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“Lacy” - Lumbar Disk Extrusion



“Lacy”

“Lacy” is a six year-old Cocker Spaniel who presented with a history of back pain that had begun three days prior to visiting San Carlos Veterinary Hospital. The morning of her visit Lacy's rear legs suddenly became paralyzed. Our examination revealed depressed reflexes and no pain sensation when the rear toes were squeezed. She was flaccid in the rear legs and could not support her weight at all. She had completely lost bladder control. These neurologic deficits are considered VERY serious, with less than a 50-50 chance for recovery. Her spinal radiographs showed calcified, degenerated disks between the 12th & 13th thoracic vertebrae (where the last two ribs attach).

Figure 1 is a myelogram which illustrates the contrast material we injected into Lacy's spinal canal. The filling defects of the contrast material, which are caused by the extruded disk material, blood clots, and spinal cord swelling, are illustrated in Figures 2 & 3. These myelograms demonstrated a large area of potential spinal cord damage.

Figure 1.

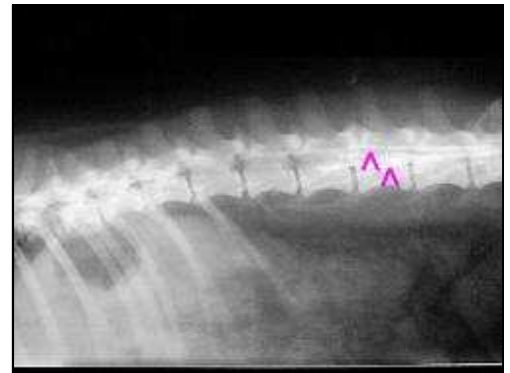


Figure 2.

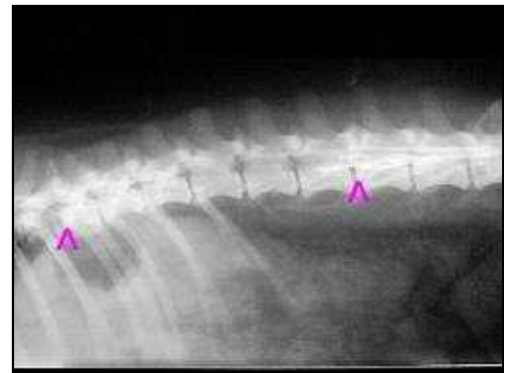


Figure 3.



Figures 1-3

Myelograms of spinal column indicating extruded disk material, blood clots and spinal cord swelling.



“Lacy” cont.



We performed a dorsal laminectomy over the area of contrast filling defects. In this surgical procedure the dorsal lamina, or “roof of the spinal canal”, is removed to expose the spinal canal and spinal cord. We found just what we expected... MUCH extruded fresh disk material, blood clots, and extensive spinal cord swelling, with some areas of potentially permanent spinal cord damage. The arrows in Figure 4 point to two extruded disks

Figure 5 shows Lacy 40 days after the surgery. By then she could lift her rear end and support her weight on her own. She wagged her tail and had some voluntary movements in her rear legs (right better than left) when she tried to walk.

Lacy also has nearly normal urinary bladder control. When she is standing (on her own!), I can push down on her rump with a great deal of pressure and Lacy does NOT fall down, but rather resists my pushing with good force. This means she has recovered excellent muscle tone.

Lacy still suffers from conscious proprioception deficits; that is, she doesn't know exactly where her paws are when she does try to walk, and consequently she is very uncoordinated.

What does the future hold for Lacy? We can never know for sure, but the fact that she has recovered voluntary motor function means she has significantly improved her chance to walk again, even if uncoordinated. She also has regained her bladder control, a very critical problem with paraplegic people and pets. We are now optimistic she will continue to make slow but steady strides toward improvement...not bad for a case that had less than a 50-50 chance before surgery!

It is likely that part of the reason Lacy made such great strides is because the surgery was done THE DAY she became paralyzed! Quick action often minimizes the degree of “paralysis permanency” in cases of “slipped disks”

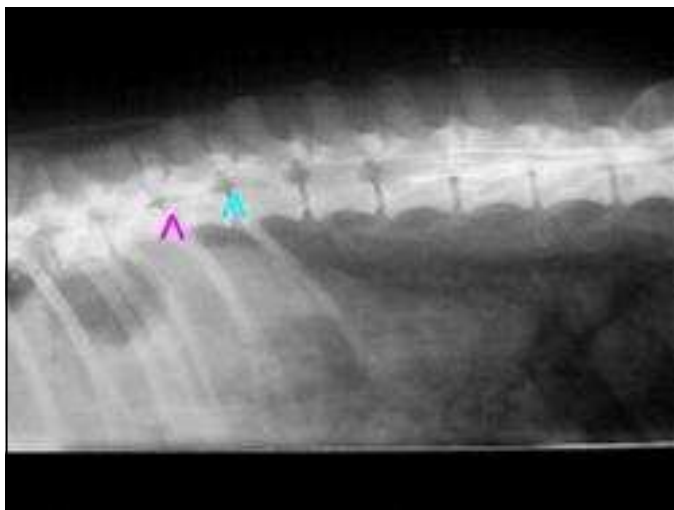


Figure 4.
Two extruded disks, shown by arrows.



Figure 5.
Lacy has some voluntary movements in her right legs.