

## **A Twitch in Time.....**

Stephen Sheldon, DVM

A litter of 4 adorable white kittens with flame pointed ears and bright blue eyes graced our presence here a few months ago. They were here for vaccinations, neuter/spaying and were destined for our adoption ward where we knew they would not spend much time. They were beautiful kitties. They were all going to good homes. Everything was routine.

Then we noticed one of the boys started twitching. I get worried with nervous system disorders in young cats; it's a bummer to look at the list of possible diseases. Nonetheless, my friend in vet school had a cat with one of these diseases and it lived a fairly normal life. So we adopted him, named him Twitch and said our prayers.

While waiting for our prayers to be answered we of course have fallen in love with the little guy. He's too cute for words. Our clients all adore him too; he is a source of amusement and bewilderment for all of us. He's a trooper and has a yummy, raspy meow. He crawls into his bed and surrounds himself with all of his toys creating photo ops like the ones you get in e-mails. He loves the touch of a human hand.

To be in the profession of caring for animals means you have a hospital full of charity cases who get disease appropriate names (in parenthesis): dogs with amputated limbs (Stumpy), retired greyhounds slated for the gallows (Dead Man Walkin' or DMW), rescued rottie guard-dogs (Bouncer), and one day old kitties you bottle feed round the clock for weeks (KMR) fill out the roster.

These outcasts touch your heart. People stop by just to visit them; "Hi guys how ya doing?" they say, "I'm just here to see Twitch." You can tell these critters know they've been given a second chance. They make you proud of your profession and they make you feel good inside.

And they usually end up teaching us lessons about dealing with our own adversities.

We have tried everything for Twitch. Our staff takes him home every night. Dr. Nadine lovingly gives him acupuncture. He sits on my lap and helps me do deskwork. Sadly though, neurologists we have consulted feel he has a progressive form of a brain 'storage disease'. My brother died from a similar disease, Tay-Sachs, so this hits home a little harder for me. Excuse me; I need a break to wipe the tears off my keyboard.

I've known longer than anyone else here what will happen to him. You never get used to it. It sucks knowing and it's tough watching him deteriorate. We now have to bottle feed him and he can barely walk; he twitches uncontrollably. I know what needs to be done. We all do. No one wants to do it.

But a big part of our profession is compassion and we can't bear to see him suffer anymore. So my young staff will learn one of life's important lessons and we will do what needs to be done no matter how difficult. And we'll share a tear and always remember the little guy and how hard he tried. Life's not always fair. Rest in Peace little Twitch-man.