

doomed determination

Jade is a beautiful and exceptionally gentle cream-coloured Staffordshire Bull Terrier cross. At 13 years of age, it's not unusual that a few of her body systems are starting to wear out.

BY DR ALEX MELROSE

We recently performed a successful laparotomy on Jade, opening her abdomen to operate on the enlarged spleen we had detected with an ultrasound scan.

During surgery we isolated three discrete masses on the spleen, removing them with wide tissue margins, and checking all the abdominal organs, confirming no visible signs of spread elsewhere. There are some very malignant and aggressive tumours, which can be present in a dog's spleen so we nervously waited for the laboratory pathology results. A few days later the lab results confirmed we had got all the relatively benign masses out. Jade was going to be fine. She bounced back quickly and was soon at home with her loving owners.

Over the next few weeks, although Jade's abdominal wounds were healing fantastically, she was very reluctant to walk and one of her back legs seemed painful. Our experience with Jade indicated it would have to be something serious, as she never complains about anything. She clearly lives every day elated to be with her fantastic owners who rescued her from a cruel, abusive situation many years ago.

Fortunately for Jade, and for ourselves, we had the option to perform a procedure called excisional arthroplasty to re-model her disintegrated hip and create a new pain-free fibrous hip joint. Because our furry pets are much lighter than us and spread their weight over four limbs instead of two, this operation works exceptionally well.

We prepared Jade with IV fluids, pain relief and a general anaesthetic. We got all the blood pressure, ECG, body temp and pulse oximetry monitors set up, the sterile surgery field prepared, and then we went into the left hip joint. The overlying muscles were split, bluntly opened, and intact structures retracted to create a deepening window down to the joint. We got hold of the fractured ball of the femoral head, cut its attached ligaments and removed it back out of the surgical window. Next we smoothed off the jagged femoral neck, flushed the joint clear of debris and then started bringing all the overlying tissues back together before closing the wound.

As a result of the procedure, we have completely removed the source of pain, and nature will create a fibrous cushion between the femur and the pelvis without us having to implant an artificial joint.

Amazingly, within three days Jade was bouncing around, pain free and keen to exercise. She is an exceptional dog and I think she is planning to stick around for quite a long time yet. 🐾



We brought Jade back into our hospital, this time to X-ray her joints, especially her hips, where the pain seemed to be localised. We discovered a fracture – Jade wasn't having a good run. Although the full gamut of our radiographs showed significant arthritic degeneration of many of Jade's joints, by far the worst was her left hip. The ball and socket joint of this hip looked jagged, showed pieces of joint cartilage and bone chips (joint mice) floating free, and a pathological fracture of the entire head of the femur. In short, it looked like a painful mess, so no wonder Jade was limping.



Photos by Michelle Kitcholy