

Pet of the Season - Bobbi

This Autumn, our "Pet of the Season" from Cambridge Veterinary Services, is Bobbi Ford, a 7 year old Jack Russell Terrier, who lives with Marg and Edsel Ford, and sons Rory and Paddy, in Duncan Rd, Tamahere.

Bobbi is Marg's travelling companion, and accompanies her everywhere, even on her wool classing trips to the South Island.

Bobbi is a very special dog. Whilst Edsel admires working dogs, he is not really a pet dog person, and after Marg's first terrier, Frank, was tragically killed in an accident, the family became dog less... This situation threatened to become permanent, until one day, some 7 years ago, Edsel was shearing on a block at Te Pahu, where a small dog named Rosie took a shine to him. She wove her feminine wiles, and Edsel was secretly smitten. Some months later he returned to the block, and was delighted to note Rosie's gravid tummy. That night, amongst the sweet nothings of pillow talk, was the surprise announcement that the Fords were on a wait list for a puppy, and so Bobbi arrived. Initially she was a family dog, but soon a special bond developed between Marg and Bobbi, and they seldom travelled apart.

Move on to Christmas season 2014, a busy time on the roads. 23rd December, Marg was off to Cambridge for last minute Christmas shopping. Not wishing to leave her for hours in the parked car, she planned to leave Bobbi at home. Bobbi had other ideas, and unknown to Marg, hopped in a momentarily open car door, quietly taking up her usual position on the back window shelf.

Driving along the Whakanui stud straight, an oncoming car, driver distracted by radio controls, drifted into her lane. It smashed into her rear end, spinning her car into a roll.

Marg came to with the car on its side, driver side down. Battered, bruised and semi concussed, she climbed out of the wreck, and was bemused to see Bobbi (whom she thought was safely at home) lying motionless on road verge. Fearing the worst, she scooped up the crumpled body, and was relieved to note an eyelid flicker.

Passing motorists stopped to help, an ambulance arrived to take Marg to hospital, but she clutched her pet protectively, and refused to budge.

Finally a commanding voice broke through the daze. 'I'm a vet nurse, I'll look after her and take her to the vets'.

The good Samaritan was Kelly Jackson, an ex-vet nurse. She brought Bobbi into the clinic, where both Dr Janine Devaney and myself, examined and treated her.

Bobbi lay on her side, unable to lift her head, her eyes gazed around with confusion and pleading. Her back legs were weak and floppy, in contrast to her front legs, which stretched out stiffly in spasm.

This posture, known as Schiff-Sherrington syndrome, is usually caused by a broken back, with a severed spinal cord. After injecting pain relief and anti-inflammatory, we x-rayed Bobbi's spine from nose to tail. We were relieved to see no fractures. Her strange posture must be due to brain trauma.

With brain injury, it is always hard to predict if, and how much recovery, will occur. In the case of people, CT scans and MRI's help predict how much is likely. Even they are imprecise, and we read all the time of people who defy hopeless medical predictions. These advanced imaging procedures are not readily available with dogs, so we use a three pronged approach. 1/ powerful anti-inflammatories to minimize ongoing swelling and damage. 2/ Oxygen supplementation to boost any damaged circulation to the brain 3/ lots, and lots, and lots, of hope.

Our simple prescription proved successful. Next day, Christmas eve, Bobbi could lift her head, and her front legs mercifully relaxed. We discharged her into Marg's care. She promptly took her to Even-song at St Stephens, Tamahere, where they both were included in the prayers.

Marg's and Bobbi's recoveries have paralleled each other. Marg suffers from memory loss, headaches and tiredness. Bobbi's injuries are more obvious. She carries her head tilted to the left, and throws her left leg out stiffly. She is very "clingy" and seems anxious. She may also suffer headaches and memory loss, we just don't know. We try medication, hoping it will help. She does, however, still catch rabbits, and definitely has a life worth living. Good luck Marg and Bobbi.