

## Braveheart - Bumble Green.

Bumble is a 12 year old female cat who we saw quite a lot of at Emmview Vet Centre at the end of last year.

We first saw her in October with very itchy skin due to an allergy; she also had fairly severe dental tartar and gingivitis, and was seen to be stiff and uncomfortable when walking around the room. Bumble's owners also reported that she was finding it more difficult to get around the house and was not as agile as she once was. It is all too easy to put these problems down to 'old age' but as we constantly tell our clients, old age is not a disease, it's just that animals and people collect more ailments as they get older, and they are often interrelated.



With Bumble it was decided that the problems most affecting her quality of life were the joint stiffness, attributed to arthritis, and the itchy skin. The dental disease was something that we could address a little later down the line, as whilst it was not causing her immediate pain, it was an issue that can have far reaching consequences the longer it is present for and will only get worse with time.

Firstly, we wanted to help her with the pain associated with her arthritis. Metacam is a very effective and fairly safe anti-inflammatory available for use in cats, unfortunately it is not recommended to use this drug if there is kidney disease present, however there are circumstances when metacam can be used on cats with stable chronic kidney disease. Kidney disease is very common in older cats and so it is wise to screen for this before starting a long course of Metacam, and to monitor the kidneys throughout treatment. A urine sample was collected from Bumble and tested – happily for Bumble, her urine was well concentrated, and this shows that her kidneys were working well! We started Bumble on Metacam which is easily given at home and it made a great difference to her mobility, meaning that her pain was likely to be under better

control. She is also receiving Easeflex, a joint supplement which may help her arthritis as well, she loves these and eats them like treats.

Poor Bumble was also suffering with a flea allergy when we first saw her, this was pretty easily dealt with by applying Advocate to her skin once a month to kill the parasites. She now has a lovely, glossy coat and is no longer itchy.

The next thing on our list was Bumble's teeth. Gingivitis can be a source of pain and inflammation in the body, and high levels of bacteria can be harboured there. These bacteria are released into the blood when the animal chews and bacteria and their toxins can cause damage to other organs, most importantly in cats – the kidneys. It is therefore important that dental disease is dealt with promptly when it is discovered, it is a condition that will only get worse if an oral care regime is not put in place.

Animals require a general anaesthetic to have dental procedures and whilst anaesthetics have never been safer, there is always a risk involved and in older animals like Bumble this risk is increased. To minimise the risks, we recommend that older animals have a blood test before undergoing anaesthesia and that they are on intravenous fluids before, during and after the procedure. Anaesthetics are also closely monitored by our Veterinary Nurses. In Bumble's case, her blood results were fairly normal, and so she had a dental scale and polish under general anaesthetic – this all went without a hitch and she luckily did not require any extractions.

We thought that this would be last that we would see of Bumble at Emmview until her next check-up, but unfortunately this was not to be the case!

Bumble's owners brought her in to see us a week after her dental with a very sore right eye. Bumble had been holding her eye closed for a few days, and it was very painful. We found a large, deep corneal ulcer in the middle of the right eye; the ulcer appeared infected as it was what we call a 'melting ulcer'. Melting ulcers are very serious and can result in the loss of the eye, even when treated. They usually require surgery to repair when the infection is under control. Unfortunately we do not have a picture of Bumble's ulcer, but below is an example of a melting corneal ulcer, and as you can see they are pretty unpleasant looking, not to mention painful.



Treatment of melting ulcers needs to be aggressive and hourly drops were required initially. We took a sample of blood from Bumble and made eye drops for her out of the blood serum and a chemical called EDTA. The EDTA serum cocktail should stop the melting process of

the cornea, the drops need to be used hourly initially, and then the frequency can be reduced as the melting is controlled. Bumble also needed antibiotic eye drops and oral antibiotics as well as pain relief. This was all quite a labour intensive treatment plan, and so Bumble was admitted to our hospital at Nine Mile for a few days. Thanks to the care of the vets and nurses at Nine Mile, Bumble's cornea stopped melting and the ulcer began to heal.



We had discussed with the owners about removing the eye if it failed to heal, or about referral for a procedure to repair the ulcer with a graft. Luckily for Bumble, neither of these options proved necessary, the ulcer healed with medical treatment alone, and Bumble is now fully recovered from the ulcer!

Bumble used to hate coming to the Vets, but she now gets into her box happily when a visit is due. She does make a lot of noise when she gets here though! She takes all her trips to see us in her stride, and even seemed pretty relaxed about being hospitalised. Well done Bumble!

