

BULLETIN 64 – January 2009

Dear Members and Friends

First of all, a very happy New Year to you all and to your dogs. I hope that 2009 will be kind to you and that all of you with Therapets will continue to enjoy your visiting which brings so much happiness to patients in hospitals and hospices and residents in residential, nursing and care homes. During 2008 we were very pleased to register 114 new Therapets.

The Trust continues to thrive under the leadership of the new Chairman of Trustees, George Leslie. In 2009 it is hoped to make significant developments to the Website, we hope to increase the educational work of the Trust and, of course, continue to expand the Therapet Service, thereby increasing the number of institutions which we visit.

THERAPETS

As I have already mentioned we were delighted to welcome a great number of new Therapets during 2008. Sadly, however, since the last Bulletin we have heard that the following wonderful dogs have died:-

Keith & Greer Abendroth's Rough Collie "Finlay"
Elizabeth Craik's Beardie/Border Collie "Millie"
Patricia Kerr's Tibetan Terrier "Sasha"
Vanessa Kingswell's Cavalier King Charles "Millie"
Donald McLellan's Border Collie "Chet"
Alan McNeish's Labrador "Abbie"
June McPhillip's Flat Coated Retriever "Kyle"
Muriel Mustard's Sheltie "Seathan"
James & Jean Stewart's Newfoundland "Bo"
Rosemary Stroyan's Greyhound "Wilkie"
Mary Tatner's Westie "Heather"
Mary Todd's Labrador "Becky"

My sympathies go to you all but at the same time I would like to thank you for your participation in the Therapet Service with your beloved pets.

To our new Members and their Therapets many thanks for becoming involved. I am sure that you will find your participation rewarding in many ways. Please write to me to let me know how you are getting on and how your Therapets are taking to their new work.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2009 are now due and I enclose the normal renewal form. We do hope that you will continue your membership and of course it is very important, from the insurance point of view, that Therapet Volunteers keep their membership up to date. Again this year the form contains a **Gift Aid Declaration**. If you are a tax payer please do sign this declaration as the Trust can then recover valuable tax from HM Revenue & Customs

The membership subscription rates have not changed since the Trust was formed in 1988. It has been, and remains, the Trustees' policy to retain very modest fees and there are no plans to make any increases. We do appreciate very much the generosity of many members who feel able to send donations with their membership fees.

FUND RAISING

We are so grateful to members and friends who raise funds for the Trust in many different ways. It is not practical to write about them all but here are some examples:-

In 2008 Maureen Hill, our Area Representative for Dumfries, has sent in over £1,650. Maureen along with members Pat Bryce and Elizabeth Maxwell (with Maureen's husband helping in the background!) attend a lot of events in the Dumfries area with a wonderfully stocked stall and great numbers of most beautiful quilts and fleeces for dog beds, which they spend many hours making.

In Badenoch and Strathspey Area Representative Vivien Moen, and her team of willing helpers, always has a stand at the Figgat Fair and we were delighted to receive the net proceeds of £229.60. Vivien was out of action towards the end of 2008 – she is now the proud possessor of a new hip and is recovering well. She is walking well although the icy conditions have made life a little hazardous for her.

Caroline Fox, from the Borders, arranges seminars, on behalf of her employers, which Veterinary Surgeons are invited to attend. The Vets are not charged a fee but are asked to make donations to Canine Concern Scotland Trust. In November Trustee James Macdonald was invited to a special presentation in Glasgow at which he was handed cheques totalling a magnificent £1,600.

Both Norma Murray, in Tayside, and James Macdonald, in Glasgow, organised sponsored walks in 2008. Norma's walk raised £392.50 and the total raised at the Glasgow walk was £1339.00. John and Anne Mitchell of Paisley raised the highest individual amount of sponsorship and their sum was doubled by the Bank by which they were employed under the Bank's Matched Funding Scheme.

We received £250 from Jacqui Guest's employers, PriceWaterhouseCoopers under their Volunteering Awards Scheme. Again this year we have benefitted from a doughnut day organised at the Glasgow office of Ernst & Young. This raised £100 which was doubled by Ernst & Young under their Matched Funding Scheme.

The Muirhead Ring Craft Club make collections at their Club nights and in 2008 they sent the Trust a wonderful sum of £239.56

Thank you everyone who raised money or sent donations in 2008.

PRESENTATION AND AWARDS LUNCHEON 2008

This took place on Sunday 16th November at the Kaim Park Hotel, Bathgate, and by all accounts it was a very happy occasion. Chairman George Leslie introduced the awards and Patron Lesley Fitz-Simons was there to make the presentations.

Unfortunately I was not fit enough to attend which was particularly sad as I was on the awards list! Nick arrived home with the Iain Whyte Memorial Trophy for me along with a most beautiful engraved crystal bowl which the Trustees gave me as a retirement present. He also brought with him a wonderful card which had been drawn by great friend of the Trust, Malky McCormick (Malky designed the Therapet logo for us). It is by far the largest card I have ever received and it was signed by everyone who attended the lunch. We have since had it framed and I look at it every day!

The following is the report on the awards that was sent to the press.

“THE SPENCER AWARD for THERAPET OF THE YEAR was presented to Clare Copland’s WALTON, a Retriever/Labrador Cross, a very handsome boy with a wonderful temperament. Walton has been a regular visitor to Rowan Court Nursing Home in Aberdeen for over five years but it was for his work with phobic children that he was nominated for the award. We received a glowing testimonial from a Clinical Psychologist at the Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital. Walton particularly



helped one child who was petrified of dogs. As the Psychologist said “I would go so far as to say that Walton helped to change this child’s life for the better.” Two teachers from St Andrew’s School in Inverurie, also wrote in praise of Walton. One of the teachers is responsible for autistic pupils and the other for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Both teachers described the profound, and almost magical effect, that Walton had in helping pupils overcome their fear of dogs.

The runner up was Caroline Hipplesley’s Labradoodle CLOVA who has been an outstanding visitor to the Whitehills Health & Community Centre in Forfar.

THE DR MORRIS ANDREW & DANIEL THE SPANIEL MEMORIAL AWARD – a beautiful silver quaiche donated by Morris’s family - is made annually to the Therapet Organiser of the Year. Morris was a Trustee and was also Area Representative for Edinburgh for a number of years. This year the award was made to Lynsey Thomson, our very dedicated Area Representative for Stirlingshire.



Two awards were made in respect of “Stepping Out For Scotland”, a series of sponsored walks so vital for our fund raising each year. This year the award for the organiser whose walk raised the most money was won by James Macdonald who arranged the walk in Glasgow.



The award for the individual who obtained the most sponsorship went to John and Ann Mitchell who participated in the Glasgow walk.

The final award of the day was **THE IAIN WHYTE MEMORIAL AWARD**. This award is made to a person or organisation whose work has been of special benefit to the Trust over the past year or over a period of years. For the second time this award was made to Marjorie Henley Price, who, earlier this year and because of continuing ill-health, retired as the Chair of Trustees and as a Trustee. Sadly Marjorie was not fit enough to attend the ceremony to receive her award. Marjorie was the inspiration behind the creation of Canine Concern Scotland Trust in 1988. She worked tirelessly for very many years carrying out the administration of the Trust and organising the tremendously successful Therapet Scheme. Marjorie was always to the fore in arguing on behalf of dogs and the great value they are to humans in very many ways. On her retirement as a Trustee the Trustees appointed her to be the first Honorary Life President of the Trust.”

More detailed reports and more photographs are on our website
www.canineconcernscotland.org.uk

THERAPET PUBLICITY

As a result of Walton’s award he and Clare were featured in the Press & Journal, a great picture and an excellent article. This was swiftly followed by an appearance on GMTV News in which Walton and Clare were shown visiting St Andrew’s School in Inverurie and Clare gave a really good interview.

NEW ARRIVAL

More news of Stirlingshire Area Representative, Lynsey Thomson. She gave birth to her second child on 6th August. George weighed in at 8lbs 12.5oz and by all accounts he will be playing rugby for Scotland in a few years time!!! Congratulations Lynsey.

THOUGHTS ON AGEING THERAPETS

I have been asked on a number of occasions for advice on looking after older Therapets. Should we consider retiring them at some point? What are the best ways to keep them healthy and fit?

First let us consider what we mean by an older Therapet. The old adage that one dog year is equivalent to 7 human years is not very accurate. It is fairly obvious that a 1 year old dog is relatively more mature than the average 7 year old child and is probably more of a teenager. I think that most accounts I have read suggest a comparison more as follows ;

1 year old dog = 14 year old human
2 year old dog = 21 year old human
3 year old dog = 27 to 30 year old human

Thereafter small to medium breeds one dog year = 4-5 human years, and large to giant breeds one dog year = 6-7 years.

I feel that this sort of formula is fairly accurate, although there are so many different breeds and types of dogs no formula will ever be completely accurate.

So what is my advice about combating the ageing process in our pets? I have three basic principles.

1) Just as with humans keep them active and socially interactive, so being a Therapist is probably one of the best occupations a dog could have. Equally going to dog clubs, dog shows, sponsored walks, family holidays etc will all keep your pet young at heart.

2) Do not let your pet become overweight. If that happens you are almost guaranteeing a shorter lifespan. Most Vets and some Pet Stores have suitable scales, although for small to medium dogs weighing yourself + dog on bathroom scales and subtracting your weight is pretty accurate. If the weight is going up then Diet! Diet! Diet! There are two types of diets. The first saves you money. You must calculate everything the dog eats in a day and make a 15% reduction. If the weight does not come down make a further reduction. The second involves obtaining extreme low calorie dog food from your vet (diet is prescription only and expensive).

While exercise is always good for your dog, do not try to reduce an overweight dog by exercise. Many overweight dogs may have other health problems and you should check with your vet about exercise requirements.

3) Good dental health. This factor is not quite so obvious but most dental disease in dogs involves periodontal disease and this is a major drag on general health. I can't overemphasise the need for keeping your pet's teeth clean either with toothpaste, oral hygiene products, dentichews etc and regular check-ups.

As your dog's age increases various problems start to appear. Probably the most obvious will be (just as with humans) stiffness and occasionally severe lameness or leg weakness. There is a great deal you can do. Controlled exercise – no jumping or galloping – walking provided there is no severe lameness and swimming provided you don't need to clamber over rocks or muddy river banks to get into the water.

Have the problem assessed by your vet who may prescribe short term or long term anti-inflammatories. If these help do not assume that your dog is cured and still control the exercise. Many people advise glucosamine, chondroitin and cod liver oil. All of these probably help but the scientific evidence is pretty thin. Two hints – only a drop or two of cod liver oil is required – if you can get glucosamine hydrochloride rather than glucosamine sulphate go for it as it appears to be absorbed better by dogs but it tends to be much more expensive.

Physiotherapy can be helpful particularly if there is muscle wasting on one leg but good veterinary physios are few and far between.

The following steps are important but I am sure that they are also common sense

- dramatic change in appetite must be checked
- dramatic increase in water consumption must be checked
- any problems with vomiting or with toilet must be checked
- breathlessness, tiredness and even a mild soft cough must be checked
- all surface lumps must be checked by measurement, fine needle aspirates or biopsy

Remember old age is inevitable but the indignities associated with it are not. Modern veterinary medicine can do a lot to extend your pet's life and quality of life. Most vets can offer to run geriatric blood tests which can often uncover some old age problems before they become apparent to their owners and when they are more easily treated.

Skin problems which also include many ear problems are more common in the young to middle aged but when your dog becomes old skin and coat quality do deteriorate and neglected ear problems come back to haunt you. You need veterinary advice on every case but regular grooming is vitally important.

I am always being asked to trim nails and in most cases it is un-necessary but in the older dog nail care is important. Nails tend to crack, split or curl and need regular care.

Eyes tend to deteriorate with age, and we should learn to manage our older dogs with the knowledge that they probably don't see as well as they once did. However any problem with eyes involving discharge, irritation or cloudiness should be checked as they are often indicators of other disease and a great deal can be done to relieve your dog's eye problems.

So should we retire old Therapets? Not if they are still up for it, and enjoy the social interaction of meeting their friends in care homes and hospitals.

Obviously there may come a day when your old Therapet cannot manage and we have to recognise this just as we have a duty to recognise when our dog's quality of life has gone. With modern pain-killers few old dogs should suffer the indignity of pain in old age, but when quality of life has gone we all have to pick a day to let our friend go. Discuss this with your vet, and never feel that there is a rush or that you are under any pressure to make the decision. If you feel that you can be with your dog when he or she has to go then - be there for them.

George Leslie BVMS MRCVS
Chairman of Trustees

And here is a great story from **Pauline Fraser** of Glenrothes:-

“At nearly 10 years old, Labrador Denzel amazes everyone who meets him! He is still happily working as a Therapet despite having arthritis in several joints and owner Pauline thinks it is acupuncture that makes the biggest difference to his life! Every few weeks he goes for a “top-up” treatment with Vey Jane Hunter at St Clair Vets, Glenrothes branch to help keep him mobile.

When Denzel was only 2 years old he was diagnosed with having dysplasia and arthritis in both elbows and he was sadly expected to have a poor quality of life and a short one. To help him some years ago he started having acupuncture.

In May this year Denzel was miserable. He could hardly walk and had ruptured the cruciate ligament in his knee. However, with a state of the art operation carried out by St. Clair Vet Ian Paterson, his knee joint was stabilised and Denzel has made an

excellent recovery. He now has joint supplements and herbal medication but manages on a reduced dose of anti-inflammatory medication with his regular acupuncture treatments.

Denzel is now back in his Therapet role regularly visiting South Parks Nursing Home in Glenrothes where he is a very popular visitor. Denzel continues to lead a healthy lifestyle, Pauline keeps him nice and slim and he regularly enjoys swimming in the sea. And despite everything he has gone through, Denzel still loves going to the vets and getting his acupuncture.”

Well done Denzel – keep up the good work.

2009 Diary Dates

Please put the following in your diaries:-

- Companion Dog Show at Queens Park, Glasgow on Sunday 7th June
- Meeting of Trustees and Area and Therapet Representatives at the Salutation Hotel, Perth on Saturday 18th July
- Presentation and Awards Luncheon at the Kaim Park Hotel, Bathgate on Sunday 15th November

TRUSTEES, AREA AND THERAPET REPRESENTATIVES

Between them our Trustees have a very wide range of experience in matters relating to dogs and they are always available to members. They will be more than happy to hear from you and their contact details are enclosed

Our Area and Therapet Representatives do wonderful work and are always willing to help, please do not hesitate to contact them. Lists are enclosed.

With best wishes to you all and your dogs.

Yours sincerely

Marjorie Henley Price