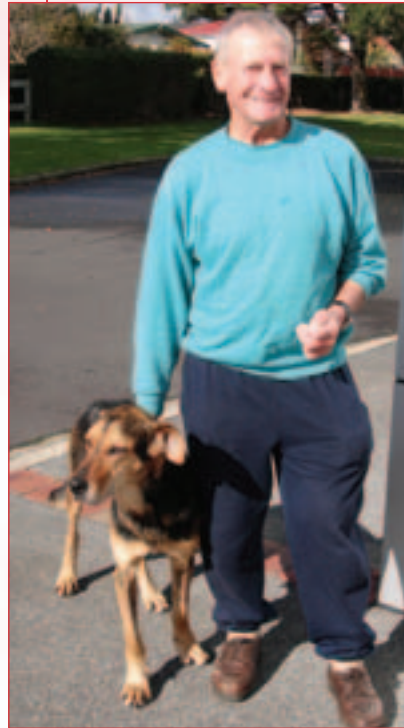


This edition of The Next Step is centred around one patient, Tai the Huntaway from Northland. The sequence of events that led to his referral to VSG and management by multiple veterinary specialists and nurses epitomizes the team approach that we practice here. A concerned owner, an enthusiastic primary veterinarian and a fast-moving multi-disciplinary approach (together with some luck!) achieved a great outcome for a dog that came very close to dying several times during the process. We will use Tai's story as a springboard for discussions of managing sepsis, obtaining good splenic radiographs and performing a safe splenectomy. Tai's owner and primary veterinarian give their sides of the story for a different perspective as well.

Strong Ties Make the Difference - by Jane Finlayson, Backbone Marketing Ltd

Tai Thomson is munching mutton on the lawn after a good day's work and he barks in response to a whistle from inside the house. Tai is a 6 year old Huntaway who earns his keep working and dog trialling with his owner Guy Thomson. Back in June this well-bred and trained dog was on the brink of death with no apparent cause.



Guy Thomson is one of those rural New Zealand gems - hard working, community minded and passionate about his dogs. The retired farmer, in his late 70s, lives on 14 acres just outside of Kaikohe in Northland with his best mate Tai and Wee Wee, a mouse-hunting Jack Russell. As well as working on local properties Guy is an active and successful dog triallist at both a local and national

level. He has had a number of strong Huntaways including Tai's sire Cruz who was highly placed in the Nationals in 2002. Guy rates Tai as every bit as good as his father so when Tai "got a bit crook" he was concerned.

It was only a month after he and Tai had competed at the national dog trials at Omarama in May this year when things started to go wrong. "We had been working with cattle Tb testing on the Tuesday and by the Friday when we were



having the tests read I noticed Tai was dragging the anchor. We came home for lunch and by 2pm he had disappeared and didn't respond to my whistle - I found him in the bamboo hedge and knew things were bad." At this point Guy quickly got Tai to Bay of Island Vets, Kaikohe branch where Jenni Petersen examined him.

Jenni says "Tai presented with acute abdominal pain and on testing seemed to have haemoglobin everywhere. We hospitalised Tai and placed him on a drip and used plasma." By the end of the weekend the team at BOI were still without a diagnosis and Tai was not doing well.

"At this point Guy had asked us to put him down because he did not want his mate to suffer. I discussed referral with Guy and he initially said no, but I knew how much Tai meant to him. So I rang VSG who said as an important step they needed to perform an ultrasound."

It was here that Jenni's relationship with Guy proved to be a critical factor for Tai. Guy explains "I've known Jenni all her life and was happy to back her judgement so when she came back to me and wanted me to let the experts take a look at Tai I agreed. It was her day off the next day and she took us all the way to VSG in Auckland - she was mighty!"

When Chris Warman conducted the ultrasound he discovered a twisted spleen and following a consultation and agreement from everyone, Richard Jerram performed emergency surgery. Tai's survival was still very much in the balance and his post operative intensive care and recovery was managed by Mike Coleman and the medical team.

After the surgery Guy went home



and waited, "Jenni kept in constant touch with VSG and me, and it was Saturday before we got our first positive report on Tai's recovery."

By the Monday Tai had managed to walk out to the waiting area to see Guy. "I was pretty pleased to see him." On the Wednesday, after 8 days of intensive care and treatment Tai got to go home.

Richard Jerram recalls "When we opened him up it was not pretty - the spleen had been twisted for some time and it didn't smell good - initially I didn't rate Tai's chances highly but we did everything that we could for him. It was one of those cases that had every one in the VSG team involved so we were all delighted to see Tai go home with Guy. They had a special bond."

Jenni says that this was the first time she had referred a patient to VSG and was really impressed. "VSG were fantastic - the client is really happy with the outcome and Tai is looking great. I'd definitely use them again where the client and situation was appropriate."

Guy says it cost him over \$6000 to get Tai back to where he was. "My magnificent mate is a ball of muscle again and back working. We will be aiming to qualify for the Nationals again in 2007 - I wouldn't have that chance if I had had to start with a new dog - so it was money well spent - thanks to Jenni and everyone at VSG who really went the extra mile."



Contacts



DR. ALEX WALKER Specialist in Small Animal Surgery
surgery@vsg.co.nz



DR. CHRIS WARMAN Specialist in Veterinary Radiology
radiology@vsg.co.nz



DR. MARK ROBSON Specialist in Small Animal Medicine
medicine@vsg.co.nz



DR. RICHARD JERRAM Specialist in Small Animal Surgery
surgeryrj@vsg.co.nz



DR. DARREN FRY Specialist in Small Animal Medicine
d.fry@vsg.co.nz



DR. MIKE COLEMAN Specialist in Small Animal Medicine
m.coleman@vsg.co.nz



DR. DANIELLE BOWLES Small Animal Medicine Resident
d.bowles@vsg.co.nz

97 Carrington Road Mt Albert Auckland

Phone: (09) 845 5455. Fax: (09) 845 5456

Email: office@vsg.co.nz Website: www.vsg.co.nz

The Veterinary Specialist Group hospital is located on the Unitec campus situated between Gates 2 and 3 on Carrington Road.

