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How a Cat Thrown Off a Train Became a National Scandal in Russia

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Twix the cat. **Social media**

Cats are the most popular pet in Russia, with about half of Russians reporting one in their household. Over the past weekend, social media has been in an uproar after a pet cat named Twix was thrown from a train and died in freezing conditions.

Twix, a ginger and white cat, was traveling with his owner's stepfather from Yekaterinburg to St. Petersburg on Jan. 11. At some point while he was sleeping, Twix escaped from his carrier.

Multiple passengers saw the cat roaming the train. Eventually, a conductor spotted Twix and mistook him for a stray as nobody claimed ownership.

Though the conductor claimed Twix had simply run away, CCTV footage shared on social media shows someone throwing the cat off the train during a stop in Kirov, 800 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

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Temperatures in the Kirov region were as low as minus 30 degrees Celsius at the time. Twix was found dead on Jan. 20 and is believed to have died from frostbite. The man who discovered him said he saw what looked like dog tracks around the body, indicating that Twix might have been attacked.

The story went viral online, with more people searching for Twix's name than President Vladimir Putin's on the day the cat was found.

Twix's owner Edgar Gaifullin announced a 30,000-ruble ($341) reward for finding his cat. Over 5,000 volunteers joined the weeklong search for Twix.

Over 200,000 people signed a petition calling for the conductor who threw Twix off the train to be dismissed.

Over 65,000 people have signed another petition demanding that she face criminal proceedings.

Currently, no action has been taken against the conductor. Though Gaifullin says he intends to pursue her in court, authorities have refused to take action, arguing that no crime was committed.

Russian Railways has apologized for Twix's death and announced they would change their rules about handling pets on trains. Instead of throwing them into the wilderness, conductors will have to hand animals to personnel at railway stations who will contact animal protection groups.

The State Duma will hold a round-table on Tuesday to discuss the rules for the transportation of animals. The head of the State Duma Committee on Ecology Dmitry Kobylkin said the move was prompted by Twix's story.

Chairman of the Investigative Committee Alexandra Bastrykin has ordered an investigation into what happened.

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