

Charlie back living the life of Riley

By Annie Wright – The Wright one

Phillipa Gordon loves cats and says her two, Charlie a Siamese and Sophie a Burmese, are treated as her children. She says both cats are an important part of her life and, until recently, they had been a healthy pair, full of fun and mischief.

Last Christmas Charlie (13) developed a dry cough which Phillipa thought could be due to fur balls as he is a perpetual cleaner. She started brushing him more often to remove the excess fur but this didn't seem to help. A few weeks later she took both cats to her local vet John Mead at Herne Bay Veterinary Clinic for their annual health check-up.

"While there I mentioned Charlie's persistent cough and John was concerned. He suggested I leave him in overnight for a chest x-ray but, when nothing showed up in the results, John thought he may have asthma. A few days later Charlie started breathing through his mouth, which sounded like an old man snoring, so I took him back to see John. He took a blood test to check out other options - a few days later the results came back showing Charlie had Feline Aids." Herne Bay Vet John Mead says after talking with Phillipa he decided to refer his patient onto the Veterinary Specialist Group (VSG) because, while he did have Feline Aids, Charlie had a good chance of living a useful and healthy life.

"Feline Aids itself is not necessarily a death sentence for cats but it does lower their immunity to other diseases. I felt Charlie had a good chance of recovering from his breathing difficulties and so referred him on to VSG where they have the latest technology as well as specialist care.

"VSG veterinarian Darren Fry took on Charlie's care and promptly arranged a series of tests, including an endoscope examination to help fully identify Charlie's problem.

"Charlie was anaesthetised and an endoscopic camera was fed into his nasal passages. This showed a fleshy mass was causing his breathing problems - subsequent tests indicated cancerous lymphoma. Darren suggested a programme of chemotherapy and this was started within days," says Phillipa.

Phillipa praises the way VSG presented the options for Charlie to her. The endoscope examination was recorded on DVD and shown to her so she was better able to understand what was going on. She had all the normal concerns and Darren talked to her about all the pros and cons. "We discussed the treatment, the costs plus the possible outcomes. Darren was

positive Charlie would again enjoy a good quality of life after treatment so I felt quite confident when I made the decision to go ahead with treatment.

After the first round of chemotherapy a scan showed Charlie's tumour had reduced dramatically and he was soon breathing freely.

"Although Charlie suffered some vomiting after the first dose, he was fine after subsequent doses. He is now having chemotherapy fortnightly and with the help of appetite stimulants he is eating well and keeping his food down.

"The aftercare attention was amazing. The VSG team phoned me everyday for the first week after I took him home and then every Sunday morning for about four weeks. They said they wanted to check that all was going ok. I was most impressed with this; we don't get that service from our doctors or hospitals.



Charlie and Phillipa

"Phillipa also says that she was really impressed with her own veterinarian, John Mead, through all this. "John went the extra mile and suggested the referral - he knows how much my cats mean to me. The treatment Charlie received saved his life as without the intervention and expertise of the VSG team he would have not survived."

She says because the VSG team took time to discuss all aspects of Charlie's care she felt she was able to make an informed decision about his future.

"I have never regretted it. Charlie is back to his old self and can be found napping in the hot water cupboard or reclining on the possum throw at the foot of my bed - he's once again living the life of Riley and it's all been well worth the effort."

