

'Operation Cuddles'

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Feline family: QT Community Cats secretary Melissa Gold with Licky, left, and Wobbles, two of her eight cats

By HUGH COLLINS

A group of Queenstown cat lovers want to ensure the challenges of Covid-19 won't be forcing anyone to give up their feline friends.

'Operation Cuddles' is the first initiative of QT Community Cats, founded in the middle of last month by four women originally involved with Queenstown Cat Rescue.

New charity secretary Melissa Gold says Operation Cuddles aims to help anyone struggling to afford food for their cat, pay for basic vet

bills, or those who need to pay for essential vaccines or desexing.

Gold says while the idea was born before Covid-19 hit Queenstown, the national lockdown, which came into effect on March 25, sprung the group into action.

“It was a niche in the market that we saw could really do with some help.”

The number of cats surrendered to Queenstown Cat Rescue has increased during the past five-odd weeks, Gold says.

“So what we wanted to do was essentially be a fence at the top of the cliff, instead of the ambulance at the bottom.

“We want to keep families together ... we’ve heard a lot of good things about people with their cats and how they’ve really comforted them and kept them going.”

QT Community Cats is raising funds from businesses and individuals at the moment, and intends on launching more fundraising initiatives soon.

“We don’t want to see people giving their cats up and the emotional stress that comes with that,” Gold says.

“At the moment, it’s about getting our profile out there, letting people know what we do and trying to get in those donations that we so desperately need.

“I think most of us can agree that cats are like our children.”

QT Community Cats can be supported via its Givealittle page.

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