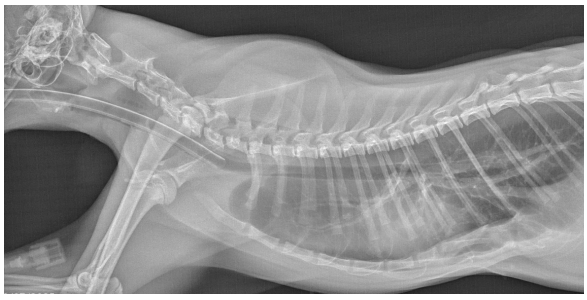
Athena is One Lucky Cat

On a recent trip through Tokyo, I was fortunate enough to visit Gotokuji Temple which is said to be the birthplace of the manekineko, or '**luck-inviting** cat figurine". According to temple legend, in the early 17th century, Li Naotaka, the second lord of the Omi-Hikone Domain, was caught in a sudden thunderstorm and a cat living at the temple invited him inside, providing shelter from the storm. In gratitude, Naotaka dedicated the temple to the Li clan and the temple has grown into a respected and important place. The temple is now filled with lucky cat figurines donated by worshippers, symbolizing the cat's enduring legacy of good luck.

A very similar story can be heard at VetHQ where our wonderful Administration Suprvisor, JJ, opened her own front door to a pregnant female cat during her time of need. Jj looked after the mum and kittens and rehomed all of them, to appropriate loving homes. **Athena** was the last kitten- she was born with a congenital (present at birth) condition called **pectus excavatum**. This is a rare condition of cats (and humans) where the breastbone (sternum) grows inward, instead of outward, creating a sunken appearance of the chest. Athena was the smallest of her litter and we were not sure of whether she would survive- but JJ wanted to give her a chance.



Her chest xrays confirmed the diagnosis but despite her set back she continues to thrive, eat well and play with the other cats. The prognosis for cats with mild-to-moderate pectus excavatum is good, with appropriate care. Athena is one lucky cat! Her mother wandered into the correct open door.

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