

Jackson is Back - by Annie Wright - The Write One

If it wasn't for the superb veterinary skills and technology available at Veterinary Specialist Group (VSG) Jackson, a much loved Jack Russell terrier, could be just a memory for the Taylor family from Manukau.

Chris and Bev Taylor and daughter Claire have two dogs - Jackson and a Kelpie called Spot. Both are exuberant, enthusiastic dogs who like nothing better than nipping about, poking their noses into everything that moves.

Shortly after Christmas, while the Taylors were shifting into a new home, they received a call from the family who were caring for both dogs. Chris says his brother-in-law had let both dogs out for a run and noticed that while Jackson was happily running around with Spot he was coughing very badly as if he had something stuck in his throat.

"I took him straight down to veterinarian Sue Grant at South Auckland Veterinary Hospital who x-rayed him and ran blood tests. Later that evening she called us to say while Jackson had nothing in his throat that would have caused the coughing, his blood test results showed he had a very low red blood cell count and was a critically ill little dog.



A low platelet count meant any sort of bleeding could lead to haemorrhaging."

He says Sue initially thought Jackson may

have been poisoned and she put him on an intravenous drip while monitoring him hourly - test results subsequently showed this to be incorrect. He had bleeding gums and Sue was concerned about the chance of internal haemorrhaging if he got bumped or knocked in any way.

For the next week Chris and Bev took Jackson to the South Auckland Veterinary Hospital by day and to Papatoetoe Veterinary Clinic at night so he was monitored 24 hours a day. After showing some improvement in health his drip was removed and he was put on a course of steroids - at this stage he had lost weight but still did not act as if he was critically ill.

"We had to feed him soft dog roll so he would not scratch his gums or stomach lining which could cause haemorrhaging. We also had to carry him about which he objected to as he didn't appear to realise he was so sick."

Sue Grant referred Jackson to Veterinary Specialist Group (VSG) at Unitec in Mt Albert where he underwent further ultrasound and



blood tests and was eventually diagnosed as having immune mediated thrombocytopenia whereby his immune system had begun to attack his own body. Sue says she referred Jackson to VSG as they have the specialist care necessary to deal with chronically sick animals plus the technology to back them up.

"I advised the Taylors that Jackson needed specialist intervention and referred him to VSG. We refer many of our clients onto VSG much the same as a GP would refer his patients onto a specialist in a particular area."

Chris says the news that Jackson was still quite ill came as a surprise as he was still so perky and up to his usual tricks.

"VSG had all the latest equipment needed to treat Jackson. They were so kind to him and they kept us informed as to what was happening every step of the way. They explained it would be expensive to treat him but he had a good chance of survival so we just went with their advice. VSG kept Jackson for a couple of days and then once he started to improve we were allowed to take him home, provided we kept him quiet."

Chris said this was easier said than done.

"Jack Russells are not known for sitting quietly for any length of time. We put him in a basket in our garden shed but he kept leaping up to the window to see what was going on outside. We then bought him a special cage and put him in there, inside the shed and left the door open so he could see out so he settled down."

Jackson was monitored regularly for the next three months and when he returned to VSG at the end of July for a check up he had

lost weight, which could be attributed to the steroids, but was otherwise progressing well. He finished his course of steroids in mid August and is now back on track to being a healthy, happy dog again.

Chris says VSG were Jacksons saving grace - "without their assistance the outcome could have been much worse.

