



media *release*

Monday 16 December 2013

Bull Terrier, Larry, bites off much more than he can chew! Dog saved by Animal Health Trust after choking on a bone

Veterinary charity, the Animal Health Trust (AHT), has recently saved the life of a Bull Terrier called Larry after a small piece of bone became wedged in his throat.

Larry managed to part-swallow a two-inch long chunk of a large marrow bone from the butcher's shop, which wedged itself across his oesophagus.

Simon Bradford, Larry's owner, would normally treat his dogs with the occasional marrow bone, but on this particular day he noticed Larry wasn't behaving quite himself. Mr Bradford said: "I could tell immediately something wasn't right when he was unable to digest his dinner. I quickly guessed it might have been the marrow bone."

Mr Bradford suddenly found himself dealing with a rather unwell dog, and an emergency appointment was scheduled for the next day. Vets sedated Larry and tried to remove the large piece of bone with forceps. However, after several unsuccessful attempts at dislodging the chunk the decision was made to transfer him to the AHT for further treatment.

At the AHT, Larry was anesthetized once again to enable medics to remove the bone using an endoscope (a small camera used internally).

Daniela Murgia, Head of Soft Tissue Surgery at the AHT, said: "Sadly, in Larry's case the bone stuck in his oesophagus (a piece of knuckle) could not be removed using this technique. Instead he had to undergo emergency surgery, which entailed

opening up his chest, incision and reconstruction of the oesophageal wall, due to the severity of the situation.”

Larry was in surgery for approximately four hours, with Daniela working hard to save him.

“After a long wait we finally heard that Larry had pulled through his ordeal,” said Mr Bradford. “It was a huge weight lifted, but a real shock as to how much damage the bone had done.

“He’s well on the road to recovery now, but it has put me off ever giving my dogs any types of bones again - even one as assumedly ‘safe’ as a marrow bone.”

Daniela added: “Bones can be fatal if parts are swallowed whole. They can stay in the stomach for long periods and cause severe gastritis, or become stuck in the gut causing obstruction, which is also extremely dangerous.

“I’d urge pet owners to ensure they are aware of the risks that bones and other treats can pose to their pet, especially at this time of year.”

Daniela and the AHT team are keen to raise awareness among pet owners of the risks pets can face during seasonal festivities. The veterinary charity has 12 festive pet tips to help keep your pets safe during the festive period. These are:

1. Some festive human foods are poisonous to your pet. DO NOT feed them chocolate, macadamia nuts, raisins or onions, and never give them alcohol.
2. DO NOT give your pet small bones to chew. As well as being a choke hazard, cooked bones can splinter, causing internal damage.
3. Ensure your Christmas tree is well anchored so your enthusiastic pet cannot pull it over! Also, clean up fallen pine needles so they don’t get stuck in your pet’s paws or throat.
4. Make sure your pet has somewhere quiet and relaxed to escape from the excitement and noise of festive gatherings.
5. If you have an open fire, use a fireguard to protect your pet from the flames.

6. Be aware of the dangers of antifreeze poisoning. Mop up any antifreeze spills and be vigilant for signs of poisoning, including vomiting, incoordination and seizures. www.aht.org.uk/antifreeze
7. It's easy to get lost in the excitement of Christmas, but remember to keep to your dog's daily routine by feeding and walking them at usual times.
8. Sparkly decorations are irresistible to your pets, but also dangerous. Glass baubles can shatter in their mouths and tinsel can become stuck in their intestines.
9. Keep your pets out of the kitchen when cooking as they may get under your feet and cause you to spill hot oil or boiling water.
10. When visiting friends and family with your dog, prepare for the car journey by providing them with fresh water and making sure they're warm.
11. Fireworks can cause distress during the Christmas and New Year period. Walk your dog during daylight hours and when the fireworks start, close the curtains and put the TV on to muffle any sound. Make sure pets have a place to hide if they get scared.
12. And finally! Know your local vet's emergency/out of hours details.

To download a poster of these festive tips, please visit www.aht.org.uk/festivepettips. Alternatively, like the 'Animal Health Trust' Facebook page and share the festive tips poster with your friends.

Ends

For further information, please contact:

Georgie Shevki, AHT press office, 01638 555602

Photographs:

Images of Larry can be requested from the AHT Press Office. A helpful infographic including festive pet tips can also be supplied.

Additional notes:

- The **Animal Health Trust** is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist

referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit our website at www.aht.org.uk