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The Good Shepherd?

Cathy Dausman



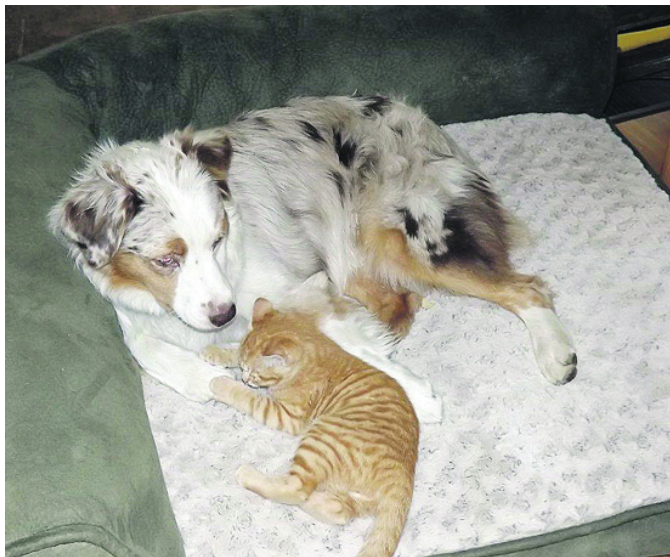
Moraga resident Lisa Gillette holds new kitten Hobbes, with dogs Ember (frog in mouth), Duncan, Guinevere and Allison looking on. Photos Cathy Dausman

bought kitten milk replacer, and bottle fed the tiny creature eight to 10 times daily around the clock. Dog mother Allison claimed the kitten as her own, and licked and cleaned it on a regular basis (mother cats lick their kittens after birth to clean and stimulate them; kittens groom themselves by four weeks).

He became "the cleanest kitten ever," said Gillette, who named him Hobbes.

Today the "older and badder" Hobbes is thriving, said Gillette, who took him for a checkup. Hobbes happily plays with his dog family, plunking himself down on the dog bed, and likes to play with the other three cats. When Hobbes gets too rambunctious, he's given a 'timeout' in a converted dog crate.

Gillette's not sure whether Ember should be praised or punished for "stealing" the kitten, and Hobbes' mother and siblings were never found. One thing's for sure-this kitten has warmed Gillette's heart, and stolen the hearts of her Shepherd pack.



Australian Shepherd Guinevere snuggles with Hobbes

Ember is a nine-month-old red merle Australian Shepherd; that much is certain. Whether she's a heroine or a thief is open to debate.

Ember lives in Moraga with Lisa Gillett; Lisa owns lots of pets. In April, Gillett's pet census included three cats, a turtle, a fish and a canary, two horses and four Australian Shepherd dogs. The dogs are Ember, her father Duncan, a 6-year-old black tri-color male, her mother Allison, a 4-year-old blue merle female, and a light colored 1-year-old female named Guinevere.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, Guinevere and Ember went on a "walkabout" near the grounds of their Bollinger Canyon home. They were gone about an hour when Gillette took the other two dogs out to find them. She spotted the young dogs running toward her, and noticed Ember was carrying something in her mouth. Guinevere wanted it, but Ember carefully kept her prize to herself.

Ember was literally dancing with excitement when Gillette heard mewing. It was a male ginger kitten so young its eyes hadn't opened yet. "He wasn't any bigger than a British banger [sausage]," and weighed about four ounces Gillette said, but "he was dirty and spitting, and fighting mad."

Gillette cradled it beneath her shirt for warmth, bought kitten milk replacer, and bottle fed the tiny creature eight to 10 times daily around the clock. Dog mother Allison claimed the kitten as her own, and licked and cleaned it on a regular basis (mother cats lick their kittens after birth to clean and stimulate them; kittens groom themselves by four weeks).

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