

Letter to Editor

I would like to offer my sincerest praise to a surgeon at the Ryan Veterinary Hospital, **Dr. Kelli Russell**. I moved from California three years ago with my five cats, one of whom—Mr. Curious—had been with me 11 years, since she was a kitten, and we had gone through some dire straits together. We had to bring her to the Hospital on Friday evening. I knew that I could not find better care than that affiliated with an institution such as Penn.

Though the prognosis for surgery was not good, Kelli was honest and forthright with us, making us at least secure in the knowledge that all that could possibly be done would be done. Unfortunately, Kelli had to come down and tell us that, in the course of surgery, she discovered that our cat was terminal, and we made the hard decision to euthanize her. Then Kelli did something that set her apart from anything or anyone that I have encountered in the entire time I have been on the East Coast. She did not just tell us she was sorry—she hugged us. In that moment, I found a measure of unparalleled competence and compassion that I have not seen

in the entire time I have been out here. I hope you can understand the huge difference that made.

I will not forget this, and will be offering what I can in the way of support to the Veterinary School at Penn in the coming years.

Sincerely and with kindest regards,

*Tim Hctor,
Senior Product Manager
Academic, Government, and Emerging Markets
Elsevier MDL*



"Mr. Curious" in all her glory. Tim Hctor thought she was a male when he adopted her; but soon found out she was pregnant. He still has two of her daughters.

Editor's note

We live in a world where news is available 24 hours a day—events can happen anywhere around the globe, and in what seems like minutes, footage and interviews are televised, photos and in-depth analyses are posted on Web sites and anyone who wants to can start a discussion on-line in a blog. We have come to expect this instant access to reams of information, sometimes becoming desensitized to catastrophes or events that should give us pause. And yet, every now and then, a story comes along that stands out and captures our attention, drawing us into a timeless narrative of a fight for survival against all odds.

Such is the story of Barbaro. Thousands followed this very special three-year-old colt from his explosion onto the field of racing to his tragic, career-ending misstep at the Preakness on May 20. Thousands more became caught up in his fight for survival, a fight that many horses before him had lost. Barbaro had fractured his leg in three places; he came to Penn Vet's Widener Hospital that night, and a surgical team led by **Dr. Dean Richardson** set the bones with the hope that they would fuse in place over time. We knew then that this was just the beginning of a recovery that could take many months, but we didn't know what highs and lows lay ahead of us.

From the day he arrived at New Bolton Center, Barbaro's saga became intertwined with our own. Countless media

camped out on the hospital grounds those early days in May, and many continue to seek a new angle on this incredible tale of survival. But despite the media's detailing of cast changes and surgeries, the analyses of why people care, the tallying of baskets of apples and get-well cards, our challenge here in *Bellwether* is to tell his tale as no one else has, and in fact, as no one else can. How did New Bolton Center handle the glare of the international spotlight, its 15 minutes of fame? The answer is, by doing what it always does, by doing what all four departments and both hospitals at Penn Vet do each and every day—by living our mission of teaching, healing and discovery.

I hope you will find our account of how the people of New Bolton cared for this and other very special patients in the summer of 2006 both informative and interesting. As we go to press, Barbaro remains in stable condition, and along with his legions of fans around the world, we are rooting for this magnificent animal, as the faculty, staff and students at both the Widener and Ryan Veterinary Hospitals continue to provide the finest of care to all our patients.

—GAIL LUCIANI