

Few clues in Emma's history - by Jane Finlayson, Backbone Marketing Ltd

It was 2 years ago that Emma became ill and had everybody stumped as to what was wrong with her. Now, due to the dedication of her owners Kathy and Gary Christopher, her vets at Howick Veterinary Clinic and the medical team at VSG Emma has overcome a range of challenges.

Emma is a 12 year old miniature poodle who rules the roost in the Christopher family. She lives with Kathy, Gary, two cats and a new kitten. Kathy says "Emma is wilful and very vocal, just ask the team at Howick Vets!"

It was June 2004 when Kathy and Gary noticed that Emma was not herself. She was having trouble getting up onto the bed for her usual snuggle and Kathy assumed old age was starting to creep up on the plucky poodle. Her mobility further deteriorated and soon she couldn't get up on her favourite spot on the couch.

When she started to vomit the Christophers promptly took Emma into Dr Leon Goldwater at Howick Vets, who found she was also suffering abdominal pain. Emma was given IV fluids and antibiotics and initially she showed improvement.

Then in mid May Emma "crashed" again and was back at the vets with general weakness in all limbs and she couldn't stand. Leon says "Emma's presentation was very unusual - it was a real puzzle for us. We worked through the normal differential diagnosis for her symptoms (which included Cushing's disease)



but still were baffled". It was at this point that Leon suggested that Emma be referred to Mark Robson at VSG.

Kathy says that she had not realized that specialists were available for pets and she and Gary jumped at the opportunity to have Emma assessed at VSG.

After the first visit with Mark it appeared that he too was somewhat baffled with Emma's case, however he had several theories. After methodical elimination of some of the theories Mark decided on treatment for Cushing's disease despite few of the classic symptoms being present. Emma received Lysodren and after a week she had improved.

For a year Emma was great, and then she again went down hill. Mark explained that this was the effect of the Lysodren. Emma now had Addison's disease, (the opposite of Cushing's) which can occur inadvertently in some dogs given Lysodren. To overcome this, daily doses of steroid hormones are required. Again Emma responded well.

But the story doesn't end there - Kathy explains "In March this year I had Emma back at Howick Vets and Leon ordered an ultra sound which was performed by VSG's Chris Warman. This confirmed Emma also had a heart murmur and treatment began for that."

Leon says "Emma has responded well again and is lucky to have such dedicated and loving owners. We did a dental on her recently and Mark Robson gave us advice on best practice for this given her conditions. She came through the anaesthetic really well, woke up and began yapping her head off as usual. She's tough and is a real character - it's very rewarding to be involved in a case like this where everyone works together. The end result is the patient and clients are happy."

Kathy can't speak highly enough of her vets and VSG "Our vets had been marvellous - both Howick and VSG have been great. They worked together to overcome Emma's challenges."

She is back to her usual old self and still enjoys both the arrival and departure of Kathy and Gary's grandchildren and as always has a lot to say.