



## McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

# KIDNEY SURGERY

A 6 year old Golden Lab called, you guessed it, LOLA, came to see us for a referral ultrasound at the end of last year because she had been urinating "clots" of blood. She was clinically bright and alert at the visit but did have a history of possibly having access to rat bait 7 days earlier.

The abdominal ultrasound was performed by Catherine and she found a possible bleed into the left kidney but no sign of tumours anywhere else. A wide range of blood and urine testing was performed, including clotting times in case of rat bait access, and all showed up very normal, apart from evidence that she had experienced a recent bleed. So initially she was discharged on Vitamin K in case of rat bait and antibiotics. She seemed bouncy and was of course still ravenous but a follow up ultrasound was scheduled for the following week to check to see if the haemorrhage had resolved in the left kidney.



She returned happily to see Kirsty the following week looking great. No further blood clots were seen in her urine. The ultrasound of the left kidney appeared in worse shape – the kidney was increased in size and still full of fluid – blood? Specialists were consulted and it was agreed that a CT scan was needed to rule in or out cancer.

Kirsty accompanied Lola to her CT scan. The radiologist noted marked pathological changes in the left kidney that resembled a rapidly progressing primary kidney tumour. No sign of cancer was seen in the lungs or other parts of the abdomen. It was decided that she needed a nephrectomy (removal of the left kidney) fairly urgently while she still essentially well. Her right kidney was functioning normally (as seen on CT scan and via the bloods) and without surgery her prognosis was probably less than 1 month.

So Kirsty and myself put our hands up to operate on Lola. A nephrectomy surgery is not to be taken lightly so we did our research before attempting the left kidney removal (text book reading, U tube videos, consulting with other surgeons). We had a blood donor dog, a German shepherd called Pepper, on standby in case she lost a lot of blood or we couldn't control surgical bleeding.

My Lola frequently gave blood but since she's had a renal tumour removed and undergone chemotherapy, she can no longer have blood drawn. It is important for a clinic to have access to a healthy, young, disease free canine patient in the case a blood transfusion is needed. Collecting blood is largely straight forward although the donor dog often needs to be sedated as the collection needle is large bore and goes into the jugular vein. The patient must lay very still while we are collecting the blood. Pepper did an amazing job and her blood was sent to the After hours clinic with Lola in case she required it.

The surgery was a complete success, and even though there were a few tense moments during the 2 hour operation, Kirsty and I were thrilled with the final outcome. Her left kidney and ureter were carefully removed and the bleeding controlled. Georgie did a superb job of anaesthetic monitoring – not straight forward at all. Lola woke up brilliantly and has really never looked back. Her owners were very thrilled and grateful for the work our entire team carried out from start to finish. And the best news being, the mass in the kidney wasn't "cancer", the kidney was diseased, non functioning and had a large blood clot present.

Lola will need ongoing monitoring to make sure the surviving kidney maintains good health. This will be done by regular blood and urine testing with her primary vet in Ashburton. Just like with my Lola, we are out of the woods but still need to keep our eyes open for any small changes. My Lola did have kidney cancer confirmed so she gets 6 monthly CT scans at St Georges and 3 monthly blood and urine testing. Periodically she is fed Prescription kidney diets but for now her surviving kidney is holding up well. Long may it last – my Lola is now swimming and relaxing up in the Bay of Islands with the family.

**Take home message – consult your vet immediately if your dog passes clots of blood in the urine. This isn't normal.**



**OPEN 7 DAYS**

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

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



McMaster & Heap