



## MESSAGE FROM TIM HOSKEN OF ALMA VETERINARY HOSPITAL

As Christmas approaches we can celebrate another year of successful collaboration with the dedicated team at C.L.A.W.S., whose unstinting devotion to their feline charges would put many larger charities to shame.

It gives us great pleasure that some of our older patients are enjoying a contented life in their new homes. Cats, like people, deserve a little comfort and compassion in the autumn of their lives. C.L.A.W.S. takes a particularly enlightened view, not only finding homes for these characterful cats but providing financial and emotional support to their carers. This is particularly noticeable where an older cat has found a loving home with a human of similar vintage. Cats love having a home where their companion is at home most of the time and we always encourage our older clients to consider adopting a C.L.A.W.S. cat when they sadly find that their beloved pet has preceded them to the hereafter. The C.L.A.W.S. helps find the time somehow to ferry these patients with or without their new owners to receive veterinary attention and it is very heartening to manage patients with diabetes, renal and bowel problems for instance very successfully due in no small part to the dedication of the C.L.A.W.S. team.

This is often a major worry for the older person who may no longer drive and often discourages them from taking on a new cat. While it is easy to see the benefit for the cat there is no doubt in my mind that even if there is no statistical indication of increased longevity through the mutual pleasure of sharing one's home with a cat, the emotional rewards are huge. People who don't have pets in their lives do not understand the companionship and bond that can develop between cat and human. As a veterinary surgeon who has had the privilege of getting to know many of my clients and their cats over many years I am a great advocate of pets as therapy.

**Finally a few seasonal tips.** Cats, unlike dogs, rarely are tempted by chocolate under the tree so we tend not to see cases of chocolate poisoning. Beware of supplementing their diet with human food as digestive upsets can follow. In particular make sure that scraps containing cooked bones are avoided as poultry bones can splinter and damage the mouth. Some cats will eat the decorations so watch out for those long pieces of tinsel. Make sure your cat has plenty of fresh water. Older cats often drink more and if their favourite tippie is water from the garden this may be unavailable in freezing weather. Try to make sure that your cat has a quiet room available if additional guests are visiting. Cats dislike change and disturbance and it is important to anticipate the effect on the household of visitors, especially young ones and vacationing pets. Cats naturally sleep quite a lot so they need to have some down time in an area where they can be undisturbed. We are available for emergencies throughout the holiday season. **All of us at Alma Veterinary Hospital wish you and your pets a happy and peaceful Christmas.**