

MEDIA RELEASE**9 November 2009**

Introducing New Zealand's oldest cat

Meet Smokey, who at 24 years and 9 months of age is believed to be New Zealand's oldest cat.

Two months ago, Purina PetCare New Zealand announced they were seeking New Zealand's oldest cat to raise awareness of a new cat food specifically designed for older cats and celebrate the role that cats play in the lives of so many New Zealanders.

"We received an amazing response from dozens of cat owners from all around the country," says Sneha Patel, Consumer Relationship Marketing Manager for Purina.

"There are definitely many cats out there that have enjoyed a long life and who have received a lot of TLC from some very caring owners over the years."

Among the many entries, there was a 19 year-old Burmese from Christchurch, a 21 year-old tortoiseshell from Wanaka, a 23 year-old domestic short-hair from Rotorua, and a 23 year-old sealpoint Birman from Auckland.

However, after a long search, Purina has officially announced New Zealand's oldest cat is Smokey, a blue Burmese born in January 1985, owned by Ian Clarke and Jean Elliot of Mt Roskill, Auckland.

Appropriately, Smokey lives with his owners in a retirement village and at 24 years and 9 months, Smokey has lived the human equivalent of about 111 human years.

While this is impressive, according to Guinness World Records, the oldest cat ever was Creme Puff, owned by Jake Perry of Austin, Texas, USA, born August 3, 1967 and died in 2005 at the age of 38.

Jean puts Smokey's long life down to the fact that he has always lived within the retirement complex and received the constant love and attention from the village's many residents.

"Smokey originally belonged to another resident here, named George. When George was in hospital in 2001, I visited him and promised to take care of Smokey. George passed away shortly after."

Smokey stayed with Jean but missed his old owner and kept visiting the old house where they

lived, meowing outside the window.

“Being a Burmese Blue, it wasn’t a quiet meow,” says Jean.

Ian says on the day he moved into the retirement complex nine years ago, Smokey simply walked in and made himself at home. Jean still tends to Smokey’s health and buys his food, while Ian provides the bed – an old laundry basket – and lots of love.

“In his younger days, Smokey liked to bring presents of spiders and birds, but now he just eyes them up from a distance, says Ian; “The ducks that nest close by are also fairly safe, along with the pigeons that gather outside Jean’s house.”

To celebrate Smokey’s record as New Zealand’s oldest cat, Purina are giving him a year’s supply of a new cat food formula designed especially for senior cats, Purina ‘Pro-Plan Senior 11+’.

The formula contains a proprietary blend of antioxidants, vitamins, fibre and fatty acids that aims to improve the lean tissue mass and immune system of older cats.

Mr Clarke is grateful for the gift and says he hopes to have companionship from Smokey for a long time yet.

“Mealtimes are always special times with Smokey, but Tuesdays are extra special because Jean always buys him fish. I swear every Tuesday Smokey knows its fish day, because he waits up the top of the driveway for his treat to arrive.”

For in-depth information about maintaining optimal nutrition and care for cats, visit the Purina web site at www.purina.co.nz

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Notes to Editor

- It’s estimated that there are almost 1.5 million companion cats in New Zealand, one of the highest per capita ownership levels in the world.
- Guidelines for cat ownership in New Zealand outlined by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee say “special attention should be given to providing an appropriate diet for the age and health of the older cat.”
- Purina has over 75 years of expertise in pet nutrition research and development. It is committed to innovation and has a research and development network comprised of food scientists, chemists, animal behaviourists, veterinarians, pet nutritionists, engineers and technicians to ensure that every product developed provides the optimum benefit to pets in terms of nutritional integrity and enjoyment. Purina seeks to understand the needs of its customers through sustained communication with pet owners and the specialist community.

About Nestle Purina New Zealand

- For over eighty years Purina has been a leader in the advancement of pet care and pet nutrition.
- Purina’s expert nutritionists, food scientists, vets, and animal behaviorists are constantly discovering new ways to help pets lead healthier, happier, longer lives.

- No one invests more in research and development, and as a result Purina has made more breakthroughs in the field than any other company.
- Today Purina is one of the world's leading pet care companies, producing some of the best known pet food brands; many of which have served pet owners for generations. Each is the result of the very latest advances in quality, taste and nutrition.
- Purina products are designed to give pets and their owners the best possible choice of recipes and formats, for every life stage and lifestyle.
- Purina is also a committed member of the wider pet care community, supporting charitable organisations, working closely with the communities in which we work and operate, and promoting responsible pet ownership in New Zealand and worldwide.
- With over seventy per cent of New Zealand households owning pets, Nestlé Purina is servicing a growing market.
- Throughout the company's long history in the pet care business, it has built strong brands such as TUX, FRISKIES and FANCY FEAST.
- In 2002 the company acquired Ralston Purina, which saw the introduction of brands such as Purina ONE, BENEFUL and PRO PLAN.