



**Laidlaw Undergraduate Research
and Leadership Program Laidlaw Foundation**

IMPERIAL

Imperial College London



Crazy Cat Lady in Sydney:

Working with SAFE Rehoming

Week 5-6 Report:

About SAFE and Cats in SAFE

Rong Hua

Leadership in Action

Summer in 2025

SAFE to me

SAFE is a wonderful shelter filled with kind-hearted people and countless cats, all working together to support the local community by caring for both surrendered and stray cats. Keeping stray cats off the streets prevents them from hunting wild lizards, birds, and other small animals, which helps protect the local ecosystem and maintain the balance of the food chain.

The shelter also covers the cost of microchipping and desexing, ensuring that every cat is healthy and fully recovered before becoming available for adoption. Moreover, SAFE follows a no-kill policy, meaning animals are never euthanised simply because there is not enough space, or because they are sick, disabled, less attractive, or have behavioural issues that can be corrected. They are only euthanised to relieve unbearable suffering or when they are considered a danger to other animals or people. This policy truly reflects the shelter's compassion and respect for life.

SAFE has been such a heartwarming place for me. I met many wonderful people and countless adorable cats. In this report, I would like to share some of my most memorable experiences with them.

SAFE Cats

1. Mother and Baby Cats

SAFE provides an ideal environment for pregnant or nursing mothers and their kittens, offering them a private and comfortable room. Well-trained carers feed the mother cats according to their needs—usually six times a day—to give them the best possible nutrition. During my stay, I was honoured to witness more than twenty kittens being born in this loving space.



Figure 1. Roxie and her Babies (Left) and Bubbles and her Babies (Right)

Among them, the most unforgettable pair was a gentle mother and her precious only kitten. It is quite rare for a cat to have just one baby, and this little one certainly received all the love and milk a kitten could ever want. He quickly grew into a strong, chubby boy, almost as big as kittens two weeks older than him.

His mother was also special—remarkably gentle and calm. Usually, mother cats become very protective and sometimes aggressive after giving birth. However, she soon realised that humans were bringing her tasty meals six times a day, and she began to relax and welcome interaction. Once her kitten started to walk, she happily greeted people with him by her side. She became a tender role model for her kitten, teaching him to trust and love humans.



Figure 2. Mother cat feeding her only kitten and later cuddling him to sleep

Watching all the kittens grow day by day and seeing them blossom brings such a pure and lasting sense of joy and satisfaction.

2. Mother and Daughter Cats

One of my favourite pairs is Rosie and Callie. Rosie is a shy and quiet mother who prefers to stay curled up in her bed or rest in a quiet corner. Callie, in contrast, is a confident and lively daughter—a beautiful domestic short hair with a stunning calico coat.



Figure 3. Callie and Rosie (left) cuddling inside their hideout, and Callie (right) enjoying a gentle rub.

Callie loves attention. She often sits in front of the door, waiting for people to play with her. When you put your fist near her face, she rubs her whole body against you, as if saying hello in her own affectionate way. Perhaps it's also her clever trick to earn extra treats, as both she and her mother have a rather “jar-shaped” figure.

Despite being outgoing, Callie has clear boundaries. She will happily greet you when you first meet her, but if you try to lift her with both hands, she immediately runs back to her mother's arms. Rosie will then gently lick her, as if to comfort her frightened daughter. I believe Callie is waiting for that special person she can truly trust and build a bond with.



Figure 4. Callie (front) having a nap with her mom Rosie (back)

3. Energetic Handsome Boy: Griffin

Griffin is an adorable orange kitten full of curiosity and energy, but his journey has been quite a bumpy one.

He was returned three times before finding his forever home. The first time, he was adopted by an elderly couple. However, as a young and playful kitten who hadn't learned to play gently yet, he accidentally scratched their visiting grandchildren and was sadly returned.

The second time, a woman who felt an instant connection with him decided to adopt him but later changed her mind when she realised that Griffin was not a lap cat—though, in truth, most cats aren't.

Griffin settled back into the shelter with resilience and soon met a lovely couple who adored him. He even got along well with their resident cat. Unfortunately, happiness didn't last long, as another family member later decided that there wasn't enough space for a second cat, and Griffin was returned once again.

This experience serves as a reminder that before adopting, one should fully understand a cat's nature and communicate with everyone involved—including family members and the building manager—before bringing a cat home. Cats are not toys or decorations; they are companions who deserve long-term love and care. Adopting a cat means committing to a friendship that may last 10 to 15 years.

Fortunately, Griffin's story had a happy ending. On 27th September, this lively boy finally found his true forever home. What wonderful news for such a brave and loving soul.



Figure 5. Griffin having a good stretch inside his enclosure.

Summary

The time I spent with the cats at SAFE was truly precious. Each cat has its own story, and every one of them taught me something new about resilience and trust. It was my honour to help some of them find loving new homes, and I sincerely hope that all the cats will eventually be rehomed.

Every animal deserves a happy life.