A Committed Veterinary Team, a Determined Owner and a Blind Cat with a Will to Live
Featured at June 5 Animal Survivor Event
2014 ACVIM Forum, Nashville, Tennessee

(Nashville, Tenn.) Tipper, a 2-year-old Siamese/“old barn cat” mix, has been living on the edge since birth. Owner Terri Wolfe of Monticello, Ark., received a call from her housemate’s aunt in May 2012 saying she needed to come get the white kitten she had long wanted before it would most likely not be alive, a fate all other members of the litter had met.

It was about a week until Wolfe and her housemate could pick up the kitten and bring it home. In the interim, it was placed in a bathtub in a deserted farmhouse. For litter, the owner used a wash pan full of dirt from beneath a tree where chickens and birds had roosted.

Since being rescued by Wolfe, Tipper feels right at home in a veterinary hospital as well as Wolfe’s home. In June 2013, the owners noticed one of Tipper’s eyes was pinkish. A trip to a local veterinarian produced a referral to Dr. William Miller, a Memphis veterinary ophthalmologist, who conducted several blood tests and referred Wolfe to Dr. John Sessions at Memphis Veterinary Specialists in Cordova, Tenn., about 200 miles from Monticello. Dr. Sessions is a Board-certified specialist who earned his certification with the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine.

Tipper was diagnosed with systemic histoplasmosis, an infection in multiple organ systems caused by a fungal organism that is found in the soil and acquired by cats via inhalation. In Tipper’s case, Sessions believes it was caused by the environment she was rescued from. Sites of infection can include respiratory tract, eyes, intestinal tract, bones/joints and skin.

“During Tipper’s initial evaluation,” says Sessions, “we determined that her fungal infection also involved her bones, and while never confirmed, we also suspected that she had intestinal involvement due to low blood protein levels.” The cat began receiving treatment for histoplasmosis in August 2013 and continues to undergo care today.

Tipper’s treatment involved an assortment of oral medications, along with four weeks of IV therapy with a potent anti-fungal medication, necessitating a month of hospitalization last fall.

As a result of the infection stemming from histoplasmosis and the resulting total blindness, Tipper’s left eye was removed in September and her right in March. Her long-term prognosis, Sessions adds, is “very fair to good.”

Sessions calls the owners’ commitment to Tipper “both emotionally and financially unmatched. Being seasoned travelers, though, Tipper’s family usually makes a trip to Memphis as part of a bigger outing. Tipper just stays with us while they motor around the South and Midwest. At the very least, they stay the evening in an area hotel if Tipper simply needs to be seen on an outpatient basis and drive home the next day.”

“She’s family,” Wolfe emphasizes, “and we will do anything within reason to maintain her care. Her quality of life is good and the way she moves around the house, you wouldn’t even know she’s blind. Once a cat has a person’s heart, money seems to be secondary. Hopefully, others will benefit from the experience Tipper has undergone.”
Tipper’s story will be introduced at the 2014 ACVIM Forum in Nashville, Tennessee at 10:00 a.m. Thursday, June 5. This special Animal Survivor event will be held in the Exhibit Hall at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center. Members of the media are invited to attend.

Animal Survivors have beaten the odds because of advances in veterinary internal medicine. The animal owner, general practitioner and an ACVIM Board-certified veterinary specialist work in partnership to help these animals overcome life-threatening illnesses to lead a healthy life once again. Each animal has a unique story of survival made possible by specialty veterinary medicine. Visit www.acvim.org for more information.

Media Note: Accredited members of the media may attend the 2014 ACVIM Forum at no charge. However, you are required to register with the ACVIM. For media registration, please fill out a registration form or contact Laurie Nelson at Laurie@ACVIM.org or 303.231.9933.

On-site Press Room
Location: Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center
Hours:
- Wednesday June 4, 2:00–5:00 pm
- Thursday June 5, 8:00 am–5:00 pm
- Friday June 6, 12:00–5:00 pm
- Saturday June 7, 8:00 am–12:00 pm

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The American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of animals and people through education, training and certification of specialists in veterinary internal medicine, discovery and dissemination of new medical knowledge, and increasing public awareness of advances in veterinary medical care.

The ACVIM is the certifying organization for veterinary specialists in cardiology, large animal internal medicine, neurology, oncology and small animal internal medicine.

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