

## Tabby Has Been 'On Duty' for a Decade

**Max, a 21-pound gray tabby, is the clinic cat at Luke Air Force Base Veterinary Clinic in Arizona.**

Posted: October 21, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Max the clinic cat and Kisma, a military working dog, have a cordial relationship. Photo: Deborah Silliman Wolfe, courtesy Luke Air Force Base Veterinary Clinic. In the stressful world of military life, a pet can have a positive effect. A 21-pound gray tabby cat named Max has been supporting the Air Force as a stress reliever from his post at Luke Air Force Base Veterinary Clinic in Glendale, Ariz., for the past decade.

In 1999, Max was discovered in a gutter after a monsoon and brought into the clinic.

"He was a 6-week-old kitten when he arrived," said Joan Seifert, 56th Force Support Squadron veterinary clinic office clerk and retired Air Force Strategic Air Command emergency actions controller. "Nobody called and said they were missing a kitten, so he hung out here and we decided to make him our clinic cat."

Soon enough, Max began to take on his own duties, roaming the office throughout the day and interacting with pets and their owners. The staff found him helpful with some of the more difficult patients, too.

"We had a Chihuahua in here one day and we were trying to get him into a cardboard carrier," Seifert said. "Every time we tried to put him in the box, the Chihuahua would try to bite us. Max must have heard us struggling, so he came running around the corner and batted the Chihuahua in the face. The dog was so baffled, we were able to close the carrier."

Through his years of service, Max has played an important role in base public relations, a press release noted. At least once a week an airman, family member or civilian will come to the clinic asking if the staff still has "that big cat."

"We had a colonel from the Aerospace Medical Squadron call up and ask if Max was available because he wanted to bring his family over to see him," Seifert said. "I told him I would check his schedule and of course Max was free. The colonel brought his family over to see him."

The vet staff also recalled a little girl who lived on base whose family didn't have any pets, so her father would bring her over to play with Max. Other people at the base sometimes bring their cameras and snap photos of him, they said.

"He plays into it when he knows he is getting attention or when people come and take photos," said Michaela Debelius, 56th FSS veterinary technician. "He loves it."

Debelius' husband, Staff Sgt. Ralph Debelius, 56th Equipment Maintenance Squadron Air Ground Equipment mobility manager, visits Max every day.

"I am a big cat person and he increases my morale on a daily basis," Debelius said. "He is really friendly, and he has this kind of feisty attitude. He has a lot of personality and is great for a good laugh."

Ever the politician, Max has not only charmed active-duty airmen, he also made friends with a few of the military working dogs that are housed right next to the kennel. When MWD Kisma, 11, comes over for an appointment, Max jumps up on the table right beside him and cuddles.

Kisma's handler, Senior Airman Steven Bruner, 56th Security Forces Squadron MWD handler, says he has never seen anything like Kisma and Max's relationship before.

"They told me before I came over here for the first time, that Kisma was pretty friendly with the cat," he said. "I was surprised."