

Django's Journey - A tale of Resilience and Hope

Django, a black lab born November 2024, is a beloved pet of one of our staff members and well known figure among the team. Hailing from impressive lineage, Django's mother is a New Zealand Retriever Champion, while his father boasts the title of Australian Retriever Champion. Both parents have excelled in Gundog Trialling, setting a high bar for Django as he embarked on his training journey at just 8 weeks old. With determination and dedication, Django aspires to follow in his parents' paw prints and one day claim victory at the National Retriever Gundog Championship.



At the tender age of 5 months, Django began to transition from puppyhood to adulthood, losing his baby teeth as his adult canines emerged. His owner noticed that all but one of his adult k9s had erupted, which seemed unusual. However, without any signs of swelling or discomfort, there were no immediate concerns. As the month progressed, Django developed swelling in his lower jaw beneath his chin. While he still appeared to be pain-free, dental X-rays were deemed necessary to investigate further. It was suspected he might have a dentigerous cyst associated with the unerupted K9.

On May 19th, Django underwent dental X-rays. His



X-rays were examined by a specialist radiographer, and histology samples were sent to the laboratory to rule out cancer. The diagnosis revealed a rare Compound Odontoma (benign thankfully) that required surgical removal. Initial discussions indicated that a partial mandibulectomy (surgical removal of his lower jaw) might be necessary. Unfortunately, this procedure could jeopardize Django's future in retrieving, the activity he cherished most.

The dedicated team at McMaster and Heap Vets collaborated extensively, gathering insights from various sources to determine the best course of action—especially to explore the possibility of salvaging Django's mandible, which would give him a fighting chance to continue competing. Meanwhile Django didn't know what all the fuss was about. He carried on as usual with a voracious appetite and still wanting to retrieve and play.

The next step involved a Cone Beam CT scan, providing crucial information about the extent of damage to the mandible and the feasibility of removing the odontoma. The CT results revealed a significant odontoma measuring 4cm x 3cm x 2.5cm (with multiple denticles and teeth involved), presenting a considerable challenge for complete removal.

The team reached out to Angus Fechny, one of the few board-certified pet dentists in New Zealand. Angus reviewed the situation and graciously offered his expertise to help Django.

Angus outlined the necessary steps and potential risks involved in the surgery, emphasizing the need for a blood supply on standby in case Django experienced excessive blood loss during the procedure. Fortunately, Django and his half-brother, Maverick, had compatible blood types, being DEA 1 positive, allowing Maverick to serve as a blood donor if required.

Angus transported his specialized equipment by plane to McMaster and Heap Vets to perform the surgery. Maverick was sedated on the morning of surgery and his blood was collected ready for use if necessary. The moment for Django's surgery arrived, marking a crucial step in his journey toward recovery and continued pursuit of his passion for retrieving, which we hoped we were going to make happen for him.

Our expert dedicated team of vets and nurses handled everything from his pre anaesthetic blood testing, his 6.5 hour long anaesthetic and his recovery. We treat our patients like our own.

Django was given a premed, started on IV fluids and plans for his pain management throughout his procedure made. Angus brought 2 trolleys of instruments down to perform the surgery with precision. Multiple medications were used to manage his anaesthetic and keep him stable and pain free throughout his six and a half hour surgery- jaw intact! Initially a lower incisor and premolars were removed to gain access and a very small amount of bone removed around the deformed canine tooth. Once the canine was able to be extracted, the cyst at the root of that tooth was visualised and able to be removed intact. Then the odontoma with the multiple small teeth and denticles was carefully lifted from the bone and removed. The space left was then flushed and filled with a bone graft and sutured closed. Post op x-rays showed no teeth structures remaining.



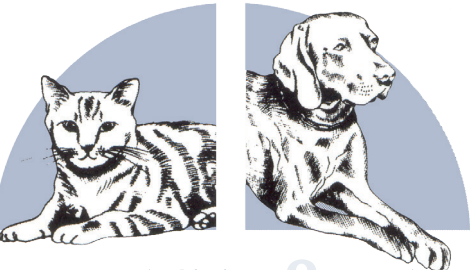
Django woke up with his tail wagging, his head in Sonya's lap and went on to eat later that night. All the teeth have made their way up to Massey University to help educate the vets of the future on what to look out for and be prepared for those hidden surprises

In most cases, the prognosis for puppies undergoing treatment for these dental anomalies is excellent. Early intervention minimizes complications, allowing the puppy to resume normal activities quickly. Django is expected to still be able to be trained as a champion retriever.

Early veterinary check-ups can help identify potential issues during development. Regular dental assessments, balanced nutrition, and attention to oral hygiene contribute significantly to a puppy's dental health. We don't know the underlying cause of Django's condition but if no-one had noticed that his canine tooth was missing from his mandible, then it certainly would have meant Django would have lost his lower jaw, resulting in a life without retrieving.

A six-month-old puppy with a non-interrupted canine, a dentigerous cyst, and an odontoma presents a complex yet manageable case that highlights the importance of veterinary dental care. Prompt diagnosis and intervention ensure we give him the best possible outcome. Awareness and prevention are key to ensuring our furry companions thrive, free from dental discomfort and complications. We were very lucky in this case that a board certified veterinary dentist, Angus Fechny, was willing and able to come and operate on Django with the assistance of the Veterinary and Nursing team at McMaster and Heap.

Dr Michele McMaster & Dr Terryne Loney



McMASTER & HEAP
VETERINARY PRACTICE

OPEN 7 DAYS Cnr Hoon Hay & Coppel Place. Ph: 338 2534
E. reception@mcmasterandheap.co.nz www.mcmasterheap.co.nz

