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"Jet" - Labrador Cross with Fibrocartilaginous Embolism



Jet

"Jet" is an athletic Labrador cross dog. In her prime at the age of 5 years.

It was therefore very understandable when her distressed owner brought her straight down to the surgery after she had suddenly appeared to lose the use of her left hind leg. Only minutes previously "Jet" had been leaping in the air to catch a ball.

It was soon apparent from her examination that, through her acrobatics, she had inadvertently caused significant damage to her spinal cord. Due to the fact that her symptoms principally involved one leg and there was no indication of intervertebral disc disease it was concluded that she had suffered a fibrocartilaginous embolism.

The semifluid filled discs situated between the backbones act as the shock absorbers of the spine. Just like the suspension system or a shock absorber in a car, if it is subjected to excessive forces the suspension fluid can leak out.

In this condition, the semifluid material of the intervertebral disc penetrates the bloodsupply due to the very high pressure exerted through Jet's high energy antics.

Sadly in "Jet's" case the "suspension fluid" created a blockage in the bloodvessels (embolism) supplying the spinal cord thus causing damage. This in turn leads to a loss of function in the affected leg.

The difficulty in these cases is establishing the extent of the damage and then forecasting the likely recovery rate. Various reflex tests are performed to grade the injury and provide a prognosis. Nevertheless, providing an accurate prediction of a patient's chances of a complete recovery are extremely difficult given the fickle nature of the spinal cord to heal.

Fortunately, I am very pleased to report that "Jet's" recovery is well ahead of schedule although I think bouncing balls are off the agendafor the moment!

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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