



Older cats often get overlooked for adoption, but they've still got so much love to give



Celebrating mature moggies

With their gravelly purr, wise old eyes and gentle nature, mature moggies make wonderful companions for those looking for a calm pet. However, the older cats in our care take over three times longer to find their forever homes than their younger counterparts. While they may be getting on in years, older cats can still be young at heart and just as playful and loving as tiny kittens.

Becky Piggott, a Senior Cat Care Assistant from our Downham Market Adoption Centre is a long-standing mature moggy devotee. "I am absolutely passionate about older cats and have adopted 14 of them over the years," said Becky.

"Offering a loving retirement home to an older cat is incredibly rewarding. Older cats have just as much to offer as kittens – they tend to stay closer to home, are very affectionate and provide amazing companionship. With improvements in cat care, the quality of life for older moggies has greatly increased so people definitely shouldn't be put off adopting one."

To celebrate all that older cats have to offer, we launched #MatureMoggiesDay on 16 June and encouraged people across the internet to share stories of their senior 'kitizens'. We were inundated with heart-warming tales from people championing feline OAPs, so read on for some senior success stories...



Bouffie has a pen pal

Beautiful Bouffie arrived at Cats Protection in December 2016 when she was 17 years old, as her owners could sadly no longer look after her. Ellie Taylor came forward to offer her a relaxing home for her twilight years and has let us know that Bouffie turned 22 in March 2021!

"We thought that if we were lucky, we might have her for six months or so," said Ellie. "It's now four and a half years later!"

"When Bouffie celebrated her 19th birthday, we spoke to Cats Protection to see if they would be able to let her old owner know that she was alive and well and enjoying life, as we thought she would be thrilled to hear the news. With the owner's son's permission, we were then put in touch with Bouffie's old owner and have written letters and sent photos every few months to let her know how Bouffie is doing.

"We feel so lucky to have Bouffie still with us after all this time. She is such a cute character and a real lap cat. She sits on our chest when we go to bed, then sleeps in her fluffy igloo. She's definitely the boss!

Although she's had a few health issues, they are all being managed by daily medication which we sneak into salmon sticks.

"She's a great cat and we've loved adopting such an old soul with so much spirit and determination to keep on."



Zavala, aged 12

Suzy recently adopted Zavala, along with his four-year-old pal Petra, from Cats Protection after he'd been regularly overlooked because of his age. He's a real character in his new home and certainly a handsome old boy!



Charley's devoted carer

Persian cat Charley was 15 years old when his owner passed away and he came into the care of our Exeter Axhayes Adoption Centre through our Cat Guardians service.

Deputy Centre Manager Jackie said: "When Charley was in our care he was very worried to start with and spent a lot of time hiding. We would spend some time with him each day and he slowly started to come out of his shell. He did have to see the vet on a few occasions as he has military dermatitis for which he has to take steroids and a special prescription diet as well."

Charley needed a special home where he could receive lots of love and attention and his condition could be correctly managed. Luckily, he soon found just the place with new owner Margaret. She said: "I wanted to adopt an older cat and was attracted to Charley's beautiful pale blue eyes, and when he arrived home you would think he had been with us all his life!"

"He has settled in brilliantly and we have not had any issues with him, he loves to sit on my knee and be cuddled or brushed and shows his appreciation with a loud purr.

"Charley is a very cheeky character, he loves to be with people. When he is hungry he will let me know with a low meow and wake me up in the morning by jumping on my pillow and gently tapping my face to inform me it's breakfast time.

"Charley also enjoys to chase his tinsel balls round the house for hours on end and will take a cat nap anywhere from the comfort of the sofa to the window near where I am working in the day."

Bonnie's purrfect playground

At 14 years old, Bonnie suddenly found herself without an owner, but thankfully she was signed up to our Cat Guardians service.

She arrived at our Harrow Adoption Centre and soon caught the eye of Sharron, who adopted her for her mum Elaine. She said: "I had been looking for a little cat to keep my mum company. We had lost my dad the previous year and my mum was terribly lonely and so quiet. She had wanted a cat for a long time but the timing hadn't been right.

"I contacted Cats Protection and the team were so friendly and helpful. The adoption process was straightforward and after filling out an online form and having a call with the centre we were so happy to be able to go forward with adopting Bonnie.

"Bonnie was delivered to our doorstep by a very kind and helpful team member, following COVID-19 guidelines, and she settled in to her new surroundings and became at ease almost immediately. She loves to play; jumping about like a kitten and chasing her toys around the room, you would never believe she was an older cat.

"She is a very affectionate cat who has become a big part of our family, who is amazingly



contented and loves a warm lap to sit on. We had regular contact with Cats Protection and they were able to advise us on feeding Bonnie and answering any questions we had.

"I feel my mum's life has been totally changed by this darling little cat, she is totally in love with her and is very happy having Bonnie to care for.

"The Cat Guardians service is such a great idea and I would recommend it to anyone. We would never have had this opportunity to have Bonnie in our lives if she had not been signed up to the scheme. Many thanks to Cats Protection, who go above and beyond to ensure their cats find the right home."



Melvin, aged 20

Emma and her mum adopted Melvin from our York Adoption Centre in 2003, when he was two years old. He gets pampered every day and loves nothing more than curling up on the sofa for a snooze.



Mo, aged 15

Alice adopted Mo from Cats Protection in 2011, when she was a timid and shy five-year-old. Now she's a very lovable older lady who will always demand a cuddle and head boops from anyone who comes over.

Cats Protection's free Cat Guardians service gives cat owners peace of mind by promising to find their beloved feline friends new homes after they pass away.

To find out how you can plan for your cat's future, no matter how old they are, visit www.cats.org.uk/cat-guardians



Find out how old your cat is in human years...

| Age of cat | Human equivalent |
|------------|------------------|
| 0-1 months | 0-1 year |
| 2-3 months | 2-4 years |
| 4 months | 6-8 years |
| 6 months | 10 years |
| 7 months | 12 years |
| 12 months | 15 years |
| 18 months | 21 years |
| 2 years | 24 years |
| 3 years | 28 years |
| 4 years | 32 years |
| 5 years | 36 years |
| 6 years | 40 years |
| 7 years | 44 years |
| 8 years | 48 years |
| 9 years | 52 years |
| 10 years | 56 years |
| 11 years | 60 years |
| 12 years | 64 years |
| 13 years | 68 years |
| 14 years | 72 years |
| 15 years | 76 years |
| 16 years | 80 years |
| 17 years | 84 years |
| 18 years | 88 years |
| 19 years | 92 years |
| 20 years | 96 years |
| 21 years | 100 years |



For more advice on keeping your elderly cat healthy, turn to page 48.

How old is 'old'?

Think there are **SEVEN HUMAN YEARS** to every cat year?

Actually, it varies! Cats grow up faster in the first few years.



Thanks to advances in veterinary care and increasing awareness of good cat welfare, our pet cats are living longer than ever before. While their life expectancy will depend on many factors, including health, diet and environment, the average lifespan of a pet cat is 12-14 years old, with some living into their 20s. Cats start to be considered 'mature' or 'old' when they reach the age of seven, but they don't typically start showing signs of aging until they're classed as 'senior' at around 11 years old.

Tips for caring for an elderly cat

Many mature moggies still act like energetic kittens well into their twilight years, but they will need a little bit of extra care and attention to keep them healthy. Here are some top tips to help them grow old happily.

- 1. Take them for frequent vet visits** – Ensure your cat gets checked over by a vet at least once a year, so they can spot any health issues early and provide effective treatment. Conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and kidney problems can all be treated if they're caught early enough.
- 2. Feed an age-appropriate diet** – For older cats, it's best to feed them a 'senior' cat food that's tailored for their nutritional needs. Feeding little and often is best and you could try warming up their food to make it more appealing or adding water to make it easier to chew if they have dental issues.
- 3. Adapt their environment** – Older cats may not be as agile as they used to be, so some simple changes around the home will make their lives easier. Try providing steps up to their favourite perches, adding rugs to slippery floors, and getting a litter tray with lowered sides so they can get in and out easily.
- 4. Keep them comfortable** – Mature moggies will sleep a lot more, so make sure they have plenty of soft, cosy spots for a snooze. Place comfy beds and blankets in quiet, warm parts of the house and make sure you don't disturb them while they're sleeping. **C**

Less than **4% OF PEOPLE** knew that a one-year-old cat is 15 years old in human years.

Most (**69%**) thought the correct answer was five years old.

Only **16%** of people correctly answered that a five-year-old cat is 36 years old in human years.