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## For Freya. Part 1 of 2.

Mon, 2014-09-22 16:15 — Robin Olson

*Ten days ago when I began to foster Freya, a tiny kitten who has a birth defect called a RectoVaginal Fistula, I knew I'd be in for a challenge. I also knew it would possibly be incredibly painful to spend time with her because this past weekend might be her last.*

Freya's birth defect means that although her bladder is properly connected to her urethra, there's a [fistula](#) <sup>[1]</sup> (*an abnormal connection*) that goes from her rectum to her vagina. **In crude terms, she poops from where she pees.** This is not good. It's life-threatening and it's RARE. **It's so rare most Vets never see a case like this and IF they do, due to costs, the risky surgery and the high chance of post-operative complications, they often humanely euthanize the animal.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Hello Freya.

It was discussed that due to the 10% chance of surviving the surgery the only kind thing to do for Freya was to let her go. I was mortified and horrified. With all the technology and medical achievements surely they could do something for her. Because she's so sweet and cute, the kind-hearted Vets decided to chance it and give her a few more days to gain some strength. Being 5 weeks old and weighing 1 pound, 2 ounces, meant she wouldn't do well under anesthesia. **Her little body would have a tough time keeping her temperature up and her other organs, not fully developed, would be under great strain, too. The stress on her would be so great that it wouldn't take much for her to expire during the procedure. In a last-ditch change-of-heart, we all agreed that Freya should get those extra days.**

**This also meant that I needed to give her the best few days I could. I needed to drop everything else to focus on her.** I'd still provide the basics for the other fosters and try to put off my ever-growing "To Do" list. I had to feed her every 5 hours, repeatedly bathe her very sore behind and do continuous loads of laundry to sanitize her bedding. It also drove me to finally buy an inflatable twin mattress so I had a place to rest during the late and early feedings. It barely fits in front of my washer/dryer which shares a space with my now infamous blue bathroom where so many other foster kittens have lived. **With all that's required it's not a surprise that I sleep when I can. Some times it's at 6 PM and other times it's 5 AM.** I'm very drained but I can't complain. This is Freya's time. She needs me. She needs loving care, not to be shut in a cage at the Vet until surgery day.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Freya with her luminous eyes.

**I managed to arrange for Freya's brother, Pascal to visit.** The hope was that Pascal could stay with us until Freya's surgery. She was so happy when she saw him. She perked up and ran over to him. He chased her and she chased him, but it didn't last long.

**Pascal, in good health and bored by not having another kitten to play with, repeatedly jumped on Freya and furiously "bunny-kicked" her back, making her shriek.**

He didn't show any signs of backing off no matter how many times we took him off her and distracted him with a toy. It was clear this reunion was to be short lived and Pascal left with his family, leaving me to give Freya the comfort she so needed.

I've never had to care for an incontinent kitten. Certainly my senior cats as their life comes to an end needed special care, but this is different. **Freya pees in the litter pan perfectly, but her rear end always has a smear of stool on it. Sometimes her legs get dirty. I describe how she behaves as if she's a rubber stamp. When she sits she leaves a little print of poo on the floor. It's good to see this because it means she's passing something.** It's NOT enough. You can feel her intestines and her belly is badly swollen. **Some of her intestines are HARD. Dr. Andrews called it an Obstipation, which is more severe than constipation-it's basically a chunk of very hard stool that's stuck in her intestines. This buildup is due to her inability to pass stool as nature intended AND due to her diet.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Someone is ready for another quick bath.

**This is yet another example of why grained food and kibble are SO BAD. If I fed those things to Freya it would bulk her up and kill her a lot faster. Interestingly enough I also can't feed her a raw diet because her stool would be much less in volume, but VERY dry and hard, impossible to pass. I decided (and Dr. A., Freya's surgeon, agreed) that her best diet is high protein, no grain, low-carb. canned food with some water added. This will keep her hydrated and maybe soften the stool. She seems to be passing more, but it's not enough to reduce her abnormally huge abdomen.**

And that's the problem.

**We can't give her laxatives** because she has a tiny opening for stool. We can't give her a stool softener because it won't help the obstipation she has.

**We're playing a VERY VERY difficult game and if I make a mistake, Freya dies.**

Over the weekend Freya ate well. She did her thing. She played. She was much more vivacious than I expected. She gained 2.5 oz. She was a kitten in every way but one. I had an idea that I ran past our Vets. We discussed it last week when Freya returned to NVS. **We decided to NOT do the surgery yet and that it was worth giving her a little more time in the hopes that she will grow a bit and better handle what is to come.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Another morning getting a bit of rest next while Freya sees her reflection in the washing machine door.

**The risks are serious. If we wait too long, Freya's intestinal wall gets thinner and more stretched to the point where she may get megacolon <sup>[2]</sup> from it. If we wait too long Freya may go downhill and be too weak for surgery. If we DON'T WAIT and do the surgery NOW she is too little to have a good outcome. She's stable, but I was told that the smallest change in her behavior means she MUST come right back to NVS.**

**We agreed to give it another week**—a week I will be on pins and needles. A week where I will continue to work hard to give Freya the best I can. I'll give her morning and evening cuddles. She'll sleep under my chin with her head on my face. She'll purr her loud purr and I'll fight off the knot in my back from seizing up from sitting awkwardly for long periods of time.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Freya comes to life when she gets her ribbon to play with. Of course she's always carefully supervised since ribbons can be an ingestion hazard for cats.

**Freya is a darling creature. With her wide back end and wobbly back legs she looks a lot like a hamster when she runs. She “talks” to me when she’s hungry or when she needs me to give her a bath (if I haven’t already figured that out). She has periwinkle blue eyes and tiniest little paws. I want to give her the world. I want to KNOW that we’re making the right choices for her, but we won’t know until after it’s all said and done and we can look back on this choice with pride or regret.**



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**It’s embarrassing to admit that I watched a few minutes of *Couples Therapy* on VH-1 this weekend. The staff Psychologist said that if you don’t experience pain, you can’t have any opportunity to grow. Through Freya I am learning that a life, short or long, should be celebrated every day. I’ve heard it said a million times but now it means something to me. It reminds me that every day could be our last, especially in Freya’s case. If she does pass away, I will certainly experience a great deal of pain, but I will have learned more ways how to provide care for kittens and how to do it without so much fear attached to the outcome.**

As I sit here late at night wondering about what is yet to come, I have to remember to say **how grateful I am to the staff at NVS [3] for cheering Freya on.** Some of the staff came out to see her when they heard she was in the building. That wasn’t enough. One of the ladies took her around the entire facility to say hello to everyone after our appointment was over.

**I’m grateful to all of YOU for your donations and caring messages. I’m grateful to my friends at Animals in Distress [4] who were able to take responsibility of Freya so she wouldn’t be euthanized when her family couldn’t afford her care. It really takes a village and in this case it couldn’t be more true.**

**End of Part 1. Part 2-where we meet “The Guy” who could change everything for Freya.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Peace fills my heart when I watch Freya sleep.

**CICH Content Categories:**

Vets [5]

## Comments

Mon, 2014-09-22 19:04 — Catnonymouse (not verified)

### **She's happy, purring.** [6]

She's happy, purring, playing, doing kitten things. No matter what the outcome, I think you were right to give her these days with you. It sounds like an astonishing amount of work, but worth it to see that little face. I hope you get a miracle, but if it's not to be, it's not because you could have done any better by her. She knows she's loved.

Mon, 2014-09-22 21:35 — Michelle (not verified)

### **You know, it is my dream that** [7]

You know, it is my dream that one of these days I will have an opportunity to sit down with you for lunch and just chat. Robin, you are such an incredible woman. It is obvious that you have a huge, kind and generous heart. I am so glad to be able to sit back and watch your story and the stories of these little lives unfold.

Tue, 2014-09-23 13:05 — jmuhj (not verified)

### **\*PRAYERS\* and heartfelt** [8]

\*PRAYERS\* and heartfelt healing thoughts for tiny fighter FREYA. And thank you, and everyone involved, in being there for her, caring so much about her, and giving her every chance.

Fistula is also found in humans, and women who have it often die from it if there is nonexistent or substandard medical care. It is indeed a very serious malady.

Again, all the very best for Freya, and for Kitten Associates!

Sun, 2014-11-09 19:13 — Jan (not verified)

### **freya** [9]

God bless you!!!! I have had cats all my life. I am praying for Freya and you! I know it is Gods will to let that baby be healed. I so love every thing you do for all your furkids. Just know this South Carolina girl is praying hard for Freya

Sun, 2014-11-09 19:17 — Jan (not verified)

### **Freya** [10]

God bless you!!! I am praying for her healing surgery. You are a saint in my eyes.

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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**Source URL (modified on 2014-09-22 16:20):** <https://coveredincathair.com/content/freya-part-1-2>

#### Links

[1] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fistula>

[2] [http://www.vet.cornell.edu/FHC/health\\_resources/megacolon.cfm](http://www.vet.cornell.edu/FHC/health_resources/megacolon.cfm)

[3] <http://www.newtownvets.com/>

[4] <http://animals-in-distress.com/>

[5] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/85>

[6] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9251#comment-9251>

[7] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9252#comment-9252>

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