

Dory  
Domestic Short Hair  
Degloving Skin Injuries

Dory is an easy-going outdoor cat that likes to roam the neighbourhood. Usually she returns in time for supper but last month went missing for twenty-four hours. On her return she had suffered severe skin injuries to her back legs. She was brought straight to our Morecambe surgery for examination.

On assessing Dory's wounds the Veterinary Surgeon Mr Gibbons noticed what appeared to look like puncture wounds possibly caused by a tooth penetrating the skin and severe swelling of both hind limbs. Judging by the extent and location of the wounds it was suggested that they could have been caused when Dory had attempted to flee the clutches of a Dog. Unfortunately the end of her tail had been broken at the time of the incident. She could not bear weight on her left back leg so x-rays were recommended to rule out the possibility of any fractures or internal injuries. She was given pain relief and antibiotic injections.

The following day when Dory was no longer considered at risk from shock she was anaesthetised and x-rays were taken of her hind limbs, pelvis, and chest. Thankfully Dory had not suffered any internal injuries or fractures. The task now was how to repair the superficial injuries.

Dory had degloving injuries, this means when the skin is completely torn away from the underlying structures. These wounds can rarely be repaired by stitching the skin together, as there is not enough elasticity in the skin surrounding the limbs to cover the deficit. Sometimes these cases require skin grafts (taking a portion of skin and the accompanying blood vessels from one area of the body and transferring it to the affected site.) Thankfully Dory's case was not severe enough to warrant a graft so the decision was made to encourage them to heal by granulation. This happens when the body creates new skin, but requires regularly cleaning to remove residual bacteria and dressings to prevent the new skin cells from damage.

The hair around the wounds was clipped to prevent the hair from sticking to the moist tissue and so thorough asepsis of the area could be carried out. The skin was flushed with sterile saline, and then cleaned with hibi scrub; an antibacterial cleanser that continues to work long after it has been applied. Whilst she was under anaesthetic the end of her tail had to be amputated as broken tails cannot be fixed, as the spinal chord running through the broken section will also be damaged. The wounds were then dressed to protect the exposed tissue.

Dory was sent home to recuperate with antibiotics and pain relief to take with her food.

A few days later Dory returned for a dressing change. She was extremely well behaved for the nurses so the dressing change could be done whilst she was conscious. The wound had enormously improved since she was first seen.

She came back for more cuddles with the nurses for a check up several days later. The wound had not progressed as fast as it had initially done so a change in dressing material was made, to keep the wound moist but also to provide an antibiotic solution that would soak into the wound.

A week later Dory returned to her now familiar haunt at the vets for another examination. Again she had made great steps to recovery and the wound had started to granulate (new skin forming) so was dressed again to protect the precious cells.

Another week on and Dory's injuries were starting to fade, the granulation tissue had nicely covered the areas of trauma and there was no sign of any infection.

Over the next few weeks, the wounds were cleaned and covered in manuka honey (medical grade honey known for its restorative skin powers) and dressed. We are very please to be able to say the wounds have now healed and her hair is starting to grow back. Dory has been exceptionally brave throughout her ordeal and been a wonderful patient to deal with. During her time of rehabilitation she has only been able to see the outside world from the window or cat box on the way to the vets. Now she has made huge steps to a full recovery, she will be able to venture out again. Hopefully the neighbourhood terror will not strike again for Dory and she can enjoy parading her newly healed pins to the local toms.