



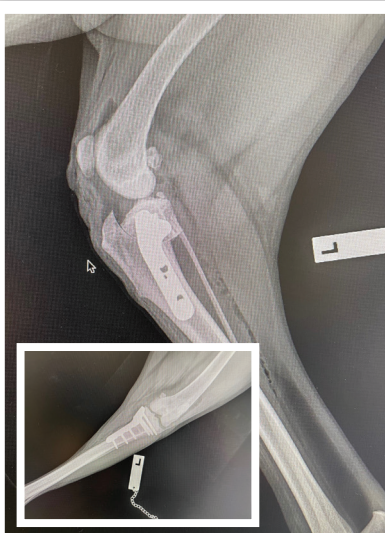
McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

LULU AND HER TPLO SURGERY

"Lulu" a nine year old 30kg black standard Poodle, recently underwent TPLO surgery (in the competent hands of Dr Lynne Wilkins) to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left hind. Lulu was originally bred in the USA as a therapy dog for autistic children. When her family moved to New Zealand, so did lucky Lulu. Lulu was rehomed once in Christchurch and plays a huge part in her new families life. Her favourite past times are chasing rabbits, which most probably led to her left hind lameness and injury.

Lulu had suffered no previous injuries and didn't really object to physical examination. The cranial cruciate ligament stabilises the stifle by preventing the tibia from sliding forward relative to the femur. When this ligament ruptures, the knee becomes unstable, swollen, painful and more prone to developing arthritis. It's impossible for dogs to enjoy a full pain free active life without surgery. This ligament doesn't heal sufficiently with crate rest and osteoarthritis develops which is debilitating for the dog.

Lulu was sedated, radiographed and her left stifle showed significant stifle swelling and left stifle medial buttress. All her other joints palpated looked normal on X-rays. Our surgeon diagnosed a partial left ACL rupture, responsible for Lulus pain and lameness, so surgery was recommended to stabilise her stifle. This is the most common cause of lameness diagnosed in dogs. It happens as either an acute tear (from a sudden twist, turn or jump) in young athletic dogs, or as a degenerative weakness in older, often overweight large breed dogs.



The finished product - a new and improved knee

I've been practising now for 35 years and my first job was in Wainuiomata in Wellington. It was a three vet small animal practice and back then most surgeries that walked in, you had to do as specialists vets were few and far between, plus clients couldn't afford specialist care. I'll never forget my second day as a newly graduated vet. In walked a lame large crossbred dog with a ruptured ACL. I was encouraged to tackle this surgery solo as my boss was away. From memory I had my textbook laid out in front of me, I nervously completed the surgery and the dog somehow walked again. Back then I performed an "extra capsular repair", which I still occasionally do today after careful patient selection. Fortunately today's surgical procedures and outcomes for stifle repairs are far superior to what they were 35 years ago.



Lulu playing with her bestie.

Our surgeon Lynne recommends a TPLO (Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy) procedure, which offers the best chance of a full recovery and reduces the development of osteoarthritis and ongoing stifle issues. Radiographic planning is necessary for this repair to determine plate size. TPLO changes the biomechanics of the knee, by eliminating the forward sliding force of the tibia during weight bearing, so the knee is stable without the ligament present. These patients typically go home the day of the surgery and the full recovery takes about 12-16 weeks, with a gradual return to full exercise. Physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, anti inflammatory pain relief medications, joint supplements and weight control are all an important part of the treatment plans. Prognosis is excellent with 90-95% of dogs regaining excellent function.

Lulu flew through her surgery and was weight bearing three days post operatively. Lynne will check her at the six week mark to make sure she's progressing how she should be in terms of exercise. It will be no time before she's able to play with her best mate again.

Dr Lynne Wilkins performs orthopaedic and soft tissue surgery (including BOAS surgery for brachycephalic dogs) at McMaster & Heap Vets. We have a very skilled, caring and competent surgery nursing team that help Lynne with these patients. Lynne is available to see referral patients for consultations.

Dr Michele McMaster



Lulu post op weight bearing on her newly operated left hind

Lulu presented with a chronic intermittent left hind lameness of two months duration. The lameness was prominent after exercise and rest.