



Second Chance Fund for Animal Welfare, Inc.

Summer 2010

Dear Friend,

As you probably know, Second Chance Fund for Animal Welfare provides a variety of services to help cats and their owners/care-givers. Besides our best-known and widely acclaimed "Quick Fix" low-cost spay/neuter clinics, another program we offer is our innovative Barn Cat Placement Program. This is a non-lethal alternative for domesticated cats that, for one reason or another, cannot be placed in traditional homes, and for feral cats - those that have been lost or abandoned and have reverted to a wild state, or were born to a stray or feral mother and have had little or no human contact.

Typically, Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) programs return ferals to their colony or location after being neutered and vaccinated. But in some cases, due to inhospitable neighbors, destruction of habitats, or excessive traffic or predators, returning them to their original location may threaten their safety. Our Barn Cat Placement Program may be able to help these cats- and control rodents at the same time.

Milo is one such cat. One cold day last February, Milo appeared in a rural neighborhood in Charlton, MA. Fortunately for him, a resident cat lover took pity on him and began feeding him, much to the chagrin of this Good Samaritan's two indoor cats, who did not appreciate a stranger hanging around their home. Milo was thin, hungry, scruffy, un-neutered, and very skittish.



As Milo's savior consistently provided him food and water, she eventually earned his trust and Milo began coming regularly to eat on her deck. Any attempts to become closer friends with him by petting and offering affection, however, were met with a swat and a hiss.

After a few weeks of trying to tame Milo's unpredictable disposition, his caretaker called Lisa Westwell, the Charlton Animal Control Officer (ACO), who arrived with trap and carrier in hand. Milo allowed himself to be coaxed into the carrier with a can of wet food, but as soon as the door closed behind him he panicked and did his best to escape. While not outwardly friendly, Milo was also clearly not feral, so after having him neutered, vaccinated, and pronounced healthy, the ACO placed him in a kitty condo (pictured above at left) in hopes that with a little patience and care he might prove adoptable.

Milo's first several days in captivity were not particularly successful. He wouldn't allow his cage to be cleaned. His food and water bowls had to be filled with a long tube that Milo could hiss and swat at, but which prevented injury to his keeper. As soon as Lisa walked away, though, he would pick up his head, make eye contact, and meow. Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Milo had two sides to his personality; he seemed to want attention, but he would growl and swat as soon as a hand reached out to him.

Confinement brought out the worst in Milo. Clearly he was a cat that would not do well in a shelter environment and his future seemed questionable.

With so many friendly cats and kittens in shelters waiting for homes, there simply isn't space for a cat with an inconsistent disposition who would ask for attention one minute, and then literally try to "bite the hand that feeds him" the next. The only alternative to certain euthanasia was to find a barn that would give Milo a home. Having worked with SCFAW's Barn Cat Placement Program once before, Lisa contacted SCFAW volunteer Mary Compton in hopes of finding a suitable placement.

Milo arrived at his new home, a dressage horse boarding and training stable in Harvard, MA, in mid-April. In his acclimation cage he continued to exhibit extremely conflicted behavior. He would meow for attention, rub against the side of the cage, and roll over on his back exposing his belly. When someone reached in to pet him, or even just to clean his litter box or change his water, Milo would hiss and swat. Normally cats stay in these large enclosures for at least a month to allow them time to get used to the sights, smells, and sounds of their new environment. This period of acclimation increases the odds that cats will stay close and safe when they are eventually released. However, confinement was not working for Milo. After about two weeks of swatting at people, Milo was released. Never have you seen such a happy cat! Milo promptly began rubbing against the legs of anyone he could catch up with. From the day of his release he has begged for attention on a regular basis, and he almost always gets it. He's even been known to rub against the legs of a horse in sheer desperation when someone doesn't pet him quickly enough! Despite the fact that he lives at a high-end dressage boarding and training stable, Milo is completely convinced that it is all about him. He expects to be the first one greeted in the morning, and the last one tucked in at night. He allows himself to be picked up and held, and he even seems to smile when he rolls over for belly rubs as you can see below.



Like many cats, Milo just needed to find the right environment to bring out the very best in his personality. He has become a treasured member of the family at the farm. Thanks to a caring citizen, an ACO who is willing to go the extra mile for the cats she encounters, and the SCFAW Barn Cat Placement Program, Milo is living the life of his dreams with a group of people who love him dearly, rather than being one of the millions of cats euthanized each year because there simply is nowhere for them to go.

The Barn Cat Placement Program is one more example of how SCFAW helps reduce the suffering of homeless cats. **We do this work on behalf of cat lovers like you.**

Your financial support helps underwrite the Barn Cat program and all our services. Our participants contribute, but don't cover all our costs. Your generosity helps keep our programs running. Your donation makes all the difference. Any amount contributes to our efforts to save and improve lives and serve our local community. Can we count on you?

With thanks for your support,

Adrienne Linnell
Executive Director