

PET OF THE MONTH

Name: Norris

Breed: Domestic Short Hair

Problem: Road Traffic Accident

Norris was brought into the practice by cats protection after a member of the public noticed he had been sat under a car for a few days.

He was subdued and on examination had harsh chest sounds coupled with shallow breathing. His abdomen was severely bruised. The vet suspected a diaphragmatic hernia (where abdominal contents spill into the thoracic cavity via a hole in the diaphragm,), which needed to be fixed with surgery

The vet placed Norris on intravenous fluids, to support his circulation and then gave him a general anaesthetic. The nurse prepared him for surgery, shaving his abdomen and cleaning the skin and providing him with pain relief and antibiotics.

A healthy chest has its own vacuum that draws air in and expels waste gases, in a diaphragmatic hernia the vacuum then extends into the abdomen. When the vet incised into the cats abdomen, the air escaped from the cavity and the vacuum was lost and the cat could no longer breath for itself (this is normal in these surgical cases.) It was then necessary for the nurse to provide intermittent

breaths through the anaesthetic circuit to provide adequate oxygen levels within the patient's blood and to maintain the anaesthetic.

The vet found that the liver had been propelled into the chest cavity in the RTA, and some intercostals muscles (the muscles that allow for expansion and deflation of the chest) had been torn. Norris had suffered some bruising to the kidneys from the impact of the collision but no other major organs had suffered traumatic injuries. Norris did not have any fractures, as pelvic fractures are common in feline RTA's. The vet sutured together the intercostals muscles and replaced the liver to its normal location. The diaphragm was repaired and a small catheter placed in the hole. A catheter is required so the hole can be made as small as possible whilst still leaving a drainage hole to remove the excess air that has accumulated in the chest cavity. If the air is withdrawn too quickly and the lung tissue is allowed to expand to its normal size immediately, this can cause a rush of blood and fluid into the lung tissue causing the pet to go into shock. The vet slowly withdrew 60mls of air from the thorax and at the last moment withdrew the catheter and sutured the hole closed.

Norris was monitored intensely by the nurse until he was up and moving about. He seemed to recover well overnight and ate his breakfast the next morning at which point his intravenous fluids were removed. The vet checked his vital signs the next morning (temperature, heart rate, respiration rate

and chest noise) and they were all within the normal range.

Over the next few days Norris continued to gain strength and the decision had to be made about rehoming him. During his hospital stay one of our nurses, Jo, had taken a shine to his charming and affectionate demeanour. Having lost her previous cat to a suspected heart attack a few years ago, Jo had been on the look out for a lovable stray to come through the doors. Fate stepped in and handed her Norris.

It is now two months on since his accident and he has settled into his new home very well! The bruising has subsided and he still has a bald belly but life is looking good for Norris.