

# SISU

Sisu is a 3 year old French Bulldog who came to see us in June with a 2 cm mass on his leg. It wasn't clear how long the lump had been present. Andy decided to carry out an FNA. This is a Fine Needle Aspirate (sometimes termed needle biopsy) and involves inserting a small needle into the lump and drawing off a sample of the cells within it. It sounds painful but is actually very well tolerated and is a common procedure when dealing with certain types of tumour. A tumour is just another word for lump and they can be completely benign. Unfortunately though, this one wasn't.

When we looked at the FNA under the microscope, we were unfortunately immediately suspicious that the lump was a mast cell tumour. Mast cells are a type of cell found in the body that play a role in inflammatory and allergic reactions. From looking at the sample it was evident that some unwanted cell changes had taken place and that much more extensive investigation would be required.



Andy also then gathered an FNA sample from the lymph node in the back of his knee. Lymph nodes are small organs located throughout the body which form part of the lymphatic system and are essential for the immune system to function properly. Sadly, the lymph node also contained malignant mast cells.

Unfortunately, it was quickly established that the diagnosis was looking increasingly like a malignant mast cell tumour and following a discussion with a consultant oncologist, it was decided that an aggressive surgical approach was required and Sisu was admitted for a full leg amputation. There is no doubt that this is a major procedure but dogs cope remarkably well and Sisu was no exception. He recovered nicely from the anaesthetic and just a couple of hours later, after a few little wobbles, was able to have a short walk around our car park. He has gone from strength to strength since and is doing very well as a tripawd!! He obviously needed some pain relief to help him in the first few days, and

unusually, he had a few episodes of apparent phantom limb pain in the first week or 2, but thankfully none recently.

Samples of the lump were sent to a diagnostic laboratory and the next day the results confirmed our fears. The tumour was high grade and there was evidence of metastasis, or spread to the lymph nodes. Scans on the day of the operation showed no spread beyond the lymph node, but that possibility does still exist, so chemotherapy was also indicated.

A chemotherapy protocol was therefore started which Sisu is still undergoing and he continues to take medication to help manage his condition and give him the very best chance of remission for as long as possible. The side effects of chemotherapy that we expect in people are rarer in dogs, and so far, Sisu has suffered no side effects at all, and importantly, he remains in remission to date. We hope this will continue for ever!

Sisu is always bright and cheerful and never complains about anything we have to do. He loves his treats and will look to Andy if he feels he deserves more than one!! Amputation is obviously a major procedure and not to be undertaken lightly, but without it, he probably wouldn't be here now, and this has given him plenty more quality time with his loving owners. 3 legged dogs really do cope amazingly well, especially if they are missing a back leg as Sisu is (60% of a normal dog's weight is taken through the front legs, so they cope better without a back one than a front one!)

It is a pleasure and an honour to be part of Sisu's care and we are sure you will join us in sending him lots of bone shaped good wishes for his future! The pictures show him before and after treats!

