

# My New Pet

I've wanted a new pet for awhile, mostly since my cat passed away almost a year ago now. What I want most is another cat – I love cats, and it would be the perfect type of pet for our household. But unfortunately, I'm allergic to cats. When I had my cat, it was a constant struggle to decide if I should pet her or not. I always wanted to of course, but then I would itch for hours, my eyes would water, and sometimes I'd get hives. And, my allergy symptoms were worse during my 4 pregnancies. I just don't want to go through that again – so no cat for us. We have a Jack Russell Terrier mix, so any type of animal she'll want to chase and bark at is out also – which means no rats, ferrets, small birds, etc. So that leaves me with reptiles or bugs, I guess. And the only reptile I'm interested in owning is a tortoise. Those can be kind of costly and I'm not entirely sure that my Jerk Russell Terrier mix won't want to hunt it, so I'm going to hold off on the tortoise for a little bit. Also complicating the situation is that I really don't have any extra time to spend with a pet, so that limits my options even further. So lately I've been in limbo, trying to decide what to get. But the other day, a new pet sort of fell into my lap.

It's a ladybug I found in the house – normally I'd let any bugs go outside that I find in the house, but it's way too cold out for a ladybug, and I don't want him to suffer while he froze to death. So I looked up what ladybugs eat, and I found out that their favorite food is aphids, which are an even smaller group of insects. Knowing I couldn't get any of those easily, I put a drop of honey in a little container with the ladybug. He went over to it and started eating it! So I put a little drop of water in there too, and he must have smelled that or something, because he left the honey and went over to the water – it was really interesting to watch. He's survived in captivity about a week now, and I have to say

I'm getting a little attached to him as a pet. It started out as just a fun little project, and I didn't expect it to live more than a few days. But he did, and I've named him Francis (like the ladybug from A Bug's Life), and he is my secret pet – the kids don't know about him. If they did, he'd be dead already because my 4-year-old adores bugs and often smothers them with love – literally. I think today I'll go out and get Francis some grass for his container, because earlier when I fed him, he REFUSED to go back into his container! I'm not kidding; he was sticking to my finger and just doing everything possible to not get locked back in there. Finally, I put him on a Q-tip and cut it to fit in the container and locked him in. I feel a little badly that I've kidnapped this ladybug, but I think I'm his only chance at life. Outside, he'd freeze, and if I let him go into my house, I don't think he'd be able to find food and water and he'd either die or go into hibernation until a kid or a dog got him.

So anyway, I guess I have my new pet. I still don't expect him to last very long, but for now it's fun just taking care of an animal, especially since he's my little secret. If he's still around in another week or so, I'll take his picture and post it. Say hi to Francis!