

1995 2015

Twinkle Trust Animal Aid [®]

20th Anniversary

Helping Homeless and Abandoned Cats for 20 Years

1995

We tried not to look and enjoy our holiday but everywhere there were vulnerable, sick and starving cats and kittens!



Mum, daughter and their tiny kittens. We used anything we could to make dishes for water and food and raided the bins for cardboard boxes to make beds to shelter them from the sun and wind.



Another female cat, with 5 kittens that were just days old. Their life from birth was harsh, shelter was whatever Mum could find, normally the base of a Bougainvillea plant or palm tree and a struggle to find food and water.



This brave mum brought her 6 kittens to our door after it had rained all night. She and her kittens were soaked & cold. We dried them with a towel, fed them and made them a nice warm box but of course we had to keep them outside the apartment!



We found so many like this, and felt utterly helpless! Each morning we would find another that had perished overnight and buried them under bushes once it was dark when we knew we would not be seen.

Just one of the cats we fell for during our week, we nicknamed her Twinkle as she would sit at our door and gaze up at the stars at night.



By the end of our week's holiday, we knew the methods used by the authorities for controlling the feline population were not only in-humane but clearly not working. To make matters worse there were no animal charities on the entire island of Fuerteventura. The animals were on their own! It was a heart-breaking week. As our plane took off for home in the UK, we promised the cats we would come back and help them, we just had to figure out how!

Back in the UK we tried in vain to find help, after finding out it was up to us, we returned to Fuerteventura 1 month later to see what we could do locally and to bring Twinkle back to the UK. When we arrived in Fuerteventura we found Twinkle hiding under a palm tree, she was very sick and starving, we rushed her to a local vet but she died 3 days later. By now we were devastated.



Early one morning one of the hotel workers brought us a kitten and dropped her in our lap, despite our cries of "no please don't " it was too late, we now had another tiny kitten to worry about! We already had quarantine booked for Twinkle so we made the decision to take back the little kitten and another black cat that was just like Twinkle in every way.

After our second harrowing trip to Fuerteventura, we were on a mission doing car boot sales to pay for medical supplies and accommodation in Fuerteventura and eventually we found a UK volunteer vet and nurse to return to Fuerteventura with us to treat and neuter as many cats and kittens as possible.



Our first Trap-Neuter-Release campaign was a real learning curve, we only had very basic equipment and a handful of cat baskets and 2 traps. Just one of the dilemmas was 'what do we do with all the sick ones at the end of the campaign'. The night before my flight back to the UK, I always ended up sitting outside the homes of people that I knew owned cats and at first light I'd have to knock on the door and plead with people to take in a cat or kitten. I made many good friends thanks to the compassion and kindness of strangers.



For many years we used holiday apartments which we would transform into a surgery. Each campaign we would have to transport all our medical supplies and equipment out to Fuerteventura and within hours of landing we would be up and running, ready to start work. My bedroom was stripped of all furniture except for the bed and it became the recovery room for the cats after their operations.

1996

To start with we had a lot of opposition from some local people on the island. They thought we were going against God's wishes, and that it was 'just wrong' to neuter male cats and they were not shy to tell us our humane method of neutering would not work. Seeing the cats and kittens suffering in our eyes was not 'Godly' at all. Within 12 months we proved that our humane method of neutering not only worked but improved everyone's lives, thankfully a year later people were coming around to our way of thinking.



Having neutered the homeless cats we also needed to be able to provide them with fresh food and drinking water. After much negotiation for a area of land to use, and armed with scraps of wood, the loan of a saw and the purchase of some cement and paint, we made and installed the first ever cat café in the Canary Islands. We now use and adapt plastic dog kennels for our cat cafés. This café installed in 1996 is still in use every day and to-date we have installed 17 more cafés.

2000

Elly van der Hout was a Dutch lady that lived in Fuerteventura. We became great friends from the moment she brought us some stray cats for neutering.



Volunteers Keith & Margaret Castle with Elly. Preparing the cats baskets for an imminent campaign.



Volunteers Sue & Ron Lanning bringing in strays for neutering, with Elly logging in the details of each cat. Elly had seen the cramped conditions we had been working in for many years and she offered us the use of her home for the neutering campaigns. This was a tremendous help. We now had a separate room for operating and another for the cats to recover in. With the extra space it meant that we could deal with more cats and we went from neutering 100 cats in a week to neutering over 300.

The In-between Years

Howie.

Since coming to us and after lots of vet visits and weeks of medical treatment, this little orphan changed from sick and unwanted to healthy and contented.



Neutering is our primary purpose, but Twinkle Trust has rescued and saved many like 'Howie'. In our 20 years, we've had a lot of sleepless nights and our hearts broken many times. We've had to accept that we cannot save them all, but we will keep trying.

2015

20 Years On – We have neutered over 15,000 cats and found new, loving homes for hundreds of cats and kittens. Twinkle Trust not only carries out large scale neutering campaigns several times a year, the charity responds to emergency calls to help unneutered, sick or vulnerable cats and kittens every single day. At our base in Fuerteventura we normally have 60-70 cats at any given time. Some of the cats are looking for new homes, others will remain with us because they are too sick, too old or have behaviour problems. Some like Max below have been ill treated. They all need and deserve love and care.



We found Max when we responded to an emergency call about a cat being dumped in a large commercial rubbish bin. Max had been put inside the bin in the morning and was still inside, crying for help later that day. As we approached the bin we couldn't hear anything and feared the worst, the heat that day had been over 30 degrees Celsius. Max was deep inside, buried under rubbish by the time we found him. We needed steps to climb into the large bin and were anxious because we didn't know if Max would panic and harm himself on the sharp glass and open tins that were everywhere. As we removed bag after bag of rubbish and broken glass, Max seemed to know we were there to help him and he began to purr. As soon as we could reach him we scooped him up in one hand, he was so skinny and happy to be rescued. We took him straight to the vets to be examined. Max had an injury to his top lip, which the vet believed to have been caused by a blow to his face. We will never know what caused the injury but we do know that whoever abandoned Max in the bin, will never know what a special, gentle young guy he has grown up to be. His lip healed but has been left with some damage to the soft tissue but it doesn't hold Max back.

Over the years Twinkle Trust has removed more cats and kittens from these type of bins than we care to remember. Sadly there are some people that think unwanted animals can be abandoned in the mountains or thrown away like Max. We are here to rescue them and to give them the life they are worthy of.