

Milly's story

Milly, usually a sprightly 11 year old, spayed Bichon Frise, was suddenly taken ill on the 3rd September this year. It came as quite a shock to her owners who were always vigilant about Milly's health and well being. She regularly visited the surgery for routine check ups to see the nurses and vets. However, on this occasion the vet had to be called out in an emergency as Milly really was unwell.

Her owner, Mrs Pennock, had noticed Milly's tummy seemed to be filling up and she was becoming quite depressed and shaky during the day. After a phone call to Michaela, the vet on duty, they all met at the surgery and Michaela soon realised something was very wrong. She admitted Milly to the hospital straight away for further tests. X-rays were taken of her abdomen and a large mass detected in the middle which appeared to be attached to the liver or spleen but Milly was too poorly to operate on that night so she was given some pain relief and kept at the surgery overnight for monitoring. She would undergo an emergency operation in the morning once stabilised.

Early the next day blood tests were taken and the liver enzymes usually measured for routine procedures on older patients were not registering on the in-house blood test machine. This indicated the mass was probably attached to the liver and therefore it was not able to function properly. The liver is the only organ in the body which can to a certain degree 'regenerate' itself and well over half of the organ, sometimes 80% of it, can be damaged before the animal shows any signs of being unwell. Its main function in the body is to filter all the toxins from the blood stream as well as store minerals and vitamins for use in digestion. It is the largest organ in the body.

Confirmation of the mass was found using the ultra sound machine and surgery was scheduled immediately.

Before the vet could carry on we needed to establish just how much damage had been done and if any of Milly's other organs had been affected. Masses or tumours like this could spread to the lungs and other organs causing further problems and sometimes making them in-operable. If Milly's tumour had spread (metastasised) especially to her lungs we would not have been able to carry on with the procedure.

Further x rays were taken of Milly's chest, the lungs were clear and we were able to go ahead. Mrs Pennock was contacted to say Milly would undergo surgery immediately.

Once under general anaesthetic, Milly's abdomen was opened up and the vet was able to see what was going on inside. A tumour the size of a tennis ball was firmly attached to her liver; this would need to be surgically removed if Milly stood any chance of survival. This procedure, known as a Lobectomy because we were taking a whole lobe of the liver away including the tumour, was risky business. The tumour was so big and had obviously been there for sometime. Though she had not shown any signs of being unwell until the day before, the blood supply to the tumour was substantial and Milly would lose a lot of her blood volume when the tumour was removed. The nurses were at this stage able to put Milly onto an intravenous drip to replace the blood loss.

Once the tumour had been removed Milly's recovery was closely monitored by the nurses. She was provided with further pain relief and anti-biotics after the operation as well as the fluids being maintained. Once again her owners were contacted and told she was out of theatre but by no means out of the woods as the surgery had been a big procedure and we would have to wait and see how she responded.

The mass removed from Milly's liver was sent to an external laboratory for identification. The report came back a few days later that it was a low grade Carcinoma (malignant tumour) and the risk of metastases was low.

Milly made a full recovery and at her post operative check 3 days after surgery she seemed back to her usual self. She would however require close monitoring and repeat blood tests to check her liver function in a month's time. She was given special food to aid the repair of her liver and a month down the line her blood tests showed dramatic improvement in liver function. Her next blood test is due in 3 months.

Mrs Pennock is a keen supporter of the PDSA (People's Dispensary for Sick Animals) and while Milly herself was not covered under this scheme many other animals are. The PDSA provide treatment for injured and sick animals when the owners cannot afford it. The charity relies entirely on donations

from the public, the average cost per animal is £142.83. Miramar is a PDSA Petaid registered practice. This means that people in the postal codes of Nr26 and Nr27 are able to apply for help towards veterinary treatments.

This does NOT include vaccinations, neutering or routine flea/worming treatments. These are costs a responsible owner should take into account before taking on a pet.

To benefit from the scheme you must register with us before your pet becomes ill. You need to be claiming housing benefit or council tax benefit and live in the correct catchment area. Your application is subject to approval from the practice and the PDSA and in no way guarantees you free treatment. Each application is reviewed every 6 months and requires re-application. Only one pet per household may be registered at any time. A £5.00 postal order is required at the time of application by the PDSA for administration costs

Please bear in mind this is a charity and you will be asked for a donation towards costs at every opportunity to fund your pets treatment should you be accepted on the scheme.

Mrs Pennock knits dolls in aid of the PDSA and we currently have them for sale at the practice. Minimum donation is £1 per doll.



Ultrasound machine



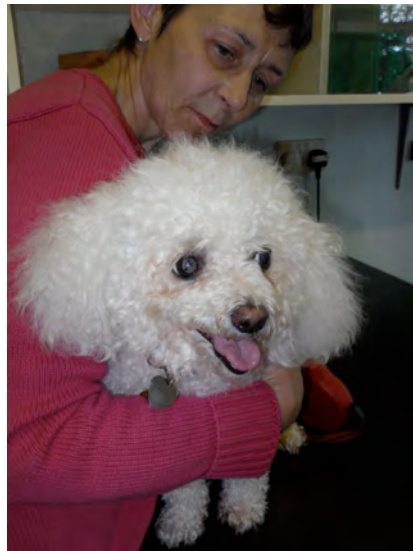
In house laboratory



Milly's X Ray showing large mass



Hand knitted dolls for sale



Milly and her owner