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## Struggling to Find Balance on the Head of a Pin

Wed, 2013-02-27 14:15 — Robin Olson

What the Hell is wrong with me? **The current group of foster cats has been here for FIVE MONTHS.** They started out as kittens and now they're young adults. Each day they grow a little less adoptable and each day I grow a little more concerned that I will never get them adopted.



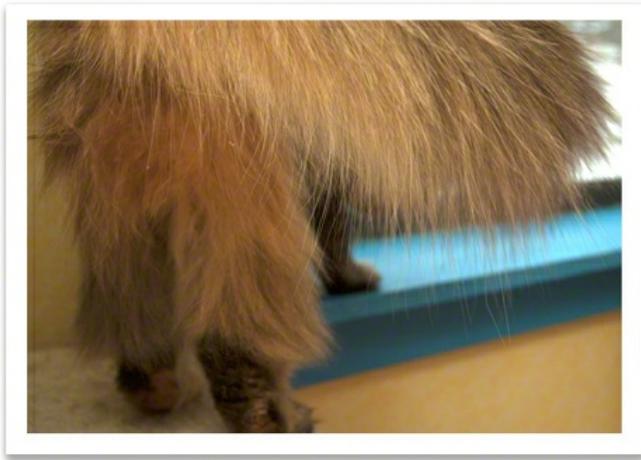
©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Willow has blossomed into a lovely young lady.

I had lunch with Super-Deb yesterday and we got into a heated discussion about appropriate nutrition for cats. We were both respectful to each other, but I also felt like perhaps I was seen as being arrogant about my views about NO KIBBLE for cats, ever. It gave me pause. I would never want to be seen in that light.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fred with Latte.

**Deb surprised me by saying she feeds grain-free dry, along with grain-free canned and some raw.** After all, Deb was one of the people who inspired me to look into feeding a raw diet for my cats so I assumed she was only feeding raw, too. She said she doesn't claim to know everything about what is the perfect food for cats. What she feeds her cats is based on what she feels is acceptable. She does not find issue with grain-free kibble. Go figure.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Willow's pantaloons.

**Deb reminded me that some cats live to be 20 years old on crappy dry food and little to no Vet care.** I countered that some people live to be 100 and they smoke cigarettes every day, too, but it's only **SOME** people, not **MOST**. What is the **QUALITY** of that cat's life over the years versus a cat on a species appropriate diet? What is a daily smoker's life like over 100 years? **What is it about some cats who can live just fine on dry while so many others get seriously sickened to the point of dying? At least half of my cats had issues that were resolved once I put them on a raw/grain-free diet. Two of the issues would have eventually caused the cats to die.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Willow with her Cat Dancer® (1).

The jury is still out and perhaps we will never know what the perfect diet is for our cats, but in my book; garbage in is garbage out. **Obligate carnivore cats need PROTEIN for energy, not a baked, extruded, blast-heated granule of grain and vegetable-based proteins and chemicals.** It sounds disgusting even imagining it. Even if the dry food had animal protein how much nutrition is left in it after the massive amounts of processing are completed?



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Barney (left) with Fred (right).

Then, the epiphany came into the diner astride a gleaming white horse. **I realized the primary reason I'm not finding good adopters is because I need to find people who share the same passion about caring for their cats as I do.**

What I don't want are people who don't treat their cat as, well, a cat; something to pet when it's convenient-to provide care for rarely if, at all. People who easily assume a cat is "evil" if it doesn't behave in the way the cat expected to—even if it's against their nature. They don't look past the assumption that the cat is being evil and don't seek out WHY the cat is acting that way or ask their Vet. People who when given common sense information about appropriate nutrition stiffen their back and refuse to even listen. **That is not my idea of a good adopter.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Finally Willow holds still long enough to get a photo of her.

**Yes. I ask a lot. I realize that.**

I don't need people to be as cat-centric as I am. **I've been working very hard to pry my mind open and give every possible adopter the benefit of the doubt when they want to adopt one of my foster cats.** I try to keep expectations simple. I do my best to educate, to be respectful, but in the end there can be a parting of the ways and another potential adopter finds a cat elsewhere.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Coco, now a refined ladycat.

To date, Coco has lost out on MANY applications. I went as far as I could with each one. I even went on a home visit. I loved the people, but their home wasn't a good fit. **I had very long conversations with Sam debating about what really mattered—the family or the condition of the home or both?** In the end I knew Coco would have spent her life hiding under the bed if she lived there and I couldn't let her go. There have been other homes that were really crazy-messy but there was so much love in the home that I knew the cat would be happy. **I try really hard not to judge, but there's a lot of pressure to get it right. I don't get a second chance to find a better home once the cat leaves here.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *I don't know what Willow is doing to Barney.*

I finally found a great adopter. He and his family came over a few times. Each time there was a reason why they couldn't do the adoption right then and there. I gave him the benefit of the doubt knowing he would adopt her after the Holidays were over. **He finally got back to me and because his daughter didn't do some mysterious chore she couldn't have the cat. I wasted two months on this.**

I found another good candidate and was about to do the home visit when the former applicant contacted me and asked if Coco was still available and could they adopt her that weekend? My gut instincts said **no way** so I moved on.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *Fabulous Fred.*

**Saturday Coco might FINALLY be getting adopted except that the woman who was going to adopt her called a few hours ago and said her father has had a serious health issue and she was going out of town for ten days at least. Could I hold Coco? Oh dear..not again.** *[note: and as of this writing Coco has just come back from the Vet. She's SICK with a mysterious "Fever of Unknown Origin"]*

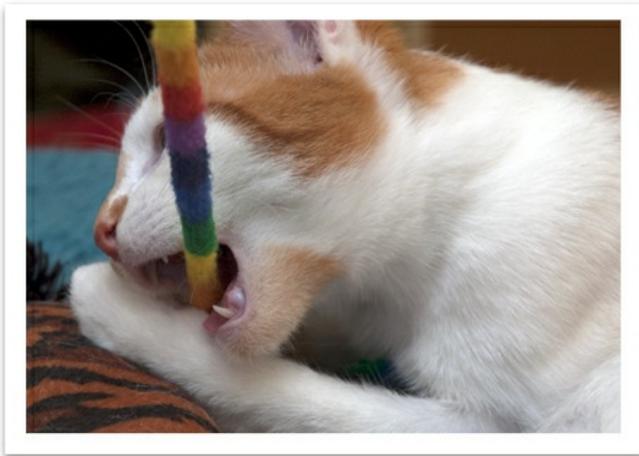
There have been many other setbacks with adopters wanting the cats, coming to visit, leaving empty handed, then contacting me later to see how the cats are doing but they don't want to adopt them! **It's not completely my fault, but I want to do better.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *I still haven't gotten even one application for Latte.*

After the [Shooting in Sandy Hook](#) <sup>[2]</sup> and the launch of our [Kitties for Kids program](#) <sup>[3]</sup> I didn't push too hard to move the cats out. It would be tough to have a program involving cats if all the cats were gone so I lost more time there.

**Tomorrow my friends Izzy and Mark are driving to Georgia to pick up Maria's foster cats: Bongo, George and Bunny Boo-Boo.** I'll meet them late Thursday night in Pennsylvania to bring the cats to Connecticut. While my house is already full, I'm bringing these guys here. They've been waiting for four months to come up and start the process of finding their forever homes and **with Kitten Season upon us I have to get things going.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *Barney-chomp.*

**There is a great temptation to not be so strict, to bend the rules, let the cats go to homes where they will go outside to roam freely, where there is no Vet reference, let alone a good one, where it just doesn't matter what they get fed as long as there's food.** I could get the cats homes in a heartbeat if that was the case...

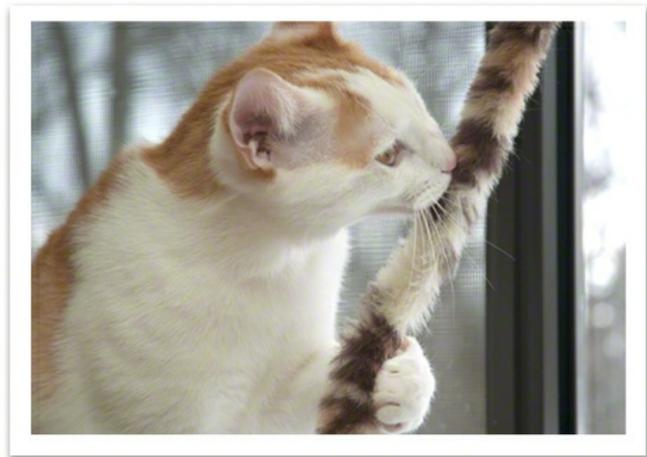
**...and I'd never be able to live with myself.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *Barney and Latte wrestle.*

**I told the gleaming white horse to go back to the barn. I have more to think about and I need to find a better way to get these cats good homes. I don't want to come off like a snob. It's not that. It's just that I see how cats suffer when they are misunderstood and not given appropriate care. It hurts me to know there are homes like that. I want to help all cats live a better life with their humans.**

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©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fred with favorite toy.

Note: Before you even go there, if you free-feed your cat kibble, that's YOUR choice. **I'm not suggesting you're a bad person if this is what you do.** Everyone does the best they can with what they have and as I said, there are some cats who are fine on kibble and nothing more. **If you read this blog, odds are you really care a lot about your cat. Be assured I would never want to offend any of you. That's never my intention.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Willow with cool slow motion tail blur.

**I AM, however, suggesting that you feed on a timed schedule** -twice or three times a day, tops and **NOT** leave a bowl of food out all day and night. This is true for MOST, not ALL cats. **There are always situations where cats need access to food all the time. I can only think of a senior cat who doesn't eat much as an example but I'm sure there are others.** Free-feeding can easily cause your cat to become obese and diabetic. Just that small change could mean a lot to your cat even if that's the only adjustment you make to feeding him or her.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Sweet Fred.

**It's easy to associate food with love. You can still love your cat more than anyone or anything in the world, but you don't have to show it by overfeeding them.** Love your cat with pets, with lots of play time and environmental stimulation. Keep the bowl empty unless it's time for breakfast or dinner.

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[Kitties for Kids](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

## **Comments**

Wed, 2013-02-27 15:43 — Connie & The Crew (not verified)

### **I too want every one of my** <sup>[16]</sup>

I too want every one of my kittens to be adopted into my ideal homes, but I unfortunately do not have that luxury.

I have (or probably am still working on) come to terms with the fact that I do not have to agree with how other people "raise their kittens".. I also don't agree with how other people raise their kids either, but that doesn't mean they are wrong. Some are. there was the couple who came to the shelter after losing their fifth cat to the fisher that lived behind their house and the people who want a cat that matches the couch, that won't shred it nor will sit on it.. etc..

What I want is for my kittens to be loved. Will it be a shorter miserable life if they feed dry? I can't possibly know that. Will they be loved and adored and treated like royalty if they feed raw? I can't possibly know that either. But I share what I know, I give people the information and let them decide what to do with it. It might not change them now, but down the road if something happens it might just make a difference.

Two of my "must feed raw or they get horrible diarrhea" kittens are no longer getting fed raw food. Turns out they were getting horrible diarrhea on the raw and they were switched over to something else and are now doing better on it. I am sad they aren't being fed raw any more, but I'll tell you something, if one of my cats was miserable on the raw and the only thing he could eat was dry, he/she would eat dry (please don't let that happen, please don't let that happen) and btw, my house is constantly a mess.. but my cats like it because it means they are never blamed for creating one.

You can wait till you find people who are willing and open enough to feed raw. But you do need to be aware that it is a drain on your resources, it is a drain on the kittens as they are in limbo waiting for their homes, and it is a drain on the kittens who are waiting to be pulled and take their place. Until you win the lotto, you might just have to consider "good enough" to be good enough.. (not saying I think you should change mind you, just putting the bug in the ear to be considered.)

Wed, 2013-02-27 16:12 — Linda Ackley (not verified)

### **Robin: I couldn't have said** <sup>[17]</sup>

Robin: I couldn't have said it better myself, especially finding the right adopter. I am no a rescue but I take care of several feral cats (25)...most of been fixed but still need to catch a couple. One of the mommas decided to come into our

warehouse(the cats are fed on our loading dock) to have her kittens. This is my first, all by myself, time trying to get the kittens adopted and I am finding it soooooo hard. Three of the four have been adopted, and now we have another we rescued from the streets to get adopted out. I find unless I have that warm fuzzy feeling, it's not a good fit. It's the hardest thing I have ever done. Momma was just fixed last week so no more kittens for her...have one more female that I know of to go....I am still taking applications for the other two but no luck yet....for all the reasons you list above...I just can't do it and live with myself. You are doing the right thing by them, love your blog and your FB page and especially THE DOOD. Keep up the good work Robin!!!! Linda

Thu, 2013-02-28 19:22 — jmuuj (not verified)

### **RE: ADOPTIONS** [18]

Though each person, like each cat, is unique and different, IMHO you are doing a stellar job of caring for, and about, the cats in your care. And as long as you're able to care for them so well, that is what counts most. The right adopters -- not the wrong or the flaky ones -- will make themselves known in due time, for each of your treasures (of whom, IMHO, Latte is the most gorgeous of all!). Keep on doing what you're doing, knowing you are growing GREAT cats whose adoptive families will thank you forever for having done so!

Thu, 2013-02-28 22:31 — Catnymouse (not verified)

### **Many factors make a good adopter** [19]

I love your blog and admire all you do for the kitties in your care. As a fellow rescue volunteer I know how much love, time and effort you put into raising the babies and caring for the adults. Of course you are selective in who adopts them.

There are many factors that run through my mind as I am reviewing an adoption application. Are you willing to keep your cat 100% indoors? If not, please go to a shelter or another rescue. Are you going to Declaw or are your other cats declawed? If so, please go to a shelter or another rescue. Have you ever given up a pet to a shelter? If so keep on walking. Are your pets current on vaccinations and altered? If not, please visit a shelter.

If a family meets all my criteria the food they feed would not be a reason to turn them down. This is based on my own experience and practicality. Even my boy Austin who had a PU surgery eats a combo of wet and dry food and has been healthy ever since. Most people simply are not willing to feed raw food but that does not make them a bad home in my opinion.

The most important part of the process is talking with the potential adopter to determine their willingness to commit to the pet for a lifetime and their expectations. In the end it does come down to faith

Keep doing what you do and listen to that voice in your head.

Sun, 2013-03-10 12:47 — Catnymouse (not verified)

### **I just adopted 2 kitties and** [20]

I just adopted 2 kitties and I have never ben happier!

Thanks for this blog and for the amazingly cute photos!!

CICH @ [Google+](#)  
Robin @ [Google+](#)

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