



*Lily, just minutes old. In birth order, right to left, Pink Liana, Blue Bentley, Red Dodge and Purple Porsche (Lily's original name).*



*A miracle of survival. Day 21, and Lily (middle) was a third the size of litter-mates Elise (yellow collar) and Bentley.*

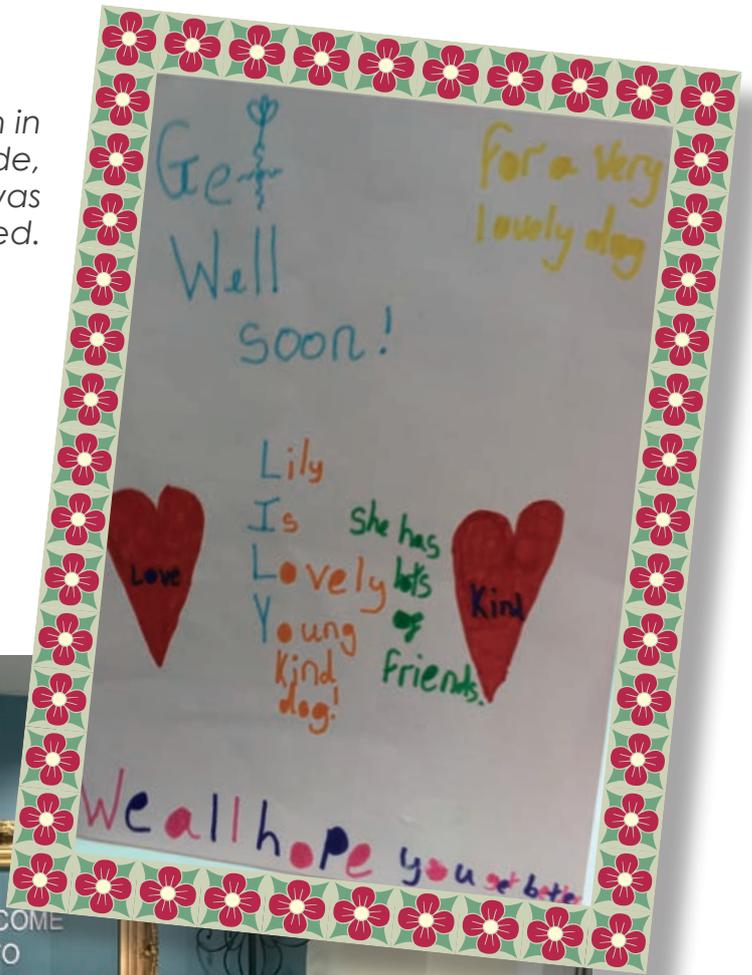
*A tired Pilot and her ten puppies.*



The get well card that children in the Read2Dogs programme made, and posted to Lily after she was spayed.



Lily and I with Vanessa Duggan, winner of The Care Home Activities Coordinator Award 2016 for her work at Hamble Heights.





*Lily with Patricia Charles at Avon Park Residential Care Home ...*

*... and with Derek Coombes ...*



*... and with Elizabeth Wymer, all of whom loved spending time with her.*



# Lily's day

The most important part of Lily's 'day' must actually take place the night before, otherwise, the next day will definitely not begin well: her food won't be ready.

10:00pm

Pilot and Lily are snoozing in the living room as, in the kitchen, I begin measuring 140g (5oz) of weight-control kibble into each of Pilot's two bowls. The sound of the kibble biscuits bouncing into the bowls wakes the girls. Within seconds, they've come to watch. And wait. Into each of Lily's three containers, I measure 86g (3oz) of adult medium-size dog kibble.

When I've finished, their waiting pays off, as I feed them each a few pieces of dry kibble. Then Lily trots into the garden for her last comfort break of the day. Pilot doesn't need one – she has long-range tanks.

After letting Lily back in, I pour 500ml (20oz) water over Lily's dry kibble almost to the top of the containers, click on their lids, and put them in the fridge for the kibble to soak overnight.

Back in the living room, Lily curls up in Jim's chair. Pilot stretches out on the couch beside me while I watch TV and charge their flashing collars for morning.

6:15am

I get the girls ready for the day's first walk. It's below 5°C (41°F) so I put their coats on them. They look unhappy about this, but I tell them they'll thank me when we come home and their backs and tummies are warm.

On go their flashing collars: Lily's twinkles pink; Pilot's twinkles green. Better for them to be seen than not, even though only four cars pass us.

6:50am

We're home after quite a cold walk. Taking off the girls' coats, I pat their lovely, warm backs, and tell them how lucky they are. I'm not sure they're convinced, though Lily wags her tail a little.

7:00am: breakfast

Lily's kibble has absorbed 215ml (7.5oz) of water, and each piece of kibble has swelled from the size of my little fingernail to bigger than my thumbnail. I warm her breakfast in the microwave for 70 seconds to take the chill off it. The microwave dings to let me know that her meal is ready.

I drain the liquid from Lily's food, and use half of it to moisten Pilot's, saving the rest to make some of the dozen or more lollies that Lily will need during the day.

After giving Pilot her food, I sit down, protecting my lap with two tea towels and a kitchen towel. Hand-feeding Lily is messy because her soaked kibble is slippery.

## Lily - one in a million!

Spacing her mouthfuls five seconds or more apart, I automatically count them as I feed her. I'm still relieved when we pass mouthful 17 without any coughing, choking or gurgling. My new method of feeding her makes her mealtimes almost always choke-free – a huge relief for us both!

*7:15am*

After finishing breakfast, Lily stands by Pilot's empty food bowl and looks at me. She wants lollies. Taking three from the freezer, I splash them with water, arrange them in her lolly bowl, and place it in Pilot's empty food bowl. Pilot's bowls are in a raised feeder 28cm (11in) high, so Lily doesn't need to bend down to lick her lollies. I listen to hear if she begins to gulp air as she licks, and, if she does, I'll take the lollies from her. But she's fine.

Pilot, as usual, gets treats when Lily has lollies.

*9:15am*

Today is one of the two days each week that Lily works at schools in Pets As Therapy's Read2Dogs programme. Pilot stays at home, happy with a roly-poly, treat-filled toy. When Pilot worked at this school yesterday, Lily went to Lizzy and Shaun's to spend the hour or so with Bentley, because, unlike Pilot, Lily can't have a toy with treats in it to occupy her when alone.

*11:30am: walk-time*

In the nearby woodland, there are sticks for Pilot to carry and, unfortunately, twigs for Lily to chew. When she picks up twigs, I tell her "Lily, leave it!" and she obediently spits out the twig.

Off-lead at the grass recreation ground, Lily jumps up to catch a ball as it bounces high while Pilot rolls around. Then they join three doggie friends and chase around for ten minutes.

Lily has two lollies when we get home.

*12:15pm: lunch*

Lily needs to have her food divided into three daily meals to ensure she's regularly hydrated. Pilot thinks this is great, because she gets a 20g (0.7oz) snack from her dinner now so that she doesn't feel left out when Lily has lunch. I measure Pilot's while Lily's lunch warms for 70 seconds in the microwave.

Lily has another successful meal. No choking, no coughing, and finishes with three lollies.

*1:30pm*

Bentley arrives because, today, both Lizzy and Shaun are working an afternoon shift, and can't be with him. The three dogs enjoy hours of play, chewing naturally-shed stag antlers, and rearranging my throws and cushions.

*2:30pm*

Lily stands by Pilot's food bowl and looks at me, telling me she's thirsty. As I get lollies for her, Pilot and Bentley hear me open the freezer, and appear, almost by magic, because they know that this sound means lollies for Lily, and treats for them.

I freeze more lollies now using the water drained from Lily's lunch, and then