

SMUDGE NEMETH

Smudge, a lovely three year old male Weimeraner/Dobermann cross had been living a normal life until the start of May this year. He came in to Nine Mile on a Monday after his owner had noticed him slowing down over the weekend. He wasn't eating very much, was quite weak, dehydrated and had a very painful abdomen. Smudge's owner was worried he may have eaten something as sometimes he picks naughty



things up on walks! Our vet Jean acted quickly, admitting him and administering fluids, taking bloods and x-raying his abdomen. At this point we didn't have a diagnosis but it was clear that immediate emergency attention was needed to avoid him deteriorating further.

After initial tests, we were one step nearer to finding out what was wrong with Smudge. A foreign body in the stomach was ruled out with x-rays, but there were some abnormalities on the blood tests. Smudge's electrolytes (the things we need to make sure our metabolism keeps going) were unstable. His potassium was at a dangerously high level, whilst the Sodium level in his blood was reduced. This raised suspicions that Smudge may have a disease called Addison's disease.

Addison's disease is a disease of the adrenal glands, which are located near the kidneys in the body. These glands are responsible for production of steroids in the body called cortisol and aldosterone. When these glands are damaged, the cortisol and aldosterone level in the blood drops and leads to the symptoms that Smudge came into us with on Monday – being off colour, lethargic, and sometimes abdominal pain. Addisons disease also causes a rise in potassium in the blood which can cause heart attacks if not treated. Sodium is lost through the kidneys due to the lack of aldosterone and subsequently large volumes of water are lost too, causing rapid dehydration.

Approximately 5 hours after admission Smudge started going into an 'Addisonian crisis' - a potentially fatal complication of Addison's disease in which his heart and other organs start shutting down and going into shock.



Luckily our vets and nurses were watching him very closely and noticed that his gums were changing colour and his pulses were becoming weaker. Smudge was treated immediately and managed for shock. He was placed on two drips, and received a large amount of fluid over a short period of time to counteract the shock process. We also injected him with steroids to try and reverse some of the changes that had occurred. He was hospitalised for two days while we nursed him through this critical period. Thankfully Smudge got through this traumatic episode with the help of the

brilliant nursing team and vet in charge of the case, Jean.

Smudge recovered well and went home on a long term prescription of steroids to replace the cortisol and aldosterone. Unfortunately due to the irreversible loss of adrenal tissue Smudge will need to be treated for life with medication to mimic the hormones he can no longer produce. As long as he has this treatment he should be able to live a normal life (with regular vet check ups!).

Smudge deserves the Braveheart award because he was a fabulous patient and tolerated all of our treatment really well. He never once complained or growled at us despite the fact he must have been feeling very poorly. It is great to see him recover from this near-fatal episode and we look forward to seeing him well into his old age!