. They are describing her as *"Failing to Thrive."* This can be a death knell for cats. I know when I hear this, it scares me to no end, **but if you spend time with Cara, watch her play, be interested in the world around her, see her pretty green eyes sparkle, surely this is not a cat who's about to die?**



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Only 3 pounds, Cara is now 2 pounds lighter than her brother.

Then Dr. Larry tells me **Cara's intestines feel a bit soft, not quite right. In xray, they see her liver. It's at an odd angle-not quite right.** We've discussed parasites and she's been dewormed a few times with a few different protocols, yet there is one we haven't done, so we'll run some Albon through her just so we can take parasites off the list of what could be wrong.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. *Feeling blue, Cara simply sniffs at her toys.*

I ask weird, stupid questions...desperate to think of something that was overlooked. Is one of her organs failing? Does she have hyperthyroid? **What makes a cat vomit, but not vomit EVERY time she eats?**

We looked at environmental factors. Her siblings crowd the food bowls and she has to fight her way in to eat. I made sure she was eating out of her own bowl, away from the other cats. She jumped off the bed and ran to her sister and started to eagerly grab at food. Of course that would have to make her vomit-eating so fast.



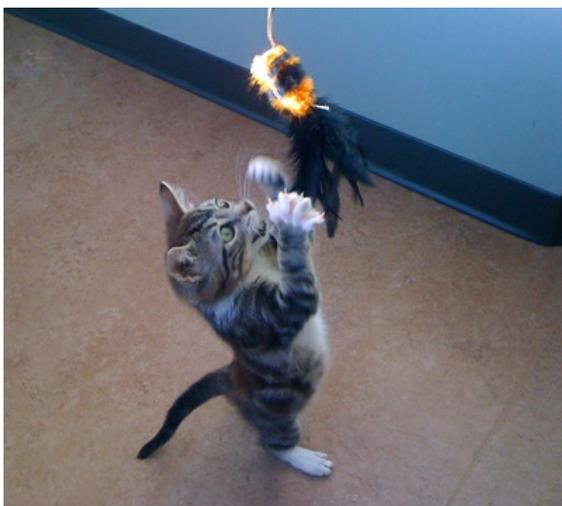
©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. *Sitting in the window at Dr. Larry's office. I'm thinking I paid for that windowsill, heck, probably the room.*

But she's alone. No competition for food. **Now I'm not even allowed to visit any more because me leaving stresses her out, too.** When I was at the Clinic last night, I could hear her crying. It broke my heart not to be able to go to her.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Cara was shaking the first day I saw her. She was so cold and scared, but she did come around after awhile.

We spoke of next steps. Endoscopy, would require sedation, which is always something you want to avoid, especially with a young animal. It would possibly give us a view of her stomach that might answer some question. The other choice is an ultrasound, which might show thickening of the intestines or lining of the stomach. No sedation required, but it's expensive.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. I actually got Cara to play. A good sign!

Then Dr. Larry said my least favorite thing; "You're already spending a **small fortune** on the barium study. Look at all these xrays." There must have been 10 or 12 in the manilla envelope. I started doing calculations and guessed that even with my discount it will be about \$750.00. I was too scared to ask. The ultrasound will be a few hundred more.

I have to find some balance, but we're not getting any answers. Probably because of the fear of the Vet bill, did I think again and say to Dr. Larry...what about ALL the antibiotics this cat has been on for MOST of her life. I bet that could be making her sick. Maybe she just needs time to recover and not be messed with any more?



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Cara just wants to get well so she can go home.

Dr. Larry thought I made a valid point-but this is during the time when Cara is still on a heavy dose of antibiotics to slay the darn URI she has had for months. **The URI is resolving, but what were the lasting effects of ALL these meds?**

Dr. Larry just called. He feels we would find out helpful information if we go ahead and do the ultrasound. It would either tell us clearly that Cara, internally, is fine or that we have a problem. We've been trying to find out why she vomits for over a month and I had to decide if I could find the funds to pay another few hundred dollars for the bill. I asked for a rescue discount. Hopefully the Vet who does the ultrasound will be kind enough to do that for us. Even if he doesn't, I have to push, yet again for funding for Cara.

**I really hate to ask for help, but Cara needs it now, more than ever.** If you can help, your donation will go straight to our [Boo-Boo and Sniffles Fund](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, which will pay Cara's vet bill.

**I can't say, "no" to doing this test, so the ultrasound will be done in an hour. I can't just watch Cara continue to be sick and hope she grows out of it. She hasn't so far and if she continues down this road...well...she may have a very short road ahead of her.**

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## Comments

Fri, 2011-02-18 17:48 — Pam (not verified)

### **Megaesophagus???** <sup>[17]</sup>

Hi Robin-

Has anyone suggested Megaesophagus? I remember that Bosley from the Elephants Upstairs blog has it. He threw up everything he ate. Now they elevate his food dish and he is on some type of medication. He is thriving, but only weighs a little over two pounds at about 1 year old.

Fri, 2011-02-18 17:57 — [Robin Olson](#) <sup>[18]</sup>

### **Not Mega...** <sup>[19]</sup>

Cara's esophagus is GOOD. Thank goodness. They just checked it on the ultrasound and not a problem there. Thank you for the suggestion!

Fri, 2011-02-18 18:42 — Catnynouse (not verified)

### **Just made a small donation. I** <sup>[20]</sup>

Just made a small donation. I wish it could be ten times, a hundred times, more but hopefully every little bit helps and hopefully many people will donate that little bit. Hugs to you and Cara; keep us posted.

Sat, 2011-02-19 09:32 — [Stephanie \(not verified\)](#) <sup>[21]</sup>

### **Good luck Robin and Cara! I** <sup>[22]</sup>

Good luck Robin and Cara! I threw in just a bit of money, like the first commenter said, if we can all throw in a bit hopefully it'll help. Cara is so cute, I want her to be healthy. Thanks for keeping us updated!

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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