

Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University



**CATNIP**



The Newsletter for Caring Cat Owners

*MISCHIEVOUS MANX*



I have lived alone for many years, but have never really been lonely. For several years after my husband died, I did not have a cat in my life. However, prior to that time, I can't remember not having a cat to keep me company.

From time to time, I mentioned to my daughters that having a cat again might be nice. Each time I spoke, however, I would also worry about the dangers posed by the busy highway that runs in front of my home in Austinville, Virginia. I would want to keep my cat safe.

In the 1960s, I owned a beautiful Manx. Ever since then, I've been partial to that breed's intelligence, loyalty, and loving nature. Each time I would mention the possibility of getting a cat, my daughters would search the Internet with the intention of surprising me with a pedigreed kitten shipped directly to my home.

I discovered their plan and thanked them for their act of kindness. Instead, I told them, I would call a former Manx breeder who lives in my county to see if she had any kittens left. I dialed the phone and she said, "We have just one little kitten left, but you won't like her. She's wild and hasn't been handled much." I appreciated her candor, and asked the woman if she would bring the kitten inside and try to tame her a bit before I arrived the next day. On the way to her home, I was excited about the prospect of meeting a kitten which no one else seemed to want. I expected a small, furry bundle who would hiss and smack at me. But when I first eyed Baby, it was instant love. I knew immediately that she was "my little girl" - all 1.5 pounds of her.

That was three years ago. Since Baby's arrival, my formerly tranquil home has been filled with all the activity that I can handle - and then some. Though Baby loves her home, she still longs to be outside at times. So, I take her out each day to romp and play and sometimes, eat grass while I supervise.

Inside my home, Baby loves to jump on the mantle, climb the curtains, and stretch out in my bathtub. She jumps up on my lap, touches my face when she needs my attention, and stands on her back feet and stretches her front paws, softly meowing to signal that I should follow her. Responding to her signal, we could be heading to the screened porch to check out a bird or to the kitchen for a mid-day snack.

My daughters have nicknamed Baby, Little Stripey, because of her bold, black-and-gray stripes, and "that wild and crazy cat." All I know is that I'm blessed with a loving, smart cat, who retrieves things, including cotton-tipped swabs. If I'm behind a closed door, she will poke her paw under the door to draw my attention.

Yes, Baby is absolutely spoiled and in total charge of my household. She is my little girl who loves me a lot - on her terms, of course. Her attitude shows me that she is aware of how special she is - a special and unequalled gift in my life.