



McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

“PORTIA” - The name says it all!!

Here at McMaster and Heap Vets we treat all sorts and types of loved pets. It would be fair to say cats and dogs make up probably 99% of the work we do, but occasionally we are faced with a sick “pocket” pet who needs urgent attention, and we have the necessary skills and equipment to handle these delicate little guys.

Portia is a fabulously funny, cute and adventurous little rat who is loved and lives with hundreds of children – she is a very important resident at Medbury School in Ilam. Everyone knows her at the school and all the kids were worried when a large mass developed on her right side, behind her foreleg.

Portia is 3 years old which is really old for a rat. Despite the lump, Portia was in such good spirits, behaving normally, eating well, running around the house, not appearing unwell at all. The only option was to surgically remove the lump and this would require an anaesthetic. There is an increased anaesthetic risk in a patient like a rat as they are so small. This means we can't pass an endotracheal tube making it hard to ventilate them if we need to and keeping them warm



can be difficult. Also we don't have access to veins to administer intravenous drugs so she was masked down with isoflurane and oxygen.

All that aside, her owners and I felt it was definitely worth attempting the surgery. The mass was going to grow even larger and was almost dragging on the ground. She was going to find it difficult to get around and there was a chance it could spread to other sites. Incidentally her lungs were radiographed and found to be clear.

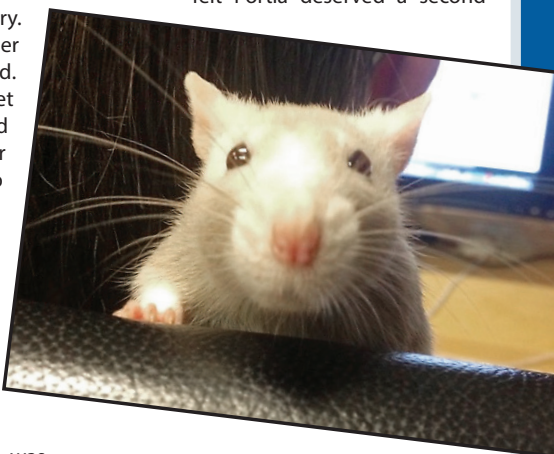
Portia was admitted for surgery and spent most of the day riding on our nurse Kim's shoulders. She was nosy and inquisitive wanting to check everything and everyone out. We placed her in a special box to gently and safely anaesthetise her. Once she was sleepy she had a mask placed over her face to keep her asleep. She was gently laid on her back and to maintain her body temperature she lay on a heating pad with all her tiny legs were bubble wrapped to conserve heat. She was then wrapped in foil and blankets. The mass came out



relatively easy and quickly. My nurse Kim kept a stethoscope on her heart the entire time, making sure her heart rate didn't fall. Her incision line was glued together with special glue as rats love chewing sutures out! She woke up within minutes and hopped into her feathery warm little bed. Then she proceeded to munch on some of her food. She was injected with some pain relief, some antibiotics and some warmed fluid to help her recover from her surgery.

Portia was the “perfect” patient – she handled everything perfectly and just got on with it. In our family my sons would say, “she manned up”!

Cancers are very common in rats and even though Portia isn't a spring chicken, I still think she's got a lot more living to do at Medbury. Actually if the truth be known, this was Portia's second surgery to remove the cancerous growth. She was operated on 6 months ago as these cancers do reoccur. Due to her excellent health otherwise, it was felt Portia deserved a second



chance at surgical removal. She has come through with flying colours and can now enjoy some more time with her huge family at Medbury.

Dr Michele McMaster

OPEN 7 DAYS



Find us on
Facebook

**Cnr Hoon Hay & Coppell Place
Phone 338 2534, Fax 339 8624**

**E. mcmasterandheap@yahoo.co.nz
www.mcmasterheap.co.nz**



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