

Directions
Read this passage. Then answer questions 25 through 31.

Excerpt from *Tiger in Trouble!* *And More True Stories of Amazing Animal Rescues*

by Kelly Milner Halls

1 After two days, Nitro was finally getting better. He was hungry. He even started to walk around his cage. But Kathryn noticed something strange.

2 Three of the four walls of the cage were made of concrete. The fourth wall was made of chain link. Most animals faced the chain-link wall. They like to watch what is going on outside of their cages. Nitro did not.

3 “He would sit and stare at the concrete walls,” Kathryn said. “And when he did turn toward our voices, he would follow the sound of our voices. But not our movements.”

4 Kathryn knew this meant one thing: Nitro was blind.

Nitro’s New Life

5 Now that he was healthy, Nitro was ready for his new cage. But he couldn’t see it. His owner in Kansas had never noticed Nitro was blind. That cage had been so small, Nitro had been able to memorize every inch. So, he may not have seemed blind.

6 Why was Nitro blind? That’s hard to tell.

7 Kathryn ruled out a brain injury. And there were no scars around Nitro’s eyes that might mean he had an injury. “We just don’t know what caused his condition,” Kathryn said.

8 Here’s what they did know. The caretakers at the Rescue had a big challenge ahead of them. They had to help a blind tiger find his way, without the use of his eyes.

GO ON

- 9 Nitro walked through his big new home. He reached out with huge six-inch paws. He was trying to feel what was ahead of him. He did not know where things were around him. Not a twig, not a path, not a feeding dish.
- 10 He was a little afraid. He could never tell when he was getting close to running into the fence.
- 11 “He was roughing up his nose, because he would walk right up to the fence and hit it,” Kathryn said. “We kept thinking, ‘you have to slow down.’” But how do you teach a blind tiger how to find a fence he cannot see?
- 12 “We decided to start marking the fence with peppermint,” Kathryn explained. “He would know when he smelled it, he should slow down. The peppermint marked the borders of his space.”
- 13 Once he learned where his fences were, the people at the Rescue put down sand pathways. The sand pathways led to Nitro’s food, water, and his cozy den.
- 14 When Nitro felt sand under his paws, he knew he would end up in one of those areas. When Nitro felt leaves, dirt, and twigs, he knew he was not heading in the right direction.
- 15 In time, Nitro learned where every bump, every tree, and every food box was in his new cage. When he did, the sand and the peppermint could be put away. Nitro was finally home.
- 16 Caretakers noticed a big change in Nitro. He mastered his space. He couldn’t see people. But he knew where they were, even if they stood perfectly still.
- 17 He chuffed in their direction to get them to answer. He wanted to hear if he knew their voices. He wanted to know who they were.
- 18 Nitro, the blind tiger, has become a Rescue favorite. Volunteers guide people through Carolina Tiger Rescue once a week. They never miss a stop at Nitro’s cage. They tell his story and give him little treats (scraps of chicken or beef). Nitro never disappoints.
- 19 “He has a great attitude,” Kathryn says. “Things haven’t been easy for him. But he still comes up to the fence happily chuffing.”

DID YOU KNOW?

What’s a chuffle? It’s the sound a tiger makes when it sees or smells a friend. It sounds like a purr with a tiny cough.