

Catwoman saves many lives

Cats don't always land on their feet — sometimes it takes a special commitment to set them down on their paws again. Yvonne Brown of Cats In Need has that commitment to her favorite animal and now shares her suburban Mangere property with more than 80 of them. Cats In Need is a registered charity and provides medical care, food and shelter for each cat. One brave kitten — Meredith — arrived last week as the only survivor of a litter of four but her eye was severely infected.

“We were bathing her eye and it just fell out,” says Mrs Brown. A flu virus killed the eye socket nerves so Meredith was taken to the vet to have her socket cleaned and sewn up. The kitten's first visit into the cat pen was a little frightening but Meredith will learn to feel comfortable with only one eye and soon retain that famous feline balance, Mrs Brown says.

She knows because the first cat she took in, Sammy, also had to have his eye removed after he came to her with a wound inflicted by a cigarette butt. After a long one-eyed life Sammy died in 2006 although he still graces Cats In Need's logo as the pet-patron of Mrs Brown's humane effort. She can't bear to see any cat euthenased, which is what often happens to unwanted cats, so she takes it upon herself to house them.

“I hate seeing life destroyed be it human or animal.

“They were around before we fell out of trees ... man created the problem and now to get rid of it man is destroying again.

“This is what we do. “It's giving cats a life,” she says. And what a life.

Scratching poles, garden ornaments and tennis balls litter the kitty enclosure as they wander silently past each other with just the odd dare of conflict. Mrs Brown has been accused of hoarding cats but she says her cattery is completely above-board and complies with all the SPCA's standards.

Her tireless efforts to keep the cats happy and healthy are all in aid of eventually adopting them out to new loving families. She says any help would be appreciated as most of the funding for her battered cattery comes from her seven-night-a-week job as well as weekend sausage sizzles. The cats available for adoption have all been vaccinated and de-sexed.

People wanting to donate or adopt can visit www.catsinneedtrust.org.nz.

Picture one:

Eight lives left: Yvonne Brown comforts new arrival Meredith as she adjusts to life at the Cats In Need cattery infection.

Picture two:

Tree-hugger: One of Cats In Need's long term residents perches atop a tree branch which has taken the brunt of many sharpened claws.