

The Trials and Tribulations of Tilly

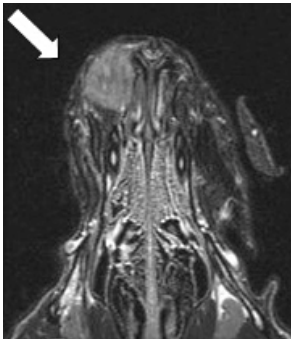
“This is the story about our black Labrador – Tilly – and her battle so far against cancer.

In Spring 2004 we noticed a small lump on the side of her nose, and assumed that she had been bumped, scratched or stung. She showed no distress from this lump, but it just remained there, not get any bigger or smaller.



In July, Tilly went to the vet for a hip score. While she was there the vet suggested doing a biopsy from the bump on her nose. The results brought the news that it was a Grade II mast cell tumour. Because of where the tumour was situated, he could not remove it without causing distress to Tilly. He therefore referred us to the Animal Health Trust in Newmarket, Suffolk.

The first scans and tests showed that the cancer had started to spread through the lymphatic system, and had travelled to at least one lymph node in Tilly's neck. This meant that there was no point in removing the lump on Tilly's nose at that time, as the cancer was already on the move. The treatment that was proposed was to remove the lymph node in the neck and then treat Tilly with 3 months of chemotherapy.



An MRI scan of the head and neck was carried out so that the vets had a clear picture of where the tumour was situated. This picture would then form the benchmark for all checks that were carried out in the future. A week after the operation to remove the lymph node, we returned to the Trust. The primary tumour on her nose was visibly smaller and it had disappeared completely to the naked eye by the second visit to the Trust.

We were concerned that the chemotherapy might have the same side effects that it does with people – hair loss, sickness etc – but we were told that this was not usual in animals. Once again, the advice and information we were given proved to be right, as apart from looking a bit sorry for herself, Tilly showed no side effects at all. Of course, being a Labrador, her appetite never suffered!

The treatment ended in early November, and Tilly was once again given a full check over by the veterinary staff at the Trust. This check confirmed that there was no sign of the cancer and that she was therefore classed as being in ‘full remission’.

She had her fifth birthday in April, and she has already been through such a lot for a young dog that we wonder, at times, have we done the right thing? We are sure though that if we had done nothing, Tilly would be gone by now. Yet even after all that we have put her through, she still shows us so much love and affection.

We can only hope that the treatment that she has received so far, combined with her strength and resilience, means that she can live a happy and fulfilled life. Tilly's treatment was managed by dedicated Oncology Clinicians, but her treatment could not have been completed without the help of the many other specialist services that the Animal Health Trust offers, including anaesthesia, diagnostic imaging, soft tissue surgery, clinical and histopathology services as well as their nursing teams.

We are obviously indebted to the Animal Health Trust, and all the people who work there. Without their knowledge and pioneering research, Tilly would not be able to enjoy herself in the way she still can, and for that we are forever grateful. Long may they continue to help Tilly, and others like her."

