

# Feline Asthma Responds to Human Treatments

by Dale L. Griffiths

A few years ago, my wife adopted a rescue kitten from a local shelter. She had adopted rescue kittens before and expected the minor afflictions that usually accompany these animals: fleas and ear mites. Unfortunately, this poor kitten, christened Misty, proved to have a more challenging disease, ringworm. We, or should I say the cat, struggled with it, and us, for months.

Once the ringworm was conquered, Misty became a full-fledged member of the household. But then we began noticing her huffing as if she were attempting to clear the dreaded feline hairball. The huffing became more frequent and severe; so it was off to the veterinarian, where we were surprised to receive a diagnosis of asthma. It turns out asthma is a fairly common feline disorder, afflicting approximately one in a hundred cats. And since the disease imitates asthma in humans, it can be treated in similar ways.

The vet prescribed prednisone for Misty in the exact same formulary as prescribed for humans. In fact, we picked up the prescription at our local pharmacy.

Giving a cat a pill is not the easiest task in the world. We tried several methods, all involving a bit of spilled blood (ours) and an unhappy cat. We finally discovered that stuffing the pill inside a cat treat worked best.

The prednisone helped minimize the symptoms, but the episodes were still occurring too frequently. Then one day I happened to be reading my wife's *Cat Fancy* magazine (*Sports Illustrated* had not yet arrived). There I discovered a familiar-looking device. It was similar to one I had seen in RESPIRATORY CARE



Journal: an aerosol chamber. Only this one was designed for cats. It is called the AeroKat feline aerosol chamber and comes from Trudell Medical International.

My work with the AARC has taught me much about asthma, so I knew that aerosol chambers improve the efficacy of medication delivery in humans. When it comes to cats, the device appears to be the *only* way to effectively deliver aerosolized medications.

We managed to acquire an AeroKat and convinced a skeptical veterinarian to prescribe albuterol. Now the challenge was to administer the medication. Misty is a big, strong cat; and I had some trepidation about this endeavor. After all, there were those claws and fangs to worry about. The helpful people at Monaghan/Trudell assured me that most cats tolerate the treatment quite well. In fact, they said cats often realize the medication is helping and do not fight the treatment.

Still, when the day came to give Misty her first treatment, I armored myself in a sweat top pulled over a denim shirt and donned heavy canvas gloves. Misty did fight us at first; but as I was told, she has learned to tolerate the treatment. However, she still fights that first breath of medication. So, we have learned to watch for the inhalation, and then as she relaxes, give her the second puff.

The results were everything we had hoped for. Just like in humans, the aerosolized albuterol has decreased the severity and frequency of Misty's asthma episodes. 🐾

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Dale Griffiths is the AARC's director of marketing.

