



## McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

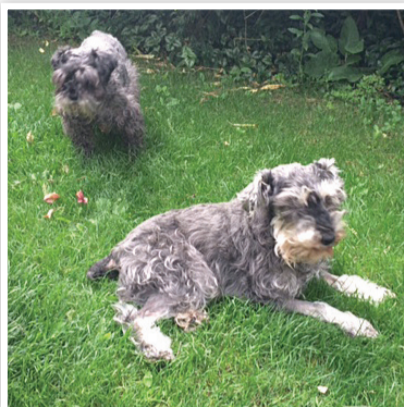
# Mighty Max

For my next article, I want to share a story about one gutsy, determined little 14 year old schnauzer "Max" and his wonderful family who loved him with all their hearts. It was obvious Max was a very integral, valued member of their family and they turned to us for help. They weren't ready to let him go, but he was 14 and often it can be a hard decision to decide when is "the right time" to let go! My initial job was to do preliminary testing urgently, stabilise and support Max and provide pain medication, until we had a grip on his problem list....which by the way was quite extensive.

Max presented to me in a very bad way. He appeared to have acutely gone down hill and when I saw him he was completely off his legs, unable to stand, not having eaten that morning and he looked as though we could lose him if we didn't act quickly. He was immediately admitted, placed on intravenous fluids and pain medications and a series of blood tests run. One of our nurses was stationed with Max all day, constantly monitoring and medicating him, repositioning and toileting Max. Max was sick and required 24 hour care – in fact 24 hour care continued for a week and after each day with us, he was transferred to the After Hours clinic through the night. These sick patients deserve 1 on 1 care with an individualised hospital plan. As vets, all 5 of us were involved in this case.

### **Max's diagnoses list was large.**

1. We found a splenic tumour on ultrasound that required major abdominal surgery to remove it in case it ruptured.
2. He had severe inflammation/ infection of unknown origin (possibly pancreatitis or discospondylosis) which finally responded to intravenous antibiotics.
3. He had severe blood loss anemia which was a complication of chronic illness. It responded to treatment for stomach ulcers, which he may have had.
4. Severe abdominal pain that didn't initially respond to medications – either referred spinal pain or true abdominal pain which resolved as the infection/ inflammation subsided.
5. All 4 legs were weak and he was incoordinated and couldn't stand or walk for days, maybe again as a result of infection/ inflammation.



This sad, frustrating, and at times stressful case pushed us, as vets and intensive care nurses caring for Max, to our limits BUT the rewards were HUGE. We witnessed a courageous, spirited, stoic and very brave little dog trot on out of our clinic eventually, like nothing the previous week had even happened. It was a moment we will never forget. It just wasn't Max's time for the "next chapter" in his life – he knew it all along and we came to realise it.

Max's family support couldn't have been stronger. Everyone in the family was involved in transporting him to the afterhours over night, visiting constantly, medicating and helping him recuperate. They showed him unconditional love and he showed them his "fight" for life. As Ange aptly puts it, "Max is in better health now than we have seen for months. We are thrilled, his illness fooled us into thinking he was in the "Departure lounge" of life!!"



*All I can say is Patience, Time, Faith, great Medicine and Love heals everything. A special thanks to my AWESOME team of vets and nurses who put hours of time and energy into ensuring Max's stay was the very BEST in everyway and all his needs were met and delivered with care and respect. We couldn't be happier with the final outcome.*

**Dr Michele McMaster**

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

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



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