

And the laser therapy contest winners are ...

By Lisa Miller, DVM, CCRT
For The Education Center

The 2013 "Make a Case with Companion Contest" winner was certainly difficult to choose. The Companion Therapy Laser home office in Newark, Del., received 96 cases from five countries, three provinces in Canada and 28 states in the continental U.S.

The quantity and quality of the cases were excellent and a panel of seven veterinarians helped select the winning cases in a three-part judging process. The winner was the case of **Stewie the cat**, submitted by **Dr. Jerri Smith and Christine Garbow, CVT, from BFF Veterinary Care in Minneapolis, Minn.**

Stewie is a 5-year-old neutered male, DSH feline that presented in 2009 with mild stomatitis. Stewie was treated over the next four years with a combination of steroids, diet change, antibiotics, homeopathy and multiple pharmacologic analgesics as well as partial dental extraction.

He also experienced feline hyperesthesia, constantly biting and chewing his skin, and was treated with amitriptyline as well. Secondary to the longterm use of steroids for his stomatitis, Stewie's skin was very thin and tore easily, resulting in four episodes of skin tears/wounds created by normal grooming.

Complications from suturing these wounds and the placement of Penrose drains in his thinned skin resulted in further skin tearing. Despite extensive workup and therapies, Stewie's stomatitis continued to worsen and by April 2013, he was anorexic and had experienced weight loss secondary to this.

Additionally, he was withdrawn and painful and the owners were considering euthanasia due to his poor quality of life.

Dr. Smith outlined each problem and complication, adding that each new issue and its treatment seemed to complicate or exacerbate his other problems.

"For instance, each skin tear seemed to increase the hyperesthesia, and Stewie's attempts to deal with the hyperesthesia created more skin tearing. It was difficult to orally medicate him because his mouth was so painful. Weight loss also reduced his immune resistance. Stewie, who had been a lively, friendly cat, refused to get out of bed, eat or interact with the owners or the other cat."

Laser treatment began in May 2013 after grooming created yet another large wound over the cat's lower back. That wound was treated with laser and bandaging and not only healed quickly, but hair regrowth was also noted—something that was absent in Stewie's prior wound sites.

Over the next six weeks, this large wound healed completely and laser treatment was expanded to include previous wound sites that were still alopecic. Those areas also regrew normal fur after treatment.

At the same time, Stewie's mouth was treated for stomatitis, beginning very frequently due to the severity of his lesions, and then tapering as his condition was controlled, to a maintenance treatment performed once weekly.

"By improving the quality of his skin and decreasing his so-



Depressed Stewie.



May 15, 2013: Stewie's wound from grooming.



June 28, 2013: Stewie's wound healing.

matic pain, his owners felt his improved quality of life justified further [dental] extractions. ... Laser treatment following his oral procedures allowed the gingival, tonsillar and lingual lesions to heal.

"By removing most of the remaining problem teeth and following up with laser treatment for post-extraction healing, Stewie's appetite returned, he began to eat normally and put on weight. We were able to significantly reduce pain medication and completely eliminate antibiotics and steroids."

Stewie has made a complete recovery, although he still has some mild inflammation of the gingival area, which is treated with the laser. He has gained weight and now acts like a perfectly normal, healthy cat. He even has his own Facebook page!

While Stewie's case involved many issues, the common thread is that laser helped reduce inflammation and pain and speed healing.

"Stewie's is a case that many veterinarians have seen," said one of the contest judges, "the patient with multiple chronic problems, many of which contribute to other problems either by their existence or their treatment. Having another option to treat these patients, laser therapy, and to have the possibility of reducing or eliminating their chronic medications, is very exciting."

Runner-up in the contest was **Bosley**, submitted by **Baring Boulevard Veterinary Hospital in Reno, Nev.**, by Dr. Sara Hogel, featured last month in VPN. Additionally, honorable mentions included:

■ Case #38, Mackenzie Murphy, submitted by East Oshawa Animal Hospital in Courtice, Ontario, Canada, by Dr. Carol Smith.

■ Case #52, Dax, submitted by Mile High Veterinary Hospital in Aurora, Colo., by Dr. Iian Waskow.
■ Case #76, Maggie Cook, submitted by Lake Forest Animal Hospital in Forest, Va., by Dr. Amy Taunton.

One of the exciting benefits of the contest was to see the multitude of conditions that Companion Therapy Laser customers are successfully treating, where they are utilizing laser therapy in their practices, and the variety of patients that laser therapy has helped.

Table 1 depicts the variety of cases and conditions submitted for the contest. These cases represent 96 patients that were treated using laser therapy as part of their therapeutic plan. Overall, 76 canine patients were repre-



September 24, 2013: happy Stewie.

sented, as well as 11 cats, three horses, two birds, two goats, and two rabbits. Not only does this illustrate that laser therapy is beneficial for a variety of species that are seen in veterinary medicine, but it also shows the versatility that this modality has in treating various conditions that veterinarians see every day. Due to the physiological effects that photobiomodulation has on inflammation and the biological effects of accelerated tissue repair and cell growth, laser therapy has become a very effective modality in treating these common conditions.

The cases show success in using the laser for treating wounds (30 percent of the cases submitted), many of which were quite severe de-gloving injuries of the extremities. Interestingly, five of the cases submitted involved patients that had either concurrent disease (such as diabetes mellitus), were receiving high doses of steroids, or had wounds that were chronically non-healing for unknown reasons. All healed successfully with the aid of therapy laser.

Many of the patients treated for the more chronic conditions listed above were able to have their medication dosages reduced or discontinued with the help of laser therapy. Laser therapy served as an excellent adjunct to traditional treatments and medications in most cases, but was also used in other cases as an alternative to more extensive surgical or medical procedures which were declined by pet owners due to various constraints or that were simply unavailable. In two cases, amputation was avoided, and in four others, pets that were facing euthanasia due to complications from their problems were saved. ●

Dr. Miller is a graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. She practiced canine rehabilitation, sports medicine, neurological rehabilitation and acupuncture for several years before returning to general practice. Dr. Miller is a product manager and medical advisor for Companion Therapy Laser.

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Condition/Category*	Number of Cases
Wounds (incl. degloving)	29
Infection or Cellulitis present	18
Other Neurologic Injury/Condition	14
Trauma	9
Osteoarthritis or Spondylosis	9
Post-Surgical or Post-Dental	5
ACL injury (conservative or post-op)	6
IVDD	4
Intra-op use during GI surgery	3
Otitis	3
Misc. Dermatitis	2
Delayed or Non-Union Fracture	1
Anal Gland Abscess	1
Perianal Fistula	1
Snake Bite	1
Lick Granuloma	3

Table 1 *Please note that some cases may have involved more than one condition/category