

A Fugitive Named “Juanita”

This is the tale of a furry fugitive, foreign travel, brilliant detective teamwork, a joyful reunion and in common with all good stories it concludes in a happy ending and bears a moral code too!

A tabby and white shorthair was discovered near Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire whilst taking refuge in a garage. Clearly a distance from home, she was taken to Kirkton Vets where she was scanned and her microchip was found to be registered to an address in Las Palmas, Fuerteventura! However, the phone number registered on the database was now disconnected suggesting that her owner may have moved and had not updated new address details. Clearly, some detective work would be needed...



Tina reunited with Fiona!
photo:
by kind permission of Cats Protection

Whilst the search for her owner was on, Vet Fiona MacPherson looked after her at the Kirkton veterinary practice in Stonehaven; meanwhile, the friendly and loving puss was named “**Juanita**” - *it is the diminutive of “Juana” meaning “gift from God”... and apparently, those bearing this name have a deep inner desire for travel and adventure! (www.sheknows.com) so my namesake and I (as a former BA Stewardess) have plenty in common!* Cats Protection alerted the local veterinary practices in the Stonehaven area and one call resulted in the recognition of the owner’s name and that practice giving her a call.

The fortunate feline, who’s real pet name is “Tina”, was reunited with her owner Fiona Prati - who now lives in Bridge of Don some 15 miles away - by vet Fiona MacPherson. Her owner even heard her cat mentioned on the local radio as she was on the 30 minute drive to collect her. “Tina”, it turned out, had gone missing about a week ago and it is believed she hitched a ride south on the A90 in a delivery vehicle before she decided to take a ‘stopover’ in Muchalls.

So the moral of the story is not only the importance of microchipping your precious pet in the first place, but of keeping those details up to date.

A pet microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is programmed with a unique 15 digit number. It is this number that should be registered to the owner to make it an effective tracking device. In cats a chip is typically implanted in the scruff of the neck by a vet or trained implanter (and many pedigree kittens are already microchipped before they are homed). The use of a scanner can detect the chip number and the database to which it is registered. Following a security check the owner’s details can then be released so that they can be contacted.

Microchips are initially registered on a national database such as Anibase (www.anibase.com) who manage the details of over 5 million pets in the UK implanted with many different types and brands of microchip. If you move house or change your contact details it is important to update registration details - this can generally be done for a small admin charge online. If adopting a cat which has already been chipped it is important to register your own details on the database against the implanted chip. If in doubt any helpful vet should be able to guide you!

Although it is the free-rangers who are most at risk, even indoor cats should be chipped. Burmese are particularly adept escape artists and see a closed door as a challenge (I speak through personal experience as door-opening is a particular ‘skill set’ of my own cats!) All the qualities that make them such fantastic companions also make them a liability when allowed to wander and “hitch-hiking” is a very likely outcome for a curious and trusting cat. Sadly, not all are as lucky as my namesake.

Juanita Sharp

(Barbizon Burmese)
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Cats Protection (www.cats.org.uk) helps over 218,000 unwanted cats each year through a network of 257 volunteer-run branches and 30 adoption centres. My grateful thanks to Zahir White at Cats Protection for permission to use the information and photograph in this article.