



Reflections on the “Human-Animal Bond” Part III Human-Animal-Human Bond

As I consider the final installment in our series on the Human-Animal Bond, I find it in keeping with our annual theme to share an anecdote from my own clinical past.

During my surgical residency, I would ‘moonlight’ at an emergency hospital. During a particular shift, a frantic gentleman carried through the door a clearly traumatized white terrier dog. As I remember, the pet had pieces of sticky tar embedded in her fur, patches of superficial road rash and because she was carried, the hip luxation was not immediately obvious to me. What was more obvious to me, was that behind him were the tears of a 9 year old little girl whose heart was clearly broken. Being an emergency hospital, the staff I was surrounded by took the moment over. The pet owner was offered a towel, the little girl offered gentle tones, calming concerns and the pet was whisked to the back for proper triage. As all of this unfolded, and as each of us fell into our rolls – this would have been like any other night – except for what transpired later. As the pet stabilized and I began to discuss the current and future clinical picture for the ongoing care, it became clear that a ‘wall’ was going up between us. Although the clinical outcome was certainly not guaranteed, it was definitely positive, and where I could see, was reasonable and relatively modest in its fiscal scope. So, it came as a shock to me when mister said: “thank you for all your work, but we would like to put her down.” I was stunned, as the injuries were fairly minor and not life threatening in the least. What surprised me more was that he said all this stoically in front of his daughter who was openly expressing her grief at the decisions being made.

Of course, I employed all the tricks I knew as a veterinarian to change the destiny of this little terriers mandate. However, promises to adopt, resources offered from the ‘Lucky Dog Fund’

and active descriptions of rich lives of pets with FHO’s seemed to fall on an unmovable resolve to discontinue care. What followed is something that is profoundly moving to me, even so many years later.

The gentleman asked for private time to discuss things with his daughter – whom he placed on his knee and gathered in an embrace as he shared with her in hushed whispers. I watched the slow, quiet interchange, as the little girl shared her grief with her father. Somewhere in the 10-15 minutes emerged a remarkable transformation. Mister rose from his chair, held out his hand to shake mine, and asked if he could change his mind and pursue treatment.

I was shocked and moved. Instantly, I had witnessed a transformation of firm resolve – changed. It seems to me that the direction of everything changed because of the love a nine year old girl had for her terrier and the love of a father for his daughter. The transformation I was witness to was within the bounds of the human-animal bond. The lessons of validation, of caring for what is important to another human being and of integrity in the stewardship of animal ownership were so vividly and tenderly revealed to me this night that it brought home why I so absolutely love being a veterinarian. Perhaps we all have stories from the clinic that may demonstrate the harsh reality of our times, but for at least this moment, as I recall this experience, I think of the redemption and sweetness of how the love for a pet can enhance the love we have for one another.

As we close out 2011, and look forward to 2012 our hope is that the upcoming holiday season is happy and whole!

Sincerely,

John J. Haburjak, DVM Diplomate ACVS

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THE SURGEONS OF VSC



FEATURED MEDICAL CASE

INTERMUSCULAR LIPOMA



Ollie

Particularly among geriatric dogs, there are almost no masses that we see more of than lipomas. As such, it is rather interesting that lipomas have very little objective data regarding natural history and recommendations for recheck intervals or recommendations for removal. What can be said, is most of these masses are

considered benign, a part of aging, and except for those that can become 'massive' are simply expected findings on a geriatric large breed dog examination. It is important to note that not all lipomas are limited in size, and certainly not all are limited in their effect on a pet's quality of life. Furthermore, there are some important rule-outs and considerations to be reviewed with pet owners who do present for consultation and evaluation of lipomas.

Lipomas are considered benign neoplasms of well differentiated adipocytes. They generally occur in adult dogs (>8 years) – whose incidence increases with age, and if a patient develops one, they are more likely to develop others. Lipomas can occur within the dermis, within the subcutis, and below myofascial planes. They can be freely movable, well circumscribed, and non-painful, however, if these masses are deep to myofascial planes, their movability may be compromised. Lipomas tend to have more than one growth pattern including slow and linear, or episodic/rapid with periods of quiescence. Important differentials for lipomas include: Intermuscular lipomas, Infiltrative lipomas and liposarcomas. These differentials require advanced imaging – preferably CT – to differentiate. Aspiration cytology and histopathology that does not include adjacent muscle are rarely helpful in differentiating these rule outs.



Hot Dog Patient Warming

We now feature the “Hot Dog” patient warming system. This systems value is that it provides even heat distributions without forced hot air or hot water, and no blowing hot air on the surgical site greatly reduces the risk of contamination. Check out this link to see the latest evidence of the risks of forced air contamination:

www.heat-rises.blogspot.com Our clinical use of the Hot Dog system has also proven it to be the most effective way to provide even, consistent, and safe heat, and as always, we strive and take pride in our ability to continually provide top level care for your patients.



...Featured Medical Case continued

Lipomas, particularly those that are large or massive, should be considered for removal when occurring in the axillae, lateral body wall, groin, caudal thigh or sub-prepuce (especially in smaller breed dogs).

Ollie (Fig. 1) an 8y old Labrador retriever presented for a three month history of intermittent, non-progressive, non-nsaid responsive right pelvic limb lameness.

V/D hips radiographs (Fig. 2) accompanied Ollie on his first referral visit. Radiographs of Ollie’s stifle and hock/pes were considered normal. On physical examination, Ollie was only mildly lame on his right pelvic limb. This lameness was easily exacerbated if he was forced to jump in and out of his SUV – or traipse up and down a flight of stairs. Further, on physical, was a large, deep, poorly marginated swelling in the intermuscular space of his caudal right thigh. This swelling corresponded to the soft-tissue swelling present on his V/D hip radiographs.

A contrast aided CT scan of both pelvic limbs (Fig. 3) was consistent with a well circumscribed homogenous intermuscular mass between the caudal thigh muscles extending from just below the tuber ischii to the popliteal recess.

We recommended and performed surgical extirpation of an enormous intermuscular lipoma (Fig. 4). Once the sciatic nerve was released from the tethering of the enormous lipoma, the lameness resolved. Ollie made an uneventful recovery.

The case of Ollie represents that size and location of lipomas may create a mechanical or pain-derived impairment in ambulation and/or quality of life. Lipomas in the thigh, groin, axillae, and those whose size changes rapidly – should be evaluated and considered for removal. The diagnostic test of choice to rule-out infiltrative lipomas (non-surgical) from those carrying an excellent surgical prognosis is the CT scan. Aspiration cytology and histopathology are generally considered inadequate for making this determination.

If you have a patient with a lipoma who you wish to have evaluated, please do not hesitate to call!

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Fig 2: V/D Hip radiographs indicating soft-tissue swelling in the caudo-proximal thigh

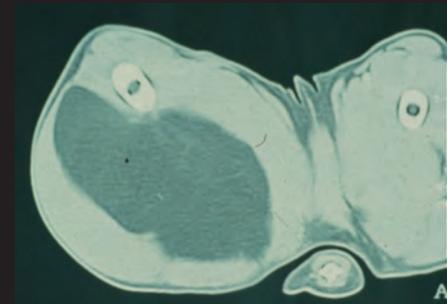


Fig 3: CT scan of both thighs indicating a well circumscribed fat dense mass in an intermuscular location within the caudal thigh



Fig 4: Intra-operative image of lipoma removal from the caudal thigh. Note the sciatic nerve coursing through the parenchyma of the mass

NOTABLE NEWS

A Warm Welcome to our New Tech Manager!

VSC proudly welcomes Serena Mysore to our management team! As a young girl Serena realized her lifelong career would be with animals. When other kids played doctor, she played veterinarian, performing complex surgeries and medical treatments on her teddy bears, frogs, dogs, cats and lions. Her career in veterinary medicine started as an assistant during her teenage years. She attended North Hollywood High School Animal and Biological Sciences Zoo Magnet Center, graduating with honors, and then attended California Polytechnic University, Pomona, as a major in Animal Science - Pre-Veterinary. She's now a California licensed RVT with a passion for Critical Care, Anesthesia and Pain Management. As a member of the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management she is seeking certification as a Pain Practitioner to further her knowledge in the treatment of chronic and acute pain.

Serena and her husband share their home with two wonderful pets, Button and Butters. While both enjoy nature and outdoor activities, they often find themselves camped in front of the TV watching sports, especially football.



PROFESSIONAL INTEREST ARTICLE

Dedication to Important Staff

There are moments that seem to come up sometimes that remind me that our relationships – at home and outside the home – help to shape who we are, help to share the aches and hardships of life and help to exalt in our achievements, all of them, small or large.

For me, the Autumn season, the time of harvest, of gratitude, has always seemed to have me focused on people – family, those with me, and those gone on, as well as colleagues who've touched my life. This coming October, Veterinary Surgical Centers has bid farewell to two special and exceptional individuals.

Christine Hilliard, our technician manager and 'super' facilitator has decided to return to her roots as a North Carolina equestrian. Of Christine, I can remember the very day I met her as a client so many years ago now – and connecting with her, her pet Stella, and her partner Kim. Since then not only has Christine become a trusted employee, but she became part of a very lovely and graceful memory I have as a father. Several years ago now, I remember a blustery winter day, at one of the horse barns and paddocks on Crow Canyon – with Christine gently hoisting a 3 year old little girl onto her first horse. The horse – a beautiful big fellow named 'Brownie' – the little girl is my daughter Eva. That experience irreversibly enhanced the life of a girl who still talks of her rides on Brownie as if they were magical moments. There is no doubt – both Brownie and

Christine are hero material in the Haburjak household.

Alastair Coomer, of Christchurch, New Zealand, in light of the tremendous earthquake tragedies facing his family has made the difficult and exceptionally emotional decision to return to New Zealand with his wife Erin and daughter Matilda. I have been assured from family and close friends from New Orleans that a tragedy the size of Katrina – or in this case the earthquakes in Christchurch – are natural disasters that effect the human psyche in almost similar manners: they make us as humans very humble and for us to yearn to be with those we love. In the nearly four short years of knowing and working with Alastair, I have been impressed at his ability to

...Professional Interest Article continued

make an impression, our patients have enjoyed his skills as a surgeon, and our staff and group of doctors have enjoyed his impeccable manners, accent and charm. What I will miss the most from Alastair are the shared anecdotes from the clinic floor, our family life and our reflections of life itself – that together make up a book not written in pen, but only in thought, yet authored together and entitled: “Life is Waaaay Better than Fiction”

Both of these individuals, as their chairs with our group are empty, will warm us with the memories of their effect on us all for many years to come. I have enjoyed their company immensely, our practice is better for their talents and my life is richer for having known them. I wish them both well and I rest assured that there are people right now for Christine in North Carolina and back home in New Zealand for Alastair – who’s lives will be touched by these two amazing people in a very special way.

I care for both of you deeply, VSC misses you more than words can share. Please fare well on your respective journeys.

John J. Haburjak, DVM Diplomate ACVS



Christine



Alastair



www.howtotravelwithpets.com

This site is dedicated to pet owners who love to travel with their pets and want them well taken care of when they can't come along. This site has all sorts of valuable information from breed specific advice, to tips for international travel, to boarding resources, to reviews and breakdowns of some of the most useful pet travel websites.



www.petfinder.com

If you're looking to adopt a pet, this is your one stop shop. The site is very user friendly because you can narrow your search by breed, age, size, etc. It also provides comprehensive information to consider before and after you adopt, health information, training information, and much more...

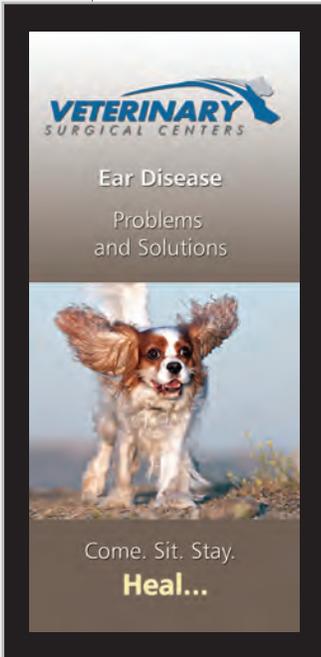


www.dogster.com

Like youtube, but all the videos are of pets doing adorable things! See a dog playing basketball, a duck who hitches a ride on a dogs back across a pond, and more. A guaranteed smile 😊

RESOURCE CORNER

FEATURED BROCHURE



EAR DISEASE

This month's featured brochure offers insight into the treatment of ear disease in small companion animals. The brochure provides an explanation of the structure of the ear, conditions that can cause ear disease, and treatment options.

This is an excellent tool in conjunction with a doctor's examination to help supplement an owner's understanding of what is going on with their pet, and what options they have, prior to making a treatment decision. The use of straight forward language and helpful images of this particular pamphlet also make it a valuable resource for any staff and clientele who want to develop a fundamental understanding of ear disease in small companion animals.

This and other brochures can be found at and downloaded from our website at www.vscdsurgerycenters.com. For complimentary copies of any of our brochures or business cards email us any time at info@vscdsurgerycenters.com.

Come. Sit. Stay.

Heal...

This newsletter is excitedly dedicated to Ian Joseph Haburjak who was born to John and his wife Aimee on 7-29-11. Ian the night owl was born at 1:36 in the morning and measured in at 7 pounds, 10 ounces, and 21" long. Their beautiful new born is the couple's third child, and first son. Veterinary Surgical Centers wishes Ian and his parents a long life full of happiness, health, and service to those causes they find worthy.



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