



Max's new heart



Max loves life (and bones)!

A while ago though, he had just run out of puff. He would collapse with excitement or exercise and more than once his Dad was worried that he had lost him.

Dr Richard Lucy examined him, performing a barrage of tests including ECGs and heart ultrasound (echocardiography). He diagnosed a 3rd degree heart block. This is a condition where the heart's normal electrical impulses are not conducted through the normal tissues. The heart rate is very slow and the patient is unable to increase heart rate in response to exercise or excitement. Left untreated, it is fatal.

Richard used to work in the Cardiology Department at Christchurch Public Hospital and has extensive postgraduate Veterinary qualifications in Veterinary Cardiology, Ultrasound, X-ray and Medicine. He has worked in universities in New Zealand, Australia and the UK and has scanned everything from people to tigers, cheetahs, chimpanzees, gorillas and guinea pigs. Richard works almost exclusively at McMaster and Heap Veterinary Practice performing Referral Ultrasonography for vets from all over the South Island.

He organised the surgical implantation of a pacemaker with the kind help and immense technical skills of Rose - the Senior Cardiac Electrophysiologist from Medtronic. Medtronic are one of the largest producers of human cardiac electrophysiology devices in the world.



Although our patients are four legged, their hearts still work in the same basic way as two legged patients!

After a day or two of rest, Max was ready and rearing to go again. In fact keeping him properly rested while he healed was the main problem!

He gets regular ultrasounds to check his heart function and the pacemaker is regularly rechecked at the same time. The pacemaker is often fine tuned a little to ensure that it is working optimally for Max. Cleverly, the device records and stores all the electrical activity of the heart (and the pacemaker). All the data is available to be examined using another machine that "talks" to the pacemaker directly through the skin!

Max loves his new lease on life, loves chewing bones and his parents love having their Max bright and happy again.

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