



"Jack" - Tibetan Terrier Unable to close his mouth



Jack

Last Wednesday I had an excellent day out with my three daughters at the National Space Centre in Leicester.

I was very impressed by the amazing technology, dazzling statistics and the depth of knowledge on display.

Refreshed by my experience I arrived at work on Thursday morning to be confronted by my colleague Ingrid with a problem case.

"Jack" a 10 year old Tibetan Terrier had presented at the surgery the day before unable to fully close his mouth.

Nothing could be seen inside his mouth but sure enough his mouth remained a full 1 inch open despite digital pressure. His owners had become aware of his difficulty in eating over the last few days.

Ingrid had taken some good radiographs of the skull in the hope of shedding some light. She had also scoured our many text books to produce a list of possibilities or differentials. Bone tumour, mandibular nerve neuropraxia, temperomandibular dysplasia and masticatory myositis were all on the list. Rare but well documented conditions that might lead to the unusual presenting symptoms.

I examined the radiographs for a third time. There was a peculiar shadow at the back of the jaw. Must be a tumour I thought. I decided to re sedate "Jack" and re x-ray the suspected lesion.

If this was cancer then the consequences for "Jack" were grim. It was important to focus on the abnormality already identified. Subsequent x-rays reaffirmed the area of concern.

Whilst sedated I re-examined the inside of "Jack's" jaws. Sure enough there was a bizarrely roughened patch right at the back of his mouth. I poked and prodded.

Then quite unexpectedly a twisted piece of black plastic popped up from under his gums. It was something "Jack" had been chewing a few days earlier! And yes his mouth could now be closed with ease.

A course of antibiotics to clear up the infection and "Jack" would be cured!

You won't find that diagnosis in any text book! It just goes to show it's not always rocket science.

Terry Dunne BVMS, Cert SAO, MRCVS

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