

Featured Felines: Cats with special needs 6 (2023)

(page checked June 2026)

**Fig, dwarf cat from Bristol; Potato, cat with no ears, Hong Kong;
Plankton, 6½ years in a shelter**

Fig, the dwarf cat **Bristol, England**



When Katie Stocks of Bristol was looking to adopt a cat early in 2022, she came across a bonded pair of black cats, brother and sister **Dante** and **Fig**, at her local Cats Protection shelter. She was asked to wait a while for Fig to grow bigger – but she never did! The shelter warned Katie that she might have feline dwarfism, but Katie decided to take on her and her bigger brother anyway. While Dante developed normally, the third kitten of the litter also turned out to have dwarfism.

As time went by it became apparent that Fig had rather more problems than anticipated. At around a year old she began to suffer with joint pain, and X-rays revealed some skeletal anomalies: her rib cage hadn't formed properly, neither had growth plates in her spine, and she had no kneecaps. There's no specific treatment or medication for dwarfism, and Fig was quite miserable for a while, but with painkillers and regular medication she became much better and can lead a fairly normal life. She does have a reduced life expectancy, though, of maybe six to eight years.



Fig has a strong bond with her big brother, and they enjoy playing together although she's only half his size. However, because of Fig's somewhat limited mobility and small size, Katie has installed various sets of ramps and 'mini stairs' in her home and back garden to enable Fig to get around easily. In particular there's a ramp leading down into the garden that the cat uses to get down and back up.



Fig is very affectionate, loves human contact, belly rubs – and food. In turn Katie adores her and wants her to be as happy as possible. She says, 'She's not going to live a long life, which is quite hard to come to terms with; but we know she'll have a happy one. We're just going to make her as comfortable as we can while she's with us.'

There's an active [Instagram](#) account for Fig, with many followers.



[Daily Mail](#) (June 2023 – archived copy) | [Happy Whisker](#) (Dec. 2023) | [TikTok](#)

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Potato, a cat with no external ears (2023)

Hong Kong



Two cats living with other street cats in Hong Kong were buddies **Potaro** and **Horlick**. They had originally been taken in by an old lady, but she died in 2016 and they ended up in a local shelter. In 2018 Carl Leung and his wife, looking to home a cat, adopted Horlick from the shelter, and then a few months later decided to return for his friend Potato.

Unfortunately the shelter had found that Potato had cancerous tumours (ceruminous adenoma) in his ear canals and ear flaps (pinnae), which was painful and could cause hearing loss if untreated. He was taken home on a fostering basis to give him a chance of a home life and so the tumours could be monitored – also so he could be with his friend Horlick again, which was a happy reunion. At that point he still had his ears.

Surgery needed

By late 2019, though, it was clear something needed to be done, as Potato was scratching his ears frequently and causing external wounds and bleeding. After consulting the vet, it was decided he would have to undergo surgery to remove the ears and ear canals. A three-hour operation was successful; it has left him with somewhat reduced hearing, but he is not deaf. The surgery was expensive, but a substantial discount was given and the shelter was able to raise funds to help with the cost. After the surgery the Leungs officially adopted Potato.

Further problems

He had also been diagnosed with pancreatitis and chronic kidney disease. The latter is stabilised by medication and three-monthly check-ups, but the pancreatitis treatment involved five days of intensive hospital care – and several thousand pounds of cost.

The stitches from his ear surgery healed within two weeks, so finally Potato was healthy and happy in his new home with his best friend. He no longer behaves like a street cat, and after overcoming his initial shyness is affectionate, playful and interactive. The photos below show him before and after surgery.



[Mirror](#) (Oct. 2022) | [Instagram](#) (active in mid-2026) | [Politico](#) (July 2022) | [YouTube](#)

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Plankton, 6½ years in a shelter (2024)

Kingston, New York state, USA



Adult cats tend to take longer to rehome than kittens, and if the adult has special medical needs, rehoming can be very difficult. Such was the case with Plankton, who arrived at the Ulster County SPCA in Kingston, NY as a kitten in 2013 from a hoarding situation with 100 other cats. He was in poor health, and turned out to have kidney problems – but against the odds he survived and even thrived. However, although he overcame the renal failure, he needed a ten-minute infusion of drugs three times a week. That could be done at home, but it put most people off from taking him in. In addition he was black, which also leads to slower rehoming.



Finally, a home!

But then Ashlee and her mother Ann read about Plankton in an SPCA article promoting older pets and, having recently lost their dog to kidney failure, decided they would give him a home! So in February 2020, after 2432 days at the shelter – over 6½ years – Plankton finally left for his forever home! Ashlee said, 'It was so sad that no one was adopting him because he had a medical condition. The fact that he'd been there so long really hit home for me. Sick cats need homes too.' Staff and volunteers at the shelter had grown very fond of Plankton over the years of his long stay, but they celebrated his good fortune and cheered as the adoption papers were signed. 'We are beyond grateful,' they said, 'to say that our longest resident and friend has finally found his purr-fect match and has gone home.'

Plankton has two feline friends at his new home, **Nutmeg** and **Boots**, and so for the rest of his days he'll be surrounded by family.

[Pain in the Bud](#) (Feb. 2020)

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