



Name: Jazz

Breed: Miniature Schnauzer

Problem: Pyometra



Why Spay?

Meet Jazz, she is a 10 year old Miniature Schnauzer.

On 16th of February, Jazz made an appearance at Bay Vets due to being lethargic, and off food. Her abdomen looked swollen and the owners noticed some yellow discharge around her vulva. Jazz had a season about a month earlier and has been fine all these years until now.

She made her way to our Lancaster branch for an abdominal scan, which showed a large, fluid filled uterus.

She was diagnosed with a condition called 'pyometra' which was later on treated by surgical intervention.

What is Pyometra?

The clue is hidden in the name as pyo means puss; pyometra is a severe infection of the uterus. It occurs when a vast amount of purulent fluid accumulates inside the uterus, secondary to hormonally induced changes. It is more commonly seen in middle to older aged animals that have never had a litter and have not been neutered, usually 5-6 weeks after a season. It is potentially life threatening and often presents as an emergency.

A large amount of vaginal discharge may be seen, suggesting that the cervix has not fully closed, giving the build-up of puss a way of draining. In some unfortunate cases the cervix will close and the uterus will carry on filling up, often making the animal appear more unwell.

This condition is usually accompanied by severe toxæmic shock (tox- : toxins, -æmic : blood) and will require intensive intravenous fluid therapy accompanied by antibiotic therapy.

The best treatment for the above condition is ovariohysterectomy.

What is Ovariohysterectomy?

Ovariohysterectomy, otherwise known as spaying or neutering of a female dog, is a super-long word for removal (-ectomy) of the uterus (-hyster) and the ovaries (ovario-).

Many animals will undergo this surgery to prevent unwanted litters and to stop oestrus activity. It can also be used as preventative method to decrease the risk of development of mammary tumours; the best effect of this is seen in females neutered before their first season. Conditions such as pyometra and false pregnancies in dogs, ferrets and rabbits, can also be avoided if the animal is spayed.

The most important part of the procedure is to ensure that the ovaries are removed fully as any remnants might still secrete hormones. The operation is usually performed from the left flank approach in cats, and midline in dogs, rabbits and ferrets. As the fur on exotic cats can sometimes grow back a different colour, many owners will ask for the procedure to be performed midline also.

Is age a factor?

Most owners would be advised to have their pets neutered at some stage of their lives. It is recommended to have the procedure done sooner rather than later. This is because as animals, just like us, get older, they may start developing other conditions, putting their bodies under additional stress. In general, a young animal in their early adulthood is expected to be healthy and all of their vital organs should work perfectly. There is a possibility for some pets to be born with certain congenital disorders which may not show up until the animal is put under anaesthetic; however a simple blood test can be performed beforehand if any concerns arise, and it would also be recommended for any older animals.

Unfortunately for Jazz, her surgery happened at the age of 10, which puts her in the geriatric stage of her life. A blood test was done to ensure her kidneys, liver and other organs were healthy enough to cope with the anaesthetic. Her vital organs were also supported by intravenous fluid therapy which additionally helped to flush the anaesthetic drugs from her blood stream, as well as the toxins caused by the pyometra. This was carried on overnight until the next day alongside strong pain relief.

After making a great recovery, Jazz went home to her worried owners. Each time the happy schnauzer came back for check-ups she seemed brighter and healthier. For some time her owners thought she was becoming a grumpy old lady hence the changes in overall demeanour. They were shocked at how much difference the necessary treatment has made.

We wish you a happy recovery Jazz, and for your sake we hope you can avoid the vets' doorstep for a while!

By Manuela Williams RVN

If you would like to enquire about neutering your pet, please speak to a member of our friendly staff.