

INTO THE DANGER ZONE

‘He’s a sweet, sweet kitty—according to me,’ says mom of feisty feline.

Some pets have ironic names—think mastiffs named Mouse or Yorkies named Hercules—while others embody their names to a T. Stephanie Antao’s mother would probably say her daughter’s cat, Danger Zone, falls into the latter category, though Stephanie begs to differ.



Nationwide®
is on your side

When a local woman was offering kittens for adoption, Stephanie knew the time was right to get a cat. She picked one from the litter and named him Danger Zone, a reference to her favorite TV show, "Archer." Little did she know how much the Himalayan would live up to his name.

Not grumpy, just 'angry-looking'

"This cat is amazing. He is my best friend in the world," Stephanie says of Danger Zone, or DZ for short. She's quick to point out that "he's the sweetest kitty ever" in spite of his naturally dour-looking mug.

But she admits in the same breath, "Ask anybody else though, and they probably wouldn't agree with that statement."

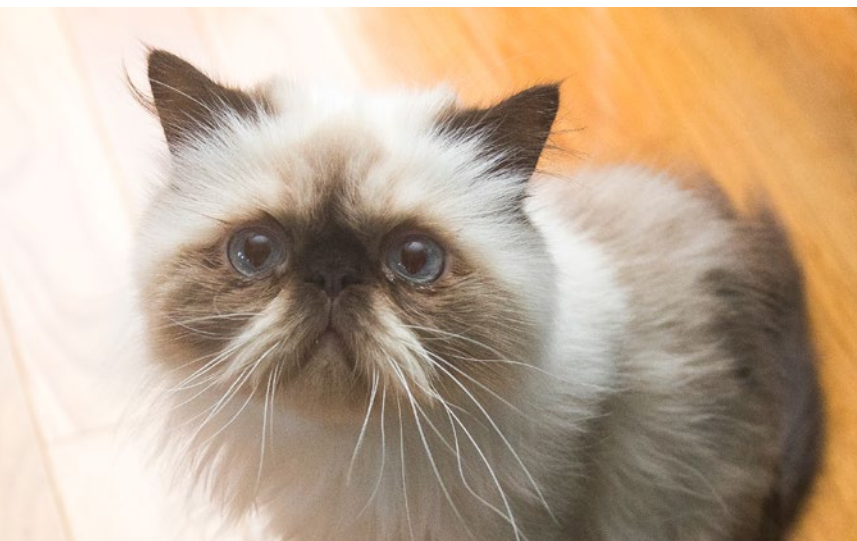
Grumpy—for good reason this time

Stephanie's job requires her to travel frequently but also allows her the freedom to work remotely. Fortunately, she was working from home one Friday when Danger Zone had a medical emergency.

While dialing in for a conference call, Stephanie heard DZ make "a noise he never made before." Startled, she went to investigate and found him just as he "dragged himself out from behind my curtains—and his back legs weren't moving."

Panicked, she hung up the call, put him in his carrier and took him straight to the hospital. Because of DZ's unfortunate track record of trying—and failing—to jump to high places, Stephanie thought he had fallen from somewhere and broken his back.

It turned out Danger Zone's back wasn't broken, but something was definitely wrong. It would take several weeks and an exploratory surgery for Stephanie to finally get answers.



Now entering the Danger Zone

As anyone who has experienced a pet crisis can attest, there's never a good time for these things to happen. For Stephanie, DZ's emergency came a week before a trip she was scheduled to take.

"This was early in the diagnostic phase; I didn't know what was going on," she recounts. "I couldn't leave my cat behind. So I called my mom in California and said, 'Hey, Mom, what are you doing next weekend?'"

Retired, Stephanie's mom was happy to accept a free ticket to Connecticut to care for her grandcat for a few days—a decision she'd soon come to regret.

"He needed medicine three times a day. ... Apparently, I can easily dose my cat but my mom couldn't," Stephanie explains. "She tried to capture the cat to give him his medicine and he was so angry he attacked her pretty good."



But like all grandmothers, Stephanie's mom was more concerned about DZ's well-being than her own badly mangled hand. Worried that she hadn't been able to give him any medicine, she managed to wrangle the cat into the carrier, wrapped up her finger and drove to the vet.

Further complicating the situation was the fact that Stephanie's mom was unfamiliar with Connecticut and was, as some might say, navigationally challenged.

"My poor mother, who has never been to Connecticut and can barely drive around [her own suburban city] by herself without a GPS, has to take the cat—with a bleeding hand—into the car to drive to the vet," Stephanie says.

Laughing as she describes the comedy of errors, Stephanie says, "My mom goes to the vet and they were more concerned about her finger than they were with the cat, so they sent her to the emergency room!"

Sigh of relief

After returning home from her trip, Stephanie relieved her mother of catsitting duty and resumed the diagnosis journey, trying to get answers on Danger Zone's condition.

"I was preparing myself for a cancer diagnosis because he was a perfectly healthy, normal cat one day; the next day he wasn't," she recalls. "If it had been a tumor growing on his spine, that could show those kinds of symptoms overnight."

MRI results did show something abnormal along DZ's spine, so Stephanie opted to move forward with exploratory surgery and a biopsy. After a tense week of waiting for results, she finally received the call she had been hoping for: No cancer.

Danger Zone was ultimately diagnosed with immune-mediated myositis, a chronic muscle disease. While the condition is lifelong, the good news is that it can be managed with treatment.

Keep yer mitts off me

Not long after figuring out what was going on with DZ, Stephanie had to go out of town again and called on her mom to catsit, promising it would be much easier this time.

"I said, 'Mom, it's no big deal. All you have to do is put him in the carrier, take him to the vet. They're going to sedate him, take his blood and you get to bring him home.'"

Many cat owners can probably relate to the difficulty involved in getting a cat into a carrier; trying to get a suspicious cat into a carrier increases that difficulty by several orders of magnitude. Trying to get Danger Zone into a carrier essentially ensures bodily injury.

"When it was time to go to the vet [my mom] and her husband couldn't get the cat into the carrier because he was swiping and hissing and being typical Danger Zone," Stephanie says. "So she decided to put on oven mitts to try and put him in the cat carrier."

"What I didn't tell her is Danger Zone is terrified of oven mitts. Whenever I'm in the kitchen, if I'm going to use the oven mitts, I need to make sure he's not around—otherwise he'll try and attack me. So Mom gets the oven mitts and her husband is on the other side of the bed and it's a two-man job to try and get the cat in the carrier."

"My mom said they were traumatized, but I can't even imagine my poor cat having oven mitts come at him with two people!"

Splash zone

Things went from merely disastrous to full-on calamitous once they reached the vet's office. The doctor and staff were handling an emergency case, which meant DZ had to wait.

"He's been labeled at the vet as a 'do-not-touch' cat, so nobody wanted to take him out of the carrier. Poor Danger Zone was in the carrier for about an hour and a half, maybe two hours," Stephanie says, explaining how the situation escalated.

"When it was time for the vet to take him out, he christened the entire staff—a firehose-type stream all over the vets and the vet assistants," she says sheepishly. "Fortunately, at this point Danger Zone was a regular [at the vet's office] and they all thought it was hilarious. My mom was mortified."

Out of the danger zone, thanks to Nationwide

All hilarity aside, the costs for Danger Zone's surgical procedures and medical treatments were no laughing matter.

"As we went through the diagnostic process and then the treatment process, my total vet bill was about \$17,000 for this incident. I didn't factor in flying out my mom twice," says Stephanie. "The only way I was able to afford all of this was because of Nationwide."

Thankfully, DZ's condition is being managed and his future is optimistic, according to Stephanie.

"People might think that indoor cats aren't going to be vulnerable to illness or sickness. That's not the case," she muses. "I never thought that my 3-year-old Himalayan would cost six times as much as my 150 pound Bernese mountain dog with hip dysplasia. ... I certainly am glad that I did have [Nationwide] to protect me and help me cover the costs." 🐾



Leaving your cat with a sitter? These tips can help ensure there are no purr-blems.

1. A few days before you leave, start jotting down notes about your cat's quirks and habits. This way, you're less likely to forget to tell your sitter about the fact that Kitty is, say, terrified of oven mitts.
2. If your sitter won't be staying in your home, make sure she's scheduled to come at least twice a day. Your cat gets attention and playtime, and the sitter can keep track of any problems that might come up.
3. Leave some worn T-shirts in your cat's favorite spots around the house. Having things with your familiar scent on them will help him feel less lonely while you're gone.
4. Write out an "In case of emergency" contact list for your sitter with the following information:

- ☐ Phone and address of your regular veterinarian
- ☐ Phone and address of your nearest 24-hour veterinarian
- ☐ Your Nationwide pet insurance policy number
- ☐ Your cat's medications (name and dose)
- ☐ **vethelpline**®: 855-331-2833
- ☐ Nationwide pet insurance: 800-540-2016

Enroll in your Nationwide® pet insurance voluntary benefit at work and choose from 50%, 70% or 90% back on eligible vet bills. Get a quote today at [PetsNationwide.com](https://www.PetsNationwide.com)

*Some exclusions may apply. Certain coverages may be subject to pre-existing exclusion. See policy documents for a complete list of exclusions. Reimbursement options may not be available in all states. Insurance terms, definitions and explanations are intended for informational purposes only and do not in any way replace or modify the definitions and information contained in individual insurance contracts, policies or declaration pages, which are controlling. Such terms and availability may vary by state and exclusions may apply. Underwritten by Veterinary Pet Insurance Company (CA), Columbus, OH, an A.M. Best A+ rated company (2018); National Casualty Company (all other states), Columbus, OH, an A.M. Best A+ rated company (2018). Agency of Record: DVM Insurance Agency, Nationwide, the Nationwide N and Eagle, and Nationwide Is on your side are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. ©2019 Nationwide. 19GRP5935b

