

WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE DO IT?

Our house is home to the disappearing cat. This would be fun if our cat Flick were the Cheshire Cat from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. However, our cat doesn't have a giant grin. Our cat might be described as aloof, unsociable or just downright cranky. But it hasn't always been like this.

We think it had its beginnings when our other cat Molly passed away suddenly in November last year. Molly was about thirteen, and from outward appearances, was an extremely healthy and robust cat. Then one Friday evening, she just keeled over, and in an instant, she was gone. It was so sudden and unexpected. Naturally, we were all terribly sad.

That term *Swings and Roundabouts comes to mind when I look back at that weekend. Because the day after Molly passed away, we found our new house. Less than two months later we had moved and were celebrating Christmas with a flood of family and friends.

Over the past few months, we've been acutely conscious of Flick's needs to stretch her claws and get out to the yard to explore and try to catch a lizard or two. But the issue was always access to outside in a way that would bypass dogs (despite our best efforts, the dogs and cats have never adapted to our blended family).

Flick's had limited access to outside in the past and has always returned for dinner or come to us when called. But Easter was a turning point. Our Sydney Easter was a long weekend of horrid, torrential rain and Flick decided that she was not going to come to us or come inside. Days went past and all we saw were fleeting glimpses of Flick.

Paul, my boyfriend, braved cruel weather to sit out on the front steps to try to coax her back in. He made a special trip to the supermarket and brought back smoked salmon and fresh chicken to try to tempt her. The closest we got to a cat was the neighbour's fluffy opportunistic moggy making a dash for our deli delights.

Five days down, we finally nabbed Flick. And she's not yet forgiven us for it. She now sleeps in the bed and only makes a sprint for food or her litter box. And when I mean that she sleeps in the bed, I mean she sleeps in the bed. She's made a slit in the lining of the mattress base and sleeps in there like it's a cat comfort cave.

Of course, any change in an animal's behaviour rings warning bells for me. I've always believed that a strange and sudden behaviour change can point to an underlying medical condition. So as soon as we could catch the cat, we hauled her off to our vet for a day of observation, tests and examinations. What was the end result? All tests and examinations show that Flick is a perfectly normal, healthy cat that's not showing any signs of illness. What can't be ruled out is whether she's on a downward road to an ailment we dread—dementia. Or perhaps, she really doesn't love us anymore. Either way, it breaks our hearts.

Where we are feeling the love is from our move into the Melbourne pet market. Starting with the December edition, Urban Animal went into selected outlets. The follow-up March edition was very well received, and we're hoping for more feedback as Melbourne dog lovers send us their votes for their best dog park.

With this issue of Urban, we're moving into Brisbane. It's another exciting move, and certainly we know new readers, just like Melbourne will embrace our magazine. We're always happy to hear our readers' feedback—the good and the bad. Perhaps some of you may even have some hints and tips on how to appease a cranky cat.

* The full term being: what you lose on the swings you gain on the roundabouts. It is an optimistic assertion that, all things considered, matters tend to turn out satisfactorily if you take the rough with the smooth. Swings go up and down, and roundabouts go round and round. But taken both together, they add up to the same thing.

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