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“Sometimes I heard the tow truck start up and drive away. A few minutes later, I heard it come back, stop, a door opened and closed and the truck would drive off,” explains Dottie. “I learned from the neighbor that he would get down the street and realize Rocky was with him so he would bring him back home and drop him off. Of course, Rocky also ended up going on a lot of calls with him.”

In 1997, Dottie adopted Rocky. She owns several cats so he fit right in. In July 2005, Dottie reached down to pet her beloved Rocky and was immediately horrified. Underneath his thick coat of fur, she felt lumps. She immediately rushed him to her veterinarian at the Cat Clinic of Stillwater.

“Rocky had lost a couple of pounds, which was hard to notice underneath all that hair,” explains Dottie.

The Clinic referred the case to the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital Small Animal Clinic where he was diagnosed with renal lymphoma - kidney cancer. In addition, he tested positive for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) or feline AIDS.

Before bringing Rocky into the house, Dottie had him tested for FIV; however, the test was negative at the time. Thankfully, when she subsequently had her other indoor cats retested, the results were negative. Rocky is her only cat with FIV.

“His prognosis was not good,” recalls Dottie. “I was told he had maybe a week if we did nothing and with chemotherapy - if it worked - maybe 3 to 5 months.”

The usual remission time with chemotherapy is around 6 to 9 months, but because Rocky’s condition was complicated by high calcium levels, renal failure, and FIV positive status, a shorter remission time was considered the most likely outcome.

Dr. Mary Bowles, Assistant Professor of Small Animal Internal Medicine, prescribed an aggressive protocol for Rocky including weekly chemotherapy. At home, Dottie would administer sub-cutaneous fluids three times a week to improve his hydration and help maintain kidney function.

“The chemotherapy brought Rocky’s lymphoma under control, but gave him unrelenting problems with respiratory infection due to his FIV positive status,” explains Dr. Bowles. “This caused him to become very debilitated.”

By the fall of 2005, Rocky was extremely anemic and weighed merely 4 pounds. Dr. Bowles stopped the chemo and recommended a feeding tube. Dottie refused.

“I decided it was time to pour my energy and my faith in God into saving Rocky,” says Dottie. “Under OSU’s direction, I purchased a nebulizer breathing machine, droppers, and anything else I needed to personally nurse him back to health. Dr. Bowles went beyond what is normally expected of a veterinarian to see that I had the information I needed to provide the best possible care for Rocky.”

That was in 2005. Today, Rocky is in remission. He is healthy, weighing more than 10 pounds, and has a beautiful, thick coat. He is prone to upper respiratory infections but those are easily controlled with antibiotics.

“Rocky is very laid back; he is just a happy cat,” smiles Dottie. “To me the money, the time and the effort were all worth it. I wish everyone loved their animals as much as Rocky is loved by so many people.”

And Dottie can’t say enough good things about the care Rocky received from the faculty and staff at OSU’s Center for Veterinary Health Sciences.

“I am truly grateful for Dr. Bowles. She is extraordinary; just an exceptional veterinarian and she is the main reason I have my Rocky today,” states Dottie. “I don’t think other veterinarians would have put in the time and effort that she did. She has called Rocky a miracle cat, and so do I. And Rocky just loves Lisa Gallery, his veterinary technician. The OSU Teaching Hospital will always be where my animals receive their veterinary services because the people here really care about their patients and clients.”



Perhaps the best thing, other than Rocky's life, that resulted from this case was the learning experience.

As in all cases at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, each patient is assigned a 4th year veterinary student to assist with the case. This provides the soon to be veterinarians hands-on experience while under the supervision of faculty veterinarians. Samantha McLaughlin was the 4th year student recently assigned to Rocky's case.

"After one of Rocky's checkups, Samantha said to me that this case gave her hope. It made her realize that she will be able to save some of the animals that will come under her veterinary care," says Dottie. "Thanks to this experience, that student has hope for future clients."

The OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital includes both Small Animal and Large Animal Clinics. Appointments can be made by calling (405) 744-7000 or by referral from other veterinarians. For more information on available services, visit <http://www.cvhs.okstate.edu>.