

# BLOCKHOUSE BAY VETERINARY CENTRE NEWSLETTER



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**Autumn 2018**

Dear Client,

I have some exciting news regarding the clinic. We are going to expand. We are not moving but instead extending behind the clinic. We will have a purpose built operating theatre as well as another room for procedures like dentals. We will also have more hospitalisation facilities for the pets.

The staff will also finally get a proper lunch room assuming they ever get time to take a break. The clinic has got very busy and the new expansion will enable us to handle the work load better while providing first class facilities for your pets.

I am also excited to announce a new vet has joined us. More from Lara later in the newsletter. Now you may be thinking we have a lot of vets at Blockhouse Bay and you would be right.

My next exciting news is Jacqueline and myself (Lance) are taking some time out from veterinary medicine and the running of the vet clinic. Now I know some people have been a bit shocked by this news. Well more shocked about Jacqueline leaving than myself.

The word retirement keeps getting banded about but clearly we are not retiring but rather taking a sabbatical to pursue some other projects and life long dreams. I was reluctant to make this announcement as we are both worried we will have to come back before anyone noticed we were gone.

The clinic is in great hands though with Geoff taking over as manager supported by vets Kate, Morwenna and Lara as well as our outstanding nursing team of Fiona, Vanessa, Kirsty, Mariska, Jaime and Ashleigh.

From Lance, Jacqueline, Breeze and Radish



## Photo competition winner



This years winning photo was taken by Jenny Harris of her dog Frankie the Schnauzer watching her little friend jump in the water at Bethells farm stay.

The quality of the photo's this year was truly outstanding and we had some debate at work as to what constituted a winning photo.

I choose this picture for several reasons. I think action shots are much harder to pull off than a pet that is sitting still. What makes this photo special is it tells a story from one picture. The brave little dog jumps straight into the water while the bigger dogs look on trying to decide if they should do the same.

Frankie will be free of fleas this year with a years supply of ADVOCATE kindly donated by Bayer.

We loved seeing what your pets got up to this summer and some of the photo's can be seen on our web site on the gallery page. If your photo is not there it does not mean we didn't love it.

We have stopped printing newsletters so if you want to read our latest news make sure we have an up to date email address. Note all past newsletters can be read on our web site [www.blockhousebayvets.co.nz](http://www.blockhousebayvets.co.nz) We can also do text reminders for your pets treatments and vaccinations so make sure we have your correct number next time you are in the clinic.

## BHB Vets In Tonga

Over the last five years I have spent a number of weeks of my annual leave volunteering for the New Zealand charity South Pacific Animal Welfare (SPAW), providing veterinary care to animals in the Pacific Islands. The majority of these trips have been up into Tonga (Tongatapu and Vava'u) and Fiji (Taveuni) and in that time two of the veterinary nurses at Blockhouse Bay Vets, Kirsty and Ashleigh, have also volunteered. This last December one of the new vets here at the clinic, Morwenna (or Mo as some of you know her as), came up to Tonga with me to participate in the SPAW clinic.

The reason SPAW goes up to Tonga to provide veterinary care is that there are currently no veterinarians or veterinary services for the entire country outside of what SPAW provides. To assist with this deficit, SPAW provides four clinics per year into Tonga plus additional support via email correspondence during the year.

Morwenna and I, were joined by two other vets, three veterinary nurses and fourteen UNITEC vet nursing students, to provide a week-long, full service clinic in Tongatapu in the first week of December 2017. The climate in Tonga at that time of the year is hot and humid and it creates a challenging work environment for both people and animals. The facilities may be different to what people are used to in New Zealand but the care, skill and attention given by the team is first class and the animals seen and treated recover very well.



Not the airconditioned surgery I am used to.

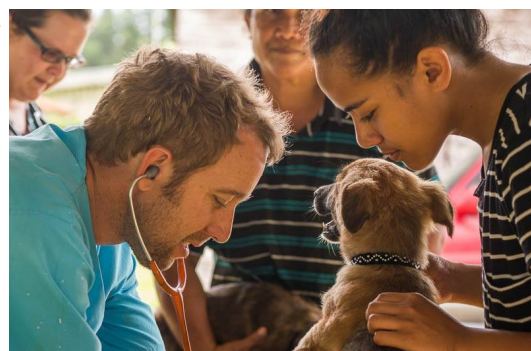
Despite the environmental and physical challenges, the trip was very successful with just on 400 animals seen in the week, including 156 surgeries. The majority of these surgeries were dog desexing (spay/neuter) operations but also included leg amputations, tumour removal, wound stitch-ups and a goat that was castrated. One case that stood out during the week was a young, sick dog that had a badly broken thigh bone which was sticking out through the skin on his leg, after surgery he went back to running about the next day happy and healthy on three good legs thanks to the work of the vet and veterinary nurses involved.

To see more of what we got up to in December plus other trips during the last few years go to [www.spaw.org.nz](http://www.spaw.org.nz) or [www.facebook.com/SouthPacificAnimalWelfare/](https://www.facebook.com/SouthPacificAnimalWelfare/) to see lots of photos and action shots.

Geoff Neal



Morwenna helping a young puppy.



Geoff examining a dog while the owner looks on.

## Meet Lara our newest vet

I graduated from Massey University in 2013. After working for 2 years in a busy small animal clinic in South Auckland I moved to the UK where I balanced locum work and travel for 2 years. I recently made the move back to New Zealand where I joined the team at Blockhouse Bay Vets. I am interested in soft tissue surgery and diagnostic imaging.

In my spare time I enjoy being active playing netball, walking my greyhound Perry and when the season suits, swimming, scuba diving and snowboarding.





## Wyatt needs knee surgery.

The topic I wanted to discuss this issue is cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) rupture. This is a very common condition that can cause our clients a lot of angst and our patients a lot of discomfort.

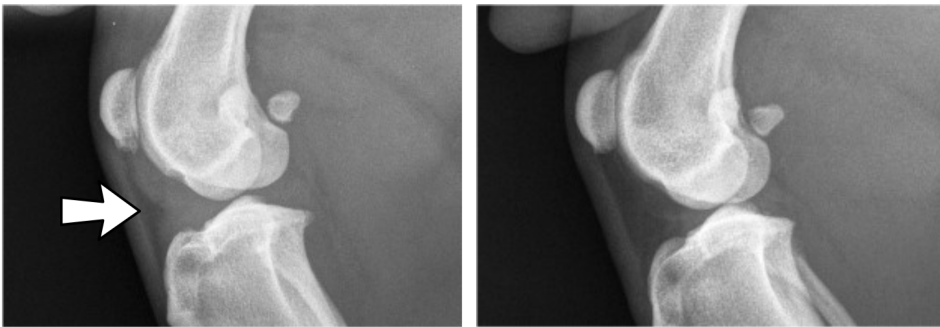
Wyatt is a very sweet mixed breed boy who presented to me a few weeks ago when he suddenly became very lame after running in the sand at Kakamatua Inlet. After sedating Wyatt and x-raying his knee joint we found that the joint was very unstable and the joint capsule was very inflamed. This is consistent with a ruptured CCL.



*Wyatt is a very active dog who has many friends from Craig Avon park. Wyatt loves swimming at local beaches like Kakamatua and Green Bay.*

There are two cruciate ligaments (cranial and caudal) that cross over inside the knee joint forming an X, (hence the name cruciate) inside the knee joint. The cranial cruciate ligament prevents the tibia from sliding backwards and forwards in relation to the femur. When it does, that is called a 'cranial drawer sign' and it confirms the diagnosis of a CCL rupture.

We still need to x-ray the joint for several reasons. Occasionally a piece of bone can break off and we need to know about this before attempting surgery. We also need to measure certain angles between the bones before attempting surgery. Once the ligament has ruptured the instability within the joint will cause inflammation and eventually arthritis. Over time the cartilage will become damaged and the joint will develop bony spurs resulting in chronic pain and loss of motion. This process can be stopped or slowed by surgery but cannot be reversed. X-raying the joint will show us how advanced this arthritic change is before we attempt surgery.



*These xrays show Wyatt's sore leg (on the left) and his normal leg (on the right). You can see the huge amount of inflammation in his joint capsule on the affected leg.*

Luckily for Wyatt, his mum and dad brought him into the vet as soon as he hurt himself. This means that he didn't have time for arthritis to set in.

There are several different surgeries for repair of the cruciate ligament. If the dog is small then we can do something called a 'lateral fabella suture'. This involves placing a thick piece of nylon suture into the joint to act as a new ligament. Small breed dogs less than about 8kg tend to do well with this procedure. If the dog is a bigger boy (like Wyatt) then a bigger surgery is required. Two options are the Triple Tibial Osteotomy (TTO) and the Tibial Plateau Levelling Osteotomy (TPLO). Both of these surgeries aim to change the angle of the joint, eliminating the instability.

All surgical procedures need strict rest for a period following surgery. The TTO and TPLO both involve cutting through bone and therefore rest is required for 6 weeks. After this 6-week rest period we will re-xray the joint to ensure correct healing, and start an exercise plan. We may also suggest other things such as physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, neuroceuticals and weight reduction.

Wyatt will be having a TTO with our wonderful surgeon David McCormick very soon. We look forward to working with his parents to ensure that he makes a full recovery.

Kate Rattenbury

## Breeze's column— What is taxidermy?

A lot of weird stuff has been going on lately. I have heard a lot of strange words that I don't truly understand like "retirement", "sabbaticals" and "Europe". Apparently my Mum and Dad have decided to take some time out from working in the vet clinic and do some "other ventures" including travel.

Now I like a bit of travel myself. Sitting in the back seat of Dad's ute on the way to the farm in Tauranga is kind of fun, but I hear Europe is ten times as far away and utes can't get there. I don't like the sound of a plane especially as I hear dogs travel like common luggage and I couldn't sit with my Mum or Dad.

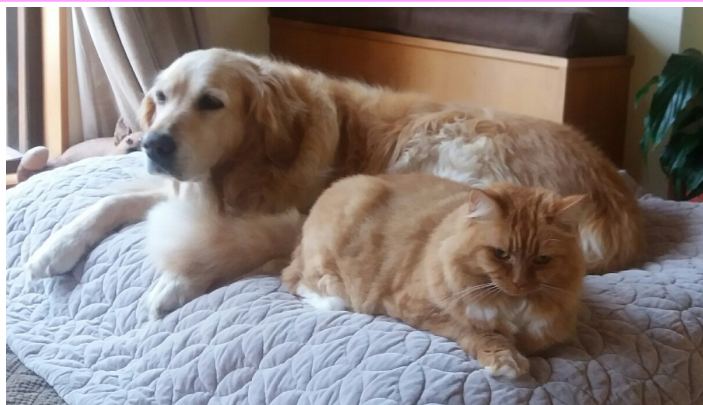
My Dad suggested taxidermy! I don't know what this is but my Mum said that wasn't going to happen.

I spoke to Radish about it and she said she honestly didn't care. As long as she has her house and servants bring her food she doesn't care.

Cats think they are so superior but to be honest I don't think she is that bright.

I know my Mum and Dad would never go anywhere without me and the taxidermy idea is off the table so I am sure it will all work itself out.

The Breeze.



Breeze and Radish. I hate sharing my bed with this stupid cat but I can't make her move.

## Health and Safety in a vet clinic.

If you have anything to do with running a business you will be familiar with health and safety regulations. I recently decided to upgrade our H&S manual so used the services of a consultant who was familiar with vet clinics. When I finally had my new H&S manual I was somewhat surprised that our number one H&S risk had a two line comment.

When I asked the consultant what he thought our number one risk was he didn't know.

So what is our number one H&S risk at work?— Dog bite wounds.

To me it seemed so obvious, but if a H&S consultant didn't know this it got me thinking, maybe our clients don't realise this either.

Our vets and nurses run the risk of serious injury from dog bites every day. In fact I was bitten on the face once requiring sutures to my upper lip and nose. Luckily I was not very good looking before the bite wound. Sadly I am not the only staff member who has been bitten on the face. I feel very responsible for all my staff and never want another incident to occur.

The picture above shows an outwardly aggressive dog. The reality is this dog is very unlikely to bite us as we make sure it doesn't get the chance, using muzzles and sedatives. The danger is from the scared dog as they are unpredictable and will suddenly lash out when they feel cornered.

When I ask an owner what their dogs temperament is like they often say "he is very gentle and would never bite". My experience tells me something else. I will often slowly introduce myself to the dog but in many cases they will lash out and try to bite. In most cases this is a fear response.

We have no intention of muzzling all dogs but we would really appreciate your help. If you know your dog can be unpredictable then tell the vet at the start of the consult, not after it has tried to bite. If a vet says they want to put a muzzle on your dog to do a procedure, please don't object even if you believe it is unnecessary. It may be unnecessary but is it worth the risk?

I believe I am very good at reading dogs behaviour but I have got it wrong in the past, clearly I was bitten on the face, so I got that one wrong. The one I feel the most guilty about was a dog that I was working with and the nurse was holding. I had known the dog for many years and didn't believe he would ever bite. I was wrong and the nurse got bitten requiring stitches to her chin. It is better to be safe than sorry.

