



In Honor of Jessie

Jessie was an energetic, fun-loving 8-year-old American Pit Bull Terrier whose pet parents brought her in to CARES in February, 2011 after noticing her limping for a few days. Her primary veterinarian identified an aggressive bone lesion in her shoulder and referred her to The Cancer Center at CARES where she came for further evaluation with an oncology specialist. Radiographs of the affected bone showed a pattern of destruction and abnormal tissue growth that was consistent with an aggressive tumor called osteosarcoma, the most common primary bone tumor in dogs. Unfortunately, just before diagnosis, Jessie had also suffered an injury of her right hind leg and was diagnosed with a cruciate ligament tear. She was lame on both legs, and since aggressive bony lesions such as osteosarcoma usually require amputation for treatment and pain relief, the surgeon was concerned about her ability to walk following surgery. Jessie started chemotherapy treatment, and a customized brace was fitted for her right hind leg to help support her. When she was walking well with the brace, surgery was performed for the osteosarcoma.

Once Jessie recovered from surgery, her chemotherapy protocol was resumed. Jessie was also enrolled in a study CARES is participating in to evaluate a new drug designed to lessen the side effects of chemotherapy treatment and to improve patient quality of life. This drug, currently called CASAD, helps with treatment-associated diarrhea. While both the owners and doctors were not allowed to know whether Jessie received the placebo or the drug, she did well through treatment, and given how well she did, both felt that she might have received the study drug.

By May 2011, Jessie was cancer free, feeling great, and was back to chasing deer and foxes around her yard. Sadly, however, osteosarcoma can be a very aggressive, drug-resistant disease, and for Jessie, this was the case. In June 2011, Jessie developed another aggressive bony lesion in her spine that affected her ability to walk and caused her pain. Median survival time for a patient treated for osteosarcoma is about 10 months, and approximately 20% are alive and tumor free at 2 years post-diagnosis. Jessie's disease proved to be more aggressive. All who knew and loved her were devastated, including the team who cared for her at CARES. We will all miss her sweet, happy face and loving nature.

Jessie's family said, "We were devastated when Jessie was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, but the skill and compassion of Dr. Overley and Dr. Puerto gave Jessie five pain-free, happy months with us that she otherwise would not have had. Jessie was such a brave dog. She was our hero. She came through

the surgery with flying colors and seemed unfazed by all the post-op treatment. She continued to romp and play, chase deer with three legs, and be the sweet, loving dog at the center of our family.

“We want to thank all the staff at CARES for the loving treatment they always provided to Jessie, especially two very special people, Sami Fritz and Lauren Stokes, who came in on their day off to be with us during the last two hours of Jessie's life. The staff at CARES treated Jessie with such loving kindness, and were an amazing comfort to her and to us. Being the wonderful caregivers that they are, they helped give us the strength to make the most difficult decision we ever had to face. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.”

