



McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

REFERRAL VETERINARY SERVICES

Unfortunately, we just can't know it all and that is why having veterinarians with extra qualifications in a field (who are only willing to offer help and advice), is of enormous value when we are faced with a difficult, challenging cases.

Recently I referred a 7 year old English Springer Spaniel to an orthopaedic surgeon at VSA in Auckland for spinal surgery. I have had personal experience with the team at VSA and great results in the past. Dusty is a patient we have seen a lot of recently. He was recently neutered and treated for an enlarged prostate and more recently I have examined and treated Dusty for what we believed to be unrelenting lower back pain.

Dusty is the perfect patient, amenable to a lot of manipulation and palpation, although he now often freezes and drops when he sees me coming. Previously Dusty has had CT scans, radiographs and blood testing to try to understand why at times he seems crippled with pain. He is unable to run with other dogs, play vigorously, jump, swim for long periods of time – in other words, "just be a dog". His onset of pain is quick and he wears his pain on his little face. We have treated Dusty with numerous types of pain and inflammation modifying drugs with no real success, as well as physiotherapy and hydrotherapy.

Dusty's owner and I discussed in depth our next step which had to be an MRI at St Georges Hospital to determine whether Dusty was a surgical candidate or not. Dusty's owner is a nurse herself and fully understands an accurate diagnosis is crucial if we are to understand Dusty's pain better and do the best for him. Luckily it also helps to have pet insurance, as MRI diagnostics and spinal surgery are right up there in cost for the average client. Dusty may make the move to the UK soon, so I wanted to make real sure we were doing all we could for him.

The staff at St Georges are helpful, knowledgeable and lovely with our canine patients. I regularly travel with patients to sedate and monitor them for their MRI which can take up to an hour. It isn't painful but they have to lie



very still in order for the radiologist to get good pictures. Ear plugs are inserted as the machinery is very noisy.

In Dusty's case, even I could see the cause of his severe pain. He had a severe disc prolapse and soft tissue hypertrophy at the lumbosacral junction (L7-S1) causing spinal cord compression. His L6-L7 disc space was also moderately prolapsed. The radiologist also noted a congenital

abnormality of his aorta, an

incidental finding.

The surgeon in Auckland had access to his MRI and could read the images. He concluded that Dusty would benefit from spinal cord decompression and stabilisation of the lumbosacral disc space, which would allow Dusty a far better quality of life.

The surgeon liaised with Dusty's owner immediately and within weeks Dusty was flown to Auckland for a referral consultation, operated on successfully and is now rehabilitating in Auckland post operatively for 6 weeks, until the follow up xrays show that there is bony healing and stability of the plates and screws. Dusty is also receiving physiotherapy to help with a quicker recovery.

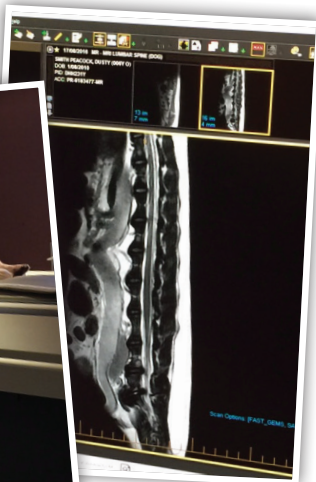
A real success story for Dusty and his family and it just goes to show that the best veterinary medicine is often a collaborative team effort, where our primary objective is to successfully cure, heal and care for our patients.

At McMaster & Heap we are also extremely lucky to have the expertise and knowledge of Steve Heap, in diagnosing and treating patients with Eye diseases and Catherine Morganti, who regularly performs ultrasounds and endoscopy on cats and dogs, allowing us more diagnostic options to working up a sick patient. We also employ a registered veterinary dentist, when required, to perform root canal surgeries and pulpotomies on teeth, when clients would rather save their dogs teeth than us perform extractions.

Steve's caseload at McMaster & Heap would be 80% eye referral work and much of this ends up being operated on. Steve also travels to Dunedin every 3 months for 2 jammed packed days of eye referral work and surgery. These vets have invested time to develop certain skills, knowledge and expertise in a specialised area of veterinary medicine and are of huge help to us primary vets in providing solutions and treatments with our patients. We find our clients want the best for their pets (as we do) and welcome referral vet services.

For any referral advice please contact our Practice.

Dr Michele McMaster



OPEN 7 DAYS

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