

Lexi's Lucky Legs

Lexi is a great wee Fox Terrier belonging to the Moffat family of Cambridge. Early in July her owners were worried about her lack of usual vim and vigour, and took her to the after hours clinic for assessment. Some discomfort through her back was detected, pain relief was administered and Lexi was much more comfortable.

Unfortunately, the next day Lexi deteriorated to the point where she was very painful on examination. She resented palpations of her back. A probable diagnosis of intervertebral disc disease was reached. This is similar to the term 'slipped disc' in humans whereby material from between the vertebrae puts pressure on the ventral (lower) aspect of the spinal cord. This can cause a lack of innervation to the hind limbs, so that they have a lack of feeling and a lack of movement.

Plain radiographs ruled out most other causes of this type of presentation. The best way to diagnose this condition is via a myelogram, where a special dye is injected into the fluid surrounding the spinal cord. This dye can be visualised on radiograph (x-ray) and the location of the lesion pinpointed. An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is also very useful.

The identification of location allows a specialist surgeon to relieve pressure on the spinal cord to alleviate symptoms. This type of surgery requires a high level of surgical skill and is consequently pretty expensive. It involves referral to a specialist veterinary orthopaedic surgeon. However, a conservative approach is often preferred initially, with a good outcome predicted in about 50% of cases.

But the following morning, Lexi had no voluntary movements of her hind limbs, and her perception of pain was limited. Her therapy in terms of medication management intensified with multiple pain and anti-inflammatory medications and continual nursing to turn her and attend to her toileting.

Over the next ten days she had gradual but positive signs of return of function in our hospital. Massage and physiotherapy while Lexi was with us have been very successful. With support from a sling she is now fairly mobile, with some knuckling over of her right foot remaining. Some toileting issues, and the fact that Lexi thinks she owns our kennel facilities are yet to be overcome, but we are well on the way to recovery.

We would like to thank the Moffat family for their commitment in rehabilitating Lexi - also known as "Little Miss Moffat" by our staff.

Dr Philippa Lowe



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A Pet's Tail

Read all about 'Lexi'

