



#### A foster kitten's story.....

Karen one of our Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVN's) would like to share Aldi's story with you.....

'A stray kitten was brought in on 11<sup>th</sup> July after being transferred by the local branch of the RSPCA from our Out of hours provider, he was taken in after being found in a carrier bag on the side of a road by a member of the public. He was affectionately nicknamed Aldi by staff at the RSPCA.

Upon examination at the Ambleside branch by head vet Ian, Aldi was estimated to be possibly 5 or 6 weeks of age, far too young to be away from his mum. Aldi was dehydrated & very thin, he unfortunately presented with quadriparesis (muscle weakness in all four limbs) he was unable to move his limbs or able to walk. At this early stage it was difficult to ascertain what could be causing this, potential diagnoses were neurological disease, congenital disorder, malnutrition or trauma, at this stage it was decided to offer intensive nursing care to Aldi, give him the correct nutritional support and monitor his progression. At this stage it was, unfortunately, a very guarded prognosis with regards to his future.

Aldi was given a warm, comfortable bed and was offered some A/D (a highly palatable complete food which has a high energy density). This food was mixed with warm water to make an appetizing pate. As he was unable to move around unaided, he was unable to get to the food and feed himself, so I helped him with this by placing it on my fingers and placing it in front of him where he was keen to lick it off.

After surviving his first night we discovered that Aldi had diarrhoea, so decided to switch him to a sensitivity diet, this was mushed up and mixed with oralade (a rehydration liquid) to assist with his dehydration as well as to resolve the diarrhoea. Aldi seemed to take this well but still needed to be hand fed. At this stage it was decided that Aldi was going to need ongoing assistance and monitoring so I offered to foster Aldi and take him home with me to monitor him more closely, and feed him throughout the night, if needed, to ensure his nutritional needs were met (he was being hand fed every few hours). As he was such a young age and at a critical stage in his socialization period it was felt it would be nicer for him to have some time in a home environment.

The following day vet Anneliese re-examined Aldi, he was thankfully making slow and steady progress. He was seen to be placing his left limbs but his right side was a little slower but had made an improvement since being first brought in, the diarrhoea had stopped, however I was unsure at this stage if he was aware of his toileting or if he was just still at an early stage in his development to be able to use the litter tray, something else to monitor. I continued to hand feed him and began to carry out some physiotherapy to encourage the use of his legs and build up muscle mass.

Towards the end of the week Aldi was making great progress, he was able to lap up his food by himself from a shallow dish and was starting to use his litter tray. He was growing with confidence and gaining weight, he was still travelling to work with me each day and coming to his foster home of an evening and at weekends. He was starting to play with toys and move around my spare room which was another great form of physiotherapy to help build up muscle tone and strength in his legs. By that first weekend Aldi was not only walking but also picking up pace to a little bit of a run it was a somewhat sideways run, he was a bit clumsy in his footing but nonetheless the progress he had made was great! His right forelimb was seen to be knuckling over at times, but he was able to correct this and place it correctly by himself.

The following week Aldi continued to improve each day with his walking, his eyes were starting to change colour from those baby blues to green and after reassessing him we think he was much

younger when brought in than we had originally thought, we now saw him to be around 6 weeks of age, therefore only being maybe 3-4 weeks when he was first brought in. Anneliese re assessed him, on the left side he was using the limbs normally and whilst not 100% on his right side he had placing reflex in both right limbs, was eating and toileting well, continuing to gain weight so there seemed to be no reason as to why he should not make a full recovery and live a normal cat life, if he continued to progress.

A few months ago one of my previous cats had unfortunately passed away, Aldi had filled a massive hole in my heart in such a short space in time and had such a sad start to life, so of course I had decided that Aldi was going nowhere and upon discussion with the Worcester and Mid-Worcestershire branch of the RSPCA it was agreed that he had indeed found his forever home with me!

Although I failed as a fosterer in this instance, Aldi has been a real nursing success, he continues to progress each day, he is settling into his new home well and is learning how to behave like a cat partly by following his new big brother (my other cat) around the house. Aldi has learnt to climb stairs although getting down is a bit trickier, he can climb and pull himself up onto the sofa for a cuddle and has recently started to practice his jumping skills! He still travels into work with me each day as he's still quite young to be left home alone, but it means we all still get to see him progress & grow into a mischievous little kitten.'

Karen Esquillant RVN

