

6 FAMILIES ON LIVING WITH THEIR BEST (FURRY) FRIENDS





From cats with dog personalities, to dogs who yawn like old men, to owners who might cry if they go a day without their pets, pet owners would be first to admit that raising pets takes you through the full spectrum of emotions. Whether it's their first pet or their fifth, each journey comes with its own surprises. Yet, one thing is constant — these Causes for Animals (CAS) rescues, who once roamed Singapore's streets as strays, are now cherished members of loving families.

Here, we catch up with 6 adopters of CAS alumni to find out more about the highs and the hiccups of living together.

BOYTJIE

Huge dog lovers with a soft spot for big dogs — that's Genevieve and Tuan. No surprise then, that they were immediately drawn to Boytjie (pronounced boy-kie) when he was put up for adoption in March 2020. Although Genevieve and Tuan were initially apprehensive about adopting a Singapore Special, he eventually won them over. They then welcomed him home with CAS's guidance, naming him Boytjie, which means 'little boy' in Afrikaans. With much love, patience, training and belly rubs, Boytjie is slowly but surely breaking out of his shell.

"HE REALLY TAUGHT ME TO RELAX, LIVE IN THE MOMENT, MAKE MISTAKES AND JUST MOVE ON."

If Boytjie could talk, what would his catchphrase be?

G: "What's in your pocket?"

G: When we first got him, he had a really bad habit. When he sees pockets, especially men's, he will literally sniff sniff sniff and put his entire snout in.

T: Even to strangers.

T: Friends will say: "Your dog's trying to steal my phone there!" and we're like, "He's looking for treats."

Best memory with Boytjie?

G: When we brought him to a beach at Sentosa for the very first time. Tuan used to have quite a number of dogs back in South Africa, and they're all swimmers. So it was almost like being tiger parents where you're hoping your kid will like swimming, because not every dog likes to swim.

G: And then he just took to the water!

T: He dived in and started swimming.

G: We were so happy that he could swim!

T: Boytjie slept so well that day. When we came home, he was like, Thank you! Thud. Then he slept till it was time to have his dinner.

G: With us vacuuming the sand...

One time I got angry at Boytjie was when...

G: I think there was once I got really angry with him for eating his bed. He had been so good with the bed and the tiles and everything. I came out of the shower, and I wasn't wearing my glasses so I couldn't see anything. I was like, eh, white. Since when is his bed white? Then I saw him rip the entire bed apart. The insides were coming out and I was screaming, "This is not a cheap bed, you know!" So I guess I was quite angry. And I spent hours stitching it up. The fabric was killing my fingers.



How has Boytjie changed your lives?

G: I strongly believe I didn't "rescue" him by adopting him. It feels like he is doing me a favor by allowing me to adopt him. I have never felt more aware of myself — my shortcomings, strengths, and mental state. I have never been healthier, more active or outgoing. And I've become a morning person. It took me many years to try to become one, and having this dog makes me a morning person in three weeks. Seriously! As a couch potato, I now go on long walks with my dog. As an incredibly difficult perfectionist who is super hard on myself, he really taught me to relax, live in the moment, make mistakes and just move on.

Why did you choose to adopt?

G: We are against pet mills, pet shops, and irresponsible backyard breeding, but are supportive of ethical breeders. We believe in "adopt or shop responsibly". As dog lovers, all of us enjoy the diversity and beauty of different breeds. But adoption really speaks to us. Marcus (co-founder of CAS) mentioned that when you adopt, you save two lives — the one you adopt and the spot you open for another dog to be rescued. Instead of splurging on a pedigree, I can save two dogs and use the surplus money to ensure my dog lives a wonderful and fulfilling life by spoiling him with good food and toys, hiring a trainer, engaging him with pack walks and even pet taxis to bring him out.



Boytfje, 1



L: Genevieve; R: Tuan

COTTON & AMBER

One day in June 2019, Angelin woke up feeling like she wanted to adopt a cat. After persuading her husband, they visited several adoption drives but felt no connection with any of the cats there. Eventually, she came across CAS and met Cotton — and felt instant chemistry! Amber joined the family about five months later, introduced to them by a CAS rescuer. Not long after, Angelin and her husband adopted Tong Tong and Summer from Metta Cats and Dogs Sanctuary. They said they'll stop at four cats, but we'll see about that...

How did you come up with their names?

A: Cotton and Amber were named by CAS when they were first rescued. When we decided to adopt a third one, we thought about having the names spell out "CAT". So I named her Tong Tong. It comes from the "同" (tóng) in "大家一同" (meaning all together), because I thought she would be the last cat and I wanted them to all be happy together. But in the end, we got Summer! Now their names spell out "CATS", so we can't have any more. But my husband said we can still make it "THE CATS"...



How has having cats changed your life?

A: It's made me busier. Sometimes it's stressful. Cotton has chronic upper tract infection and asthma, and I had to give him injections every day for 20 days. When the cats fall sick, having to chase them to eat their tablets every day is also a problem. They'll run, and chew, and pui! the tablets out. And now I vacuum every other day! All our furniture is covered in their fur — I think that's inescapable. But my husband and I are happier; it's so nice to come home to them. Even though they are naughty sometimes, you never regret it.

What is your best memory with them?

A: When they sleep beside me on the bed for afternoon naps! The first time we adopted, we said no cats allowed on the bed. But after a while, my husband said, "Let him come up lah!" and I'm like, "You're the one who said cannot!" Now, they all come onto the bed.

What is your view of adoption?

A: After getting our own, I think everybody should have pets! For cats, the cost is not very high and they can remain fresh even without showering for months. I guess some people want a special breed, but with rescue cats, you can't choose — it's the chemistry. Cotton was so sick when we first met, but when he walked around me, I knew I wanted him. Initially, I told CAS that I'm a first-time pet owner so I can't have a sick cat — but in the end, I got the sickest cat! I struggled in the first few months and had to Google a lot of things, and now almost nothing scares me! Except giving injections, but you just learn to do it.



1st Row: Amber, 2; Tong Tong, 2;
2nd Row: Cotton, 5; Summer, 6 months



Angelin with Cotton, Summer and Amber (L to R)

BELLE

For some, joy comes in unexpected forms. For first-time owners Brenda and Yong Chian, it's their sweet, laid-back dog, Belle. The couple arrived at CAS's shelter to view Belle's puppies, but ended up adopting Belle herself within a week. It was a good decision in hindsight, since they avoided the whirlwind of puppy problems and found home instead with mild-mannered Belle — who walks well on the leash, is unafraid of humans, and is "very manja" (affectionate). Fun fact: Belle was a part of the Tuas population under CAS's Trap, Neuter & Release Programme, and many of the dogs there share her distinct long-haired appearance!



"I HEARD A CRACK AND I RAN INTO THE ROOM. SHE LOOKED AT ME, WITH THE REMOTE IN HER PAWS, AND CONTINUED CHEWING."



Where is Belle's favourite spot in the house?

YC: On our bed. She just climbs up on her own.

B: Not when we're sleeping though. She likes the bed all to herself. She even uses the blanket! She will dig a nest and curl up there. She makes herself very comfortable.

YC: Since the first day [we brought her home]!

Best memory with Belle?

YC: Coney Island was fun! We brought her to Coney Island to walk, and out of nowhere she just decided — I want to go swimming. Then we were like, okay, fine. So she just happily went to dip in the water. It was very interesting for us because the last time we brought her to Sentosa, she didn't really want to go, she just waited at the side.

What are some of Belle's quirks?

YC: She yawns — like you know how when old men yawn, they make a lot of noise. She does that! It only came up this year.

B: She only does it when she knows that we are going to bring her out. She gets impatient because we will be busy getting ready, and she will make those yawning noises because she wants to go out.

YC: Another quirk is when she realises that we are done with our meals and not giving her any food. She will run into the room, pounce on a toy and start chewing it. Like she's angry she didn't get food.

B: Or she wants to chew on something!

Was it a steep learning curve for you as first-time dog owners?

B: Initially we would go, is this okay? at every little thing. Shortly after we adopted her, she fell sick.

YC: Panic!

B: Because we fed her dog bones—

YC: Not dog bones. Bones meant for dogs to chew! So when she chewed it she swallowed a long, sharp piece, and we didn't know.

B: We thought it was okay because people give their dogs bones all the time. That was something that we had to learn — that not all dogs can take it. Belle had diarrhoea, and it was so heartbreaking because it was our first experience, so we sent her to the vet.

One time I got angry at Belle was when...

B: There was a recent incident about a month back. Usually she only likes to chew soft toys, but there was once I left the fan remote on the bed. And she decided to chew up the \$50 remote! I heard a crack and I ran into the room. She looked at me, with the remote in her paws, and continued chewing. Of course, I scolded her! She has never chewed our appliances or wires, she only chews her toys! So we're missing a remote now.

HONEY

Meet Caryn and Peter, proud cat parents. Friendly encounters with their condominium cats led to the idea of adopting their very own furry friend. When Caryn and Peter saw CAS's timely Facebook post that Honey was up for adoption, they went down for a visit. As Honey frequently opened doors and climbed into hidden spaces, this 'ninja cat' was kept separately in her own room for her safety. Here's what happened: Honey came up to them, curled up in Peter's lap and promptly fell asleep. Who adopted whom? We can't be too sure.

How is Honey different from the other cats that you've had before?

C: We had our other cats when they were a bit more mature. When we first had Honey, she was just a little over a year old. She's very affectionate — she comes up to you, sits with you, lies next to you. But she's also her own person who does things her own way. You can imagine having a conversation with a five-year-old: "Why? Why can't I do it? I want to. I want to!" She's extremely persistent and very single-minded. If she wants something, she will do it until you let her.

Tell us a story that shows Honey's personality.

C: Once, there was a bug out on our balcony and my husband sprayed it with insecticide. When he came back in, Honey went to the window and couldn't find [the bug]. She came and complained to us: "Meow. Why did you do that? Where is it? Where did you take my bug? What happened to it? Oh, you're so mean!" For the rest of the night, she was in a huff at the window — completely fixated on it.

What is her favourite spot in the house?

C: She has a few. We have a box up there on top of the cupboard that's not easily found. We call it her huff box. When she's pissed off with us, she goes up there. Then she has the perch in her bedroom. If not, she has the cat cave. That's like her "naughty corner". She knows when she's in trouble, and when she gets a scolding she goes in there.

"YOU CAN IMAGINE HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A FIVE-YEAR-OLD: "WHY? WHY CAN'T I DO IT? I WANT TO. I WANT TO!" IF SHE WANTS SOMETHING, SHE WILL DO IT UNTIL YOU LET HER."

Do you believe in #AdoptDon'tShop?

C: Yes. There are so many strays out there and they all deserve a home. It's empowering to give these cats a chance. All my three cats were adopted, and they've always been so affectionate. When you have a pet, it's about the connection you have with the animal. I think animals know it when you adopt them.

Having had a few cats before, any advice for potential cat owners?

C: It's important to identify what sort of personality you prefer in cats. I think each cat is very different. For us, we wanted a lap cat, one that's very sociable. I've also had friends who want cat cats, who are very aloof. But for me, it was because one of my previous cats was like a dog. So I wanted something like that — close enough to want to be with you, but also do their own thing.



Honey, 1



L: Peter; R: Caryn



KIT

Dogs, cats, fish, sheep, a horse, and even donkeys — Ashley's family has had them all. Her love for animals meant she couldn't say no to fostering Daisy in late 2019, even though she was still grieving the passing of her "soul cat", Peggy. Wanting a best friend for Daisy, Ashley reached out to CAS and that's how Kit came into the picture. During the visit, he snuggled up to her and made his affection quite clear by purring and refusing to let go of her. This playful little kitten knew what he was doing when he reached out his little paws and chose her, landing himself a loving home. Fun fact: Kit is actually Honey's (from above) brother!

What are some of Kit's quirks?

A: He likes to knead on my arm with his paws. I thought he would grow out of it, but he hasn't, and it's adorable. Another thing he does is that if he thinks I'm not giving him attention, he'll get on the ledge and shout until I notice. It wouldn't actually hurt him if he jumped down; he just knows it's a good way to get attention. The first couple of times he did that, I did have a bit of panic.

Do Kit and Daisy get along?

A: Initially, Daisy was a bit aggressive and scared of Kit, and they sometimes scuffled. So we spoke to Helen from City Zen Cats (a cat behavior consultancy). She helped me realise that they were just playing rough and weren't actually aggressive at all — I should just leave them to it, and they would get there. And they did. Now, they play together and are happy to share everything.

Best memory with the cats?

A: With Kit, it's the memory of when we met him and he didn't want to let go. I have a video of him climbing up the cage afterwards, like, "Wait! What about me?" With Daisy, it's when she first came to sit with us. She didn't use to — she would just hide and hide and hide, then one day she decided that we were all right, and she came to sit on the sofa with us. It was a few months after we got her.

Is taking care of them a lot of work?

A: Not really. They have their litter boxes, we feed them wet food once a day, and they get some biscuits that they can nibble on throughout the day. That's really all you need to do. I play with them for about five to ten minutes a few times every day. Now that I work from home, they serve as a reminder that I need to get up and take a break because they'll come and make themselves known. They're both very needy.

How have the cats changed your lives?

A: They make the house a home. When I lost my other cat Peggy, we had these six months where our house was just empty. With Daisy and Kit, these little creatures are always busy and give you something positive to focus on, especially during the circuit breaker period.





Above: Kit, 1;
Below: Daisy, 5



Ashley with Kit

TANO

"May the 4th be with you." After six years in the shelter, "Twinkle" found a new life as Tano, the 4th furry friend in this home of Star Wars lovers. It all started with Wookie, whom Doralin and Justin adopted from another family. Then came Solo, who was found sickly in the pet shop and nursed back to health by the couple. Next in line: Yoda, their senior ex-breeding dog with big ears and squinty eyes to match his namesake. This year, the arrival of Tano fulfilled their dream of having their own Singapore Special. Calm and elegant, Queen Tano now spends her days lounging blissfully in their apartment.

"OUR DOGS ARE OUR FAMILY AND THEY FEEL LIKE OUR CHILDREN."



Tano, 8 or 9

(Top to bottom, from left to right)
Doralin, Justin
Tano, Wookiee, Yoda, Solo



(Top to bottom) Solo, Yoda, Wookiee



Tell us about their personalities.

D: All of them have really different personalities. Wookiee loves other dogs and is very chill and independent. Solo is very anxious. She needs a crutch, like a squeaky toy or something to chew on because she gets very overstimulated.

D: Yoda's deaf, so he actually uses Solo as his hearing aid. If he sees her bark at something, he'll watch her.

D: When Solo gets up and runs to the door, Yoda will be like, "Oh! something's happening." Then he'll run to the door too. We've noticed over the years that he also uses the other dogs as a cue. He's really smart that way. Tano is a gentle giant, very sweet and relaxed, and only gets up for food. On walks, she'll make an effort not to step on the smaller dogs when they go under her.

What's your best memory with Tano?

D: I think it's just seeing her come out of her shell. Over time, she'd start smiling more whenever I took out food or treats. She even does a little hop! She's not the type of dog who will sit in your lap, but she started showing us a lot more affection in her own way.

J: Also, her getting warmed up to evening walks. In the beginning, she hated it. She probably thought that she was being returned to the shelter. But over time, she started to enjoy the walks more and more. She used to avoid the leash and run away, but now she runs towards me when I take the leash out.

How has having dogs changed your life?

J: For me, it was very much a lifestyle change. When you have a dog totally dependent on you, you're responsible for him. I'm also much more emotional now, especially when it comes to animals.

D: Justin stopped eating meat because of the dogs, and he won't come to volunteer at the shelter with me because it makes him too sad. There are still so many dogs there. They get walked once a week if they're lucky, and they don't get a nice, soft bed. They're not cared for in the way they would be if they were in a home.



Do you believe in #AdoptDon'tShop?

D: Absolutely.

J: We would never want to buy. Solo was an exception, because that was more of a rescue.

D: Yoda was an ex-breeding dog. He has scars all over his face and paws from living in a metal cage his whole life. When we brought him home and put him on the bed, he was falling asleep sitting up because he didn't know how to lie down on a soft surface. Solo was very sick and the pet store was going to return her to the breeder because nobody bought her. There are so many dogs out there that need a home, and supporting the breeding industry makes no sense to me. People may feel like the adoption process is too difficult, but I think you have to be prepared that having a dog is going to be very difficult and a lifetime commitment. Dogs can live up to 15+ years and caring for them as they get older can be challenging and financially draining.

Any advice for first-time owners?

D: Facebook groups are very supportive and helpful. I've asked them for advice around home remedies and vet recommendations.

It's nice to have an online community with other dog owners that you can reach out to.

J: For me, I think it's understanding that the pros outweigh the cons. You will have to sacrifice some things and there will be a lifestyle change.

D: When we didn't have dogs, we could just go out and wouldn't have to be home by seven to feed and walk the dogs. Now we're almost on a schedule. But we don't see it as an inconvenience.

J: What you get out of it will make everything so much better that the sacrifice will be meaningless. It's like having kids.

D: Yeah, I think it's similar. Anyone who ever had children would say that it's difficult and expensive, you have to clean a lot of poop and pee. But people do it anyway because they love their children. For us, our dogs are our family and they feel like our children.

**Looking for a pet to complete your family?**

Click [here](#) to find out more about the CAS Adoption Process.

You can also browse our website to see [Dogs for Adoption](#) or [Cats for Adoption](#). Alternatively, call our adoption hotlines 9793 7162 / 9697 3491 or drop us an email at adoption@causesforanimals.com.

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