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Let it Ride.

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I'm not even sure when it started. In some ways it seems as though it's been going on forever, a never-ending cycle of bad to worse. I don't even know what triggered it in the first place. Was it a visit to the Vet? Was it stress-related?

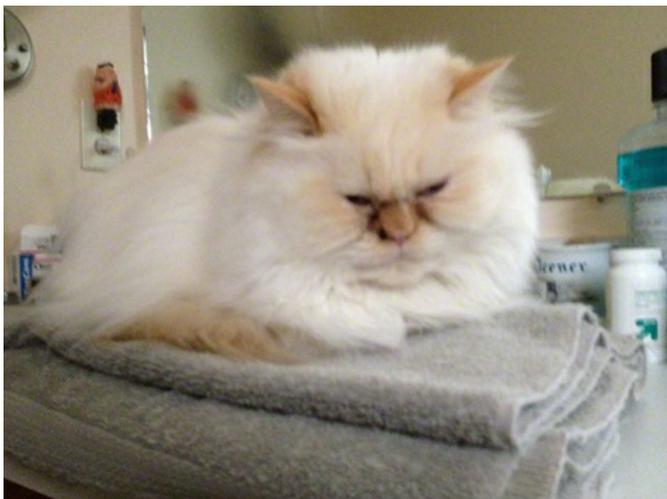
All I know is that close to every one of my cats and my foster cats are sick with a viral upper respiratory tract infection and there isn't much I can do about it.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. DOOD sleeping it off, feeling lousy and stuffed up.

It began over a month ago, before Laney, Winnie and their 7 kittens arrived from Georgia. A few of my cats had a mild case of the sneezes. DOOD, Blitzen, Nicky were a bit quieter than usual with DOOD leading the charge with violent head-whipping sneezes. There's no way I can separate the cats from each other so I had to hope that as it spread from one cat to the other, it wouldn't be too bad.

But Fluff Daddy, with his shortened nose was hit the worst. Because it was likely a virus, the treatment is not to treat; to give supportive care, rest, and monitor him to make certain it wasn't turning into a secondary infection or pneumonia. Fluff had already battled pneumonia last year and we couldn't risk that happening again. **This meant vet visits for Fluff-lots of them. Because he never had a fever, Dr. Mary felt we should let it ride and that eventually, being self-limiting, the virus would die off and Fluff would feel better.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Poor Fluff on his "spa towel."

Throughout the day I would bring Fluff or DOOD into the bathroom and run the shower. The warm moist air would help their breathing. Fluff particularly enjoyed these sessions and would sit on a thick towel on top of the bathroom counter without fussing around as DOOD often would. I'd sit on the closed toilet and play solitaire on my old iPad. It wasn't much, but it was something I could do to help them recover.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Fluff Daddy, finally on the med but still a bit worse for wear.

I've cared for sick cats many times and there's a tipping point where their care can become overwhelming. There are too many medications to juggle, too many vet visits and worse; too many late nights worrying that your sick cats will need urgent care. I hover, I fret, I try to be calm. I make mental notes about each one; are they eating? normal litter pan habits? will they play a little bit at least?

It wasn't too much to support the cats, **but then things took a turn that anyone who does rescue fears .**

Laney, Winnie and their 7 kittens arrived. They'd been vetted prior to being transported to Connecticut from their home in Georgia. They were on a transport with other cats who supposedly were also vetted. I will never know for sure the actual cause, but within ONE HOUR of them arriving to my home, a few of the adults began sneezing. At first I thought perhaps the stress of the trip had pushed them over the edge and that maybe in a few days they'd be feeling better. They'd never been sick all the months they'd lived in Georgia.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Piglet, Jelly-Belly, Lollipop, Lex and Lucy arrive. So much excitement to finally meet them after all these months.

The long winter kept me from opening the windows, which would be one of the first things I'd want to do when the cats get sick. Nice, fresh air keeps sickness at bay, but with a closed in room and nine large cats in a small space, of course they would all get sick in time. **What I feared was that my foster cats got sick from another rescue's cats on the transport. They could have been shelter cats and those guys can pick up a whole host of horrible diseases.** My guys had never been in a shelter and now what would become of them? What had they been exposed to?



©2015 Robin AF Olson. All 9 cats to the vet at once-a record number for me.

I had to bring all NINE cats to the Vet to get their CT Health Certificates issued on Monday. The Vet supposedly looked at each cat, but I wasn't privy to seeing the exams as her techs brought the cats into the back of the clinic a few at a time to see the vet. I didn't know if she was checking them well or barely looking at them. I'd given her information that said some of the cats had URIs and she was to check the cats for signs of it.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Louie, Larry and Lucy arrive from Georgia.

After waiting for about 90 minutes the vet finally came into the exam room. She talked about Piglet's ear having an infection inside it. She mentioned Jelly Belly has a stage two heart murmur. **She did not mention one thing about the URI only what to do to treat Piglet's ear.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Lucy and Lex (right) before the virus hit.

The cats were supposed to get their claws trimmed, for which we were charged a lot of money, when some of our vets don't charge for this. I got scratched. I started to look at the cat's paws. **The few I looked at hadn't have their back claws trimmed completely. Nice.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Just before everything turned bad for Piglet.

So I was left feeling like the cats got a lousy exam and I didn't know what to do about the URI. If their lungs sounded clear that was one thing, but if not I'd need to consider antibiotics.

Within a few days Piglet especially, Jelly Belly, Louie, Larry, Lex were really sick. Instead of going back to this vet I went to Dr Mary and Dr Larry. I took the two sickest kittens to start: Piglet and Jelly.



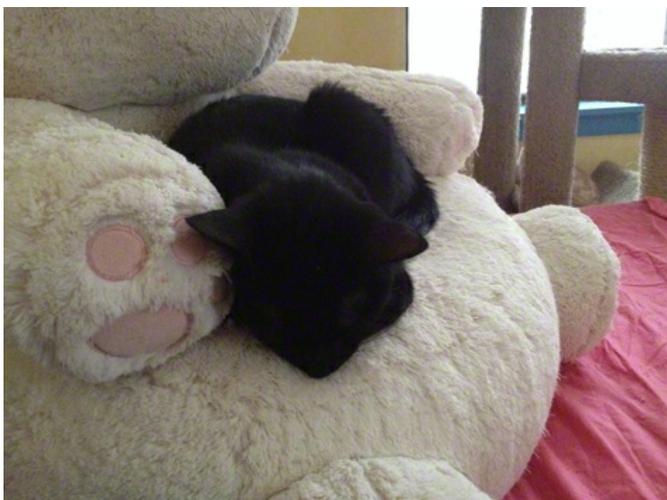
©2015 Robin AF Olson. Super-Deb comforting Jelly.

Dr. Larry examined Jelly. He had a temperature of over 103°F. He listened to Jelly's heart and agreed he had a heart murmur, but that many cats did fine with a murmur like his and that right now we didn't have to do anything about it. **The real shocker was when Dr. Larry looked at Jelly's gums. They were RED and irritated. It was a sign to us that Jelly might have bartonella** and if you've read any of my posts you'll know that bartonella is the bane of my existence. It's often mis-diagnosed as something else because it has a wide range of symptoms ranging from IBD-like digestion issues to upper respiratory to no symptoms.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Sneeze-attack.

Jelly was meowing and sneezing while poor Piglet hid under a chair. **When Dr. Larry examined her, he saw the very nasty ear infection and again discovered that she, too, has the irritated gums. Her temperature was over 104°F which was getting dangerous. They gave her and Jelly sub-q fluids and we decided to test both cats for bartonella and because all 9 cats were sick, to spend the extra on doing a DNA test called a PCR, on Piglet's secretions.** It would help us treat her better to know exactly what virus she has. Because she only weighs 4 lbs 14 oz, roughly half what Jelly weighs, we're starting her on azithromycin, which would be a treatment for bartonella. **Even though we don't know she has it, it may help her feel better. The test takes 10 DAYS to get back results and considering how frail she is we can't risk waiting to treat her.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Jelly Belly feeling lousy, too.

With the possibility that we'll have to test ALL the cats for bartonella or just if we treat them, *we can't treat unless Dr. Larry examines them first* so that means 7 times exam fees + 8 times more [azithromycin](#)^[1] costs. This medication is compounded and EXPENSIVE. It's \$46/cat for just 10 days of treatment and the full course is 21 days.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Going down hill fast. Piglet and Lex are both sick.

This could be bad, but what I fear more is what will become of Piglet. She is depressed and not eating that well. Her fever came down last night but I have to check her again today and she gets very agitated if we try to get her temperature. She's so tiny I just don't want to upset her while she's so sick.

Then add this to the fact that I have my 12-year old cat Petunia in a big dog crate recovering from serious surgery on her bladder and she's not eating well, either. I can't get antibiotics in her any longer and frankly she deserves more one on one time while she's recovering. Sam has to take over that duty, besides I shouldn't be handling her. She can't get sick on top of everything else.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Poor Piglet!

And that's the thing. **No amount of hand-washing, clothes changes, step baths of bleach are going to stop this mess.** I've been as careful as I can be but when Fluff and Freya like to hang out near the door to the foster cat room and the air from the room goes under the door, into the hallway, what am I to expect? It hasn't stopped me from being as careful as I can but in the end there's nothing I could have done to stop this.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Freya still playful with Aunt Nora at her side.

With my cats slowly starting to improve I thought I could handle helping whoever needs it, but this morning I woke up to discover Freya, sneezing her little head off. Of course she's sick now, too, even though she's on week 5 of a very strong antibiotic called Baytril to help kill her ear infection.

You may think I run a bad rescue and that I'm sloppy about keeping foster cats quarantined, but I assure you I'm neither of those things. This is a horrible confluence of events that I didn't cause and I'm struggling to do what's best for each cat even though it's meant I was at the vet 5 out of 6 days this week. Even if it's meant I'm going to drive through the latest snowstorm to get medication for Piglet.

With a virus you often have to let it ride until it runs its course, but the difficulty lies in knowing when to stop and hit it with antibiotics that often cause digestive issues and open the cat up to more problems. The challenge for me is to find a way to survive the stress this is causing. **Seeing cats so sick and not being able to fix it is heartbreaking. Worrying about the most fragile cats and worrying that I'll miss something because there are just too many cats to oversee is terrifying.**

©2015 Robin AF Olson. :-(

In all the years I've done rescue this is the worst it's ever been and hopefully, like a virus, these tough days will run their course and we'll have happy healthy cats once again.

We're in dire need of funds to help Piglet and her family so we're starting up a fundraiser.

We get more of your donation if you donate directly using our PayPal address: info@kittenassociates.org ^[2] or if you go through our **DONATE** ^[3] page on our web site.

©2015 Robin AF Olson. Sneezing and sneezing and...what??!

You can **mail a check to Kitten Associates**, P.O. Box 354, Newtown, CT 06470-0354.

Just SHARE this with your friends who have kind hearts and love cats. That helps Piglet and her family, too.

Your donation is Tax Deductible. [K.A.](#) ^[4] is a non-profit rescue and our IRS EIN is 27-3 597692.

We will stop our fundraiser as soon as we've raised \$1750.00, which we hope will cover some of our costs and allow some funds to be banked for the medications we're going to have to purchase. Any funds we don't use for Piglet's family, Fluff Daddy or Freya we will set aside for other kitties who need help.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. I hope we'll see Piglet looking beautiful and healthy again soon.

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