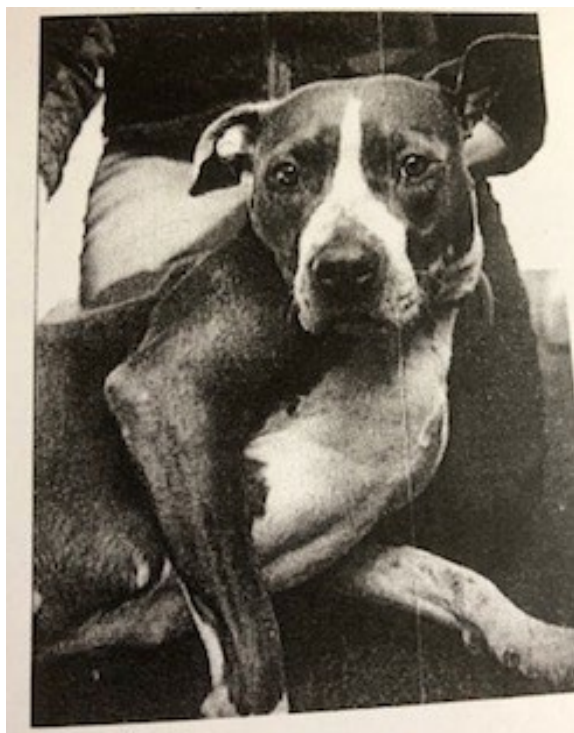


READING COMPREHENSION

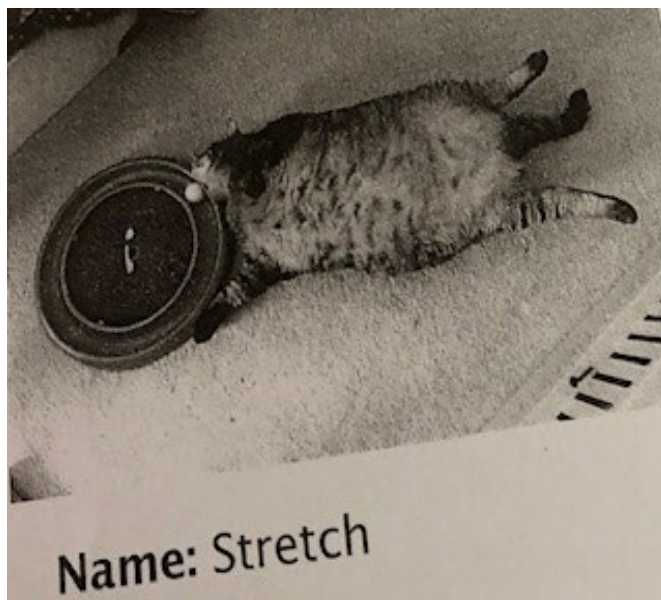
Read the story below. Then answer the questions that follow.

My Furry Feline Friend

My name is Momma and I am a Pit-Bull mix. My background is most unusual in that I spent 600 days at the Wake County Animal Center (WCAC) before being adopted. That is right—600 days! My former owner was charged with cruelty towards me and I had to remain in the WCAC until the judge made a decision about my case. I consider myself a very fortunate dog because I was adopted and am beloved.



But...that is enough about me. I'd like to introduce you to my best friend, called Stretch, who is a cat.



Do you think it strange that my best friend is not a dog? Well, I'm convinced that Stretch believes he is a dog. (He prefers to drink from the dog bowl instead of his own bowl.) I've heard odder stories about interspecies friendships: Have you ever heard the true story about Bella, a stray dog, and Tarra, an elephant, who became the best of friends at the Elephant

Kids & Critters

Sanctuary in Tennessee? * A book was written about their relationship. Friendship, like ice cream, comes in many flavors.



Let's get back to Stretch. Stretch arrived at the Wake County Animal Center (WCAC) with five other cats, all from the same family. The family explained that they needed to surrender all of us because they were moving.

Stretch was not adopted, but rather he became a "sanctuary" animal. That means he stays with a family who will watch over him carefully and continually. He cannot be adopted because it is feared he might regain weight. When I first set my eyes on Stretch, I understood why his name was very appropriate...he weighed 40 pounds! That is one HUGE and HEAVY cat! He could barely walk. I weigh some fifty 50 pounds and I'm a medium-sized dog! What does a "normal" cat weigh? An ideal weight for a cat is around ten pounds; however, this can vary a bit due to a cat's frame and breed. A Maine Coon cat can weigh 25 pounds and still be healthy.

So, it was clear that this cat needed help to lose weight and change eating habits. He needed to s—t—r—e—t—c—h, exercise and lose pounds. Stretch shared with me that his main happiness in life was eating.

As for Stretch's dislikes...he has never liked other cats. There is nothing odd about that. The fact is that many cats prefer to be the only household cat. So, Stretch did not protest about being separated from the other five cats who were surrendered with him. There are many activities Stretch does enjoy, one of which is dozing in the sun. Stretch and I enjoy taking a nice, long nap each day curled up together in my comfortable kennel.

UKids & Critters



Cat Sleeping on their Dog Friends. justsomething.com

He has lost more than twenty pounds by eating from a special bowl that looks like a maze in order to slow him down. Also, he visited the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine Rehabilitation Center where he walked on an underwater treadmill. I have heard of horses and dogs walking on an underwater treadmill, but never a cat. A technician stood with Stretch inside the tank to make sure he kept moving and felt safe. Now Stretch ambles up and down stairs with ease and can jump onto the sofa and ottoman.



Underwater treadmill helps fat cat shed... breath.com

At home Stretch is on a strict diet and he is not permitted outside the house. He eats breakfast upstairs in his own room, the sunroom, away from us—four dogs. Once in a while Stretch is caught getting into a dog food bowl. I'll hear his toenails clank against a metal bowl and hear the kibble rattle noisily. Stretch is not intimidated by us. In fact, he loves to wrestle and play with us. However, Stretch has a habit of stealing food from one particular dog's bowl. He



slithers under his elevated dog bowl, flops on his back and uses his front left paw to knock food to the floor. Cole, the dog from whose bowl the food is robbed, just looks on, his ears pinned back, and his eyebrows knotted upwards in a perplexed expression. He looks hopeless and cannot comprehend why Stretch has targeted his food bowl for thievery.

Now Stretch has a good life where people look out for him and are assuring that he does not gain weight and that he gets plenty of exercise. He loves being with me and knows I will always be his best and most loyal friend. We have another thing in common—we were both abused by our former owners and now live with people who lovingly care for us.

*Suggestions for further exploration:

Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog who Became Best Friends, by Carol Buckley, cofounder of the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee

See <http://mentalfloss.com/article/59967/13-unlikely-adorable-animal-friendships> for Twenty of the Animal Kingdoms' Most Surprising Friendships, by Erin McCarthy