

Issue 3 – Spring 2025

Together

with Blaise



In this issue...

Emergency and
Critical Care
Soft Tissue

Life-saving pacemaker
for Dachshund, Poncho
Cat Blood Donor

blaise[™] Veterinary
Referral Hospital
Birmingham

blaise-referrals.com



Poncho receives a lifesaving pacemaker

A dog whose heart had slowed to just 15 to 20 beats per minute was saved by our brilliant cardiology team in a last-chance operation that ran into Christmas morning.

Poncho, a small Dachshund who received a lifesaving pacemaker, presented with an alarmingly slow heart rate, although she was still able to wag her tail to cuddles.

Cardiologist Xavier Navarro-Cubas called his wife Sandra Sanchis, an anaesthetist at Blaise, to come in from festive preparations at home to help save Poncho.

Having carried out the procedure on the beloved pet late into the night on Christmas

Eve, he says everyone at Blaise was just happy they could give her family the perfect present.

And grateful owner Stephanie Diamond says she'll never forget the team who gave up their Christmas plans to save 11-year-old Poncho.

Stephanie, from the Brecon Beacons, had travelled to spend Christmas with her sister in Warwickshire when Poncho took ill.

“Poncho is such a special little dog, and she’s only ever had problems when she’s eaten things she shouldn’t,” said Stephanie.

“So, when she started being constantly sick through the night before Christmas Eve, I thought she must have got hold of something. Her legs went and when I took her to Severn Vets the next morning, they immediately spotted that it was a major cardiac issue as Poncho’s heart rate was down to 25 beats per minute.

“There were also concerns about potential damage to her kidneys and I was really worried.”

Severn Vets realised that an urgent operation was needed to save Poncho’s life, but it was looking bleak because of the holidays until the cardiology team stepped forward to save the day.

Team members who were about to leave for the Christmas holidays volunteered to stay behind as Poncho was rushed in, and Xavier had to make drastic changes to his festive plans.

“My wife Sandra and I had prepared food for a Christmas Eve dinner at home with friends and colleagues from Blaise,” said Xavier.

“That had to be cancelled but, as we needed an anaesthetist, I also had to ask Sandra to come in and help.

“As we have two young children, Lauren Osborne who is our senior cardiology nurse and a very good family friend, stepped in to take care of our children so Sandra could come in.”

The team were on standby when Poncho arrived and was prepared for surgery.

“By the time we were ready for anaesthesia her heart rate was only around 15 beats per minute,” said Xavier.

“That’s so low that I listened few times to check it. Usually when doing a pacemaker procedure, the patient’s heart rate tends to

“I can’t thank everyone enough from Severn Vets and Blaise who did so much on Christmas Eve to save Poncho”

Stephanie
Poncho’s owner

be around 40 beats per minute. I have seen other dogs when the rate has been 15 or 20, but in those cases, the dog’s mentation tends to be more depressed.

“Poncho was somehow still sitting, but she was very weak and, in these cases, it can be fatal unless we can act quickly.

“So, although it was very late on Christmas Eve, I felt we just had to operate straight away.”

It was after midnight before the procedure was over and Sandra was able to head back to the sleeping girls as they waited for Santa, and then Xavier was finally able to join them.

Thankfully everything had gone well, and Poncho has been making a good recovery back at home following discharge.

“I can’t thank everyone enough from Severn Vets and Blaise who did so much on Christmas Eve to save Poncho,” said Stephanie. “Xavier had such a passion for helping and the team there did amazing things.”

Having had such an unexpected evening, Xavier is just happy that the Blaise team were able to deliver their own little Christmas miracle, saying

“There’s no better gift than saving a beloved pet, especially at Christmas, and finally being able to reunite them with their devoted family.”



Spotlight on Emergency and Critical Care

What is an ECC Specialist?

An Emergency and Critical Care specialist is a vet who, after graduation, has undergone an immersive 3-year residency program in a referral private hospital or university teaching hospital. This specialised training focuses on the management of small animal emergencies and critical patients that require a high level of support or specialist interventions that might not be available in a regular practice.

Conditions that the ECC service commonly manages:

Respiratory conditions such as:

- Pneumonia
- Cardiogenic and non-cardiogenic pulmonary oedema.
- Hypoventilation (from cervical intervertebral disc disease, tetanus, etc.)
- Brachycephalic crisis

Our ICU is equipped with oxygen kennels, a high flow oxygen machine and a mechanical

ventilator. In addition, the hospital offers a great variety of laboratory tests, including arterial blood gas analysis and can provide procedures such as CT scan and endoscopy to aid in the diagnosis and the best treatment course for the patient.

Metabolic conditions such as:

- Diabetic ketoacidosis
- Addisonian crisis
- Electrolyte disturbances
- Hepatic portosystemic shunt

Patients with metabolic conditions can become critically ill. Our hospital offers specialist care as well as a dedicated nursing team to provide continuous monitoring to the most critical patients.

Haematologic/coagulopathic conditions:

- IMHA
- IMTP
- Bleeding (trauma, coagulopathies, ruptured masses, etc.)
- Thromboembolism

The hospital is equipped with coagulation testing and thromboelastography, which can help guide the diagnosis and treatment of patients with bleeding and coagulopathic disorders. In addition, the hospital stocks different blood products including packed red blood cells and different forms of plasma ready to be used for any emergency.

Infectious diseases such as:

- Septic peritonitis
- Tetanus
- Pyelonephritis

Our ICU is equipped with advanced cardiovascular monitoring and supportive care by means of telemetry and point of care ultrasound or POCUS. POCUS is an invaluable tool that allows assessment of the cardiac chamber size, contractility, and volume status to guide the best therapy for the patient, which might include treatment with different vasopressors, inotropes, intravenous antibiotics, etc. More specialised testing such as blood cultures can also be performed if required.

Cardiac and neurologic emergencies such as:

- Respiratory distress
- Aortic thromboembolism
- Cluster seizures, status epilepticus

The ECC service plays a fundamental role in supporting both cardiologic and neurologic conditions in need of intensive care. An example of this is providing temporary external pacing to patients in need of pacemaker implantation or mechanical ventilation following ventral slot surgery.

Gastrointestinal disorders such as:

- Refractory vomiting and regurgitation
- Acute haemorrhagic diarrhoea syndrome
- Parvovirus

- Pancreatitis
- Nutrition provision: naso-gastric, PEG, jejunal tubes, parenteral nutrition

Gastrointestinal conditions are amongst the most common disorders that affect dogs and cats. Fluid loss combined with anorexia can make our patients severely hypovolemic. Our team of experts can help manage fluid balance and provide nutrition via a number of different routes.

Some patients might require specialized intravenous nutrition if they are unable to tolerate enteral nutrition. For these, a jugular catheter is placed under general anaesthesia for the administration of total parenteral nutrition.

Renal disease:

- Ureteral and urethral obstruction
- AKI
- Uroabdomen

Our team of experts can help by means of advanced diagnostics including contrast studies to visualize stones in the urinary tract and palliative measures such as abdominal drains until a more definitive treatment is available (e.g. ureteral stents, urinary tract repair in case of rupture).

Finally, other conditions that might benefit from referral to the ECC service include:

- Intoxications
- Reproductive emergencies
- Environmental (smoke inhalation, drowning, etc.)

The ECC service frequently acts as the gateway into the hospital for urgent and critically ill patients, then works very closely with other Specialist disciplines to provide exceptional care. True multi-disciplinary care is invaluable in managing these cases, leading to better outcomes.

Get to know our Emergency and Critical Care Team...



Karin Spiller

Emergency & Critical Care Specialist – DVM DACVECC MRCVS

I am originally from Northern California, and I received my undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley and my degree in Veterinary Medicine from Washington State University. After veterinary school, I completed a rotating internship at Pittsburgh Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Center and an Emergency and Critical Care residency at Massachusetts Veterinary Referral Hospital. I worked at several referral specialty and emergency clinics in the United States before moving to the UK to join the team at Blaise Referrals.



Giuseppe Infranca

Emergency & Critical Care Clinician – DVM MRCVS

I studied and qualified in Italy in 2002, since then I gained an extensive experience working in first opinion practice and referral centres in Italy, the UK and Ireland. In all the experiences of the first few years, I developed a strong interest for all the medic disciplines, with particular emphasis on the Critical Care Areas.

Driven By this growing passion, I started my Emergency and Critical Care Internship at UCD University Veterinary Teaching Hospital (Dublin), where I have had the opportunity to work with board-certified clinicians in multiple fields and to further develop my skills as an ECC clinician. Since completed my Internship I was offered to continue my experience with UCDVH as ECC Clinician/Lecturer. So that I have been exposed to higher and higher referral caseload and in addition to my responsibilities of case management and student supervision, I have been involved in enhancing some of our ICU protocols and working processes. I have really enjoyed working at a university teaching hospital and furthering my learning by teaching final year students.

In August 2023 I had the big opportunity to be part of a very intriguing project which was the creation of a brand-new referral, where I have been part of the ECC Team since then.

I am passionate in all the aspect of Critical Care Medicine, with particular interest in the management of Critical Respiratory disorders, Fluid and Electrolytes therapy, Coagulation Disorders and Sepsis.



Marta Garcia Arce
Emergency & Critical Care Specialist – LV Dip.
ECVECC AFHEA MRCVS

I graduated from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in 2014. Shortly after graduation I completed a small animal rotating internship in Ars Veterinaria hospital in Barcelona. In 2016, I moved to the UK and completed a small animal rotating internship at the University of Edinburgh. Following that, I then completed the Vets Now cutting-edge programme and worked at a busy out-of-hours Vets Now clinic in London for 2 years. In 2020, I completed an ECC internship at the University of Edinburgh and started an ECC residency, at the same institution, which I completed in March 2024. Currently, I work in the ECC department at Blaise Veterinary Referral Hospital in Birmingham as an ECC specialist.





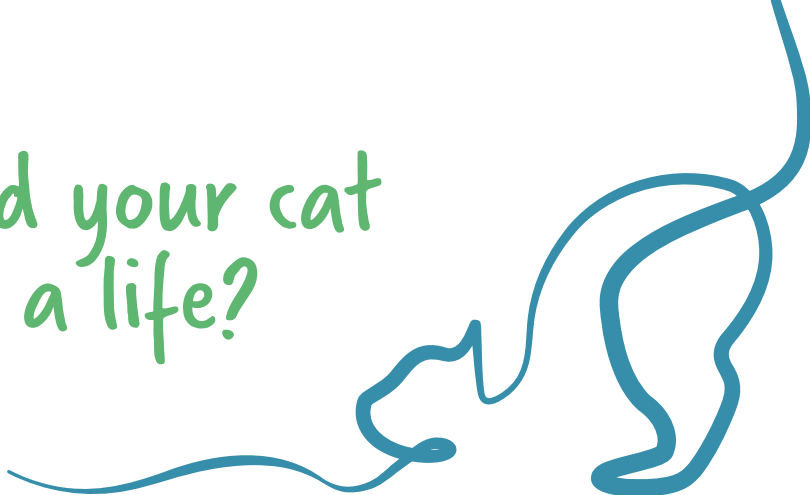
Treatment of George's Severe Anaemia

George was referred to our Emergency and Critical Care Team by his primary veterinarians due to severe anaemia.

Thankfully, a suitable feline blood donor was found, and George received a blood transfusion that significantly improved his condition. Further investigations revealed a diagnosis of non-associative immune-mediated haemolytic anaemia. George began immunosuppressive therapy, and after three days of hospitalisation, he was discharged with oral medication. We have been closely monitoring George's recovery and have spoken to both his primary vet and his owners.

We are happy to report that George's anaemia has fully resolved, and he is thriving at home!

Could your cat save a life?



Blood transfusions are sometimes necessary in a veterinary practice and are often lifesaving, as they are in human medicine.

If your cat meets the requirements below, they will then need to have an appointment to come and meet us and go through the screening process – an examination and blood tests to check general health, blood type etc. and a heart scan. If they get the all clear they could then go on our register.

The donation process is broadly similar to human blood donation. However, donors would usually stay in with us for a few hours after giving blood.

Requirements:

- Between 1 and 8 years of age
- Lean body weight above 4.5 kg
- Calm temperament
- Up to date with relevant vaccination/ worming treatment
- No current medications/serious medical conditions
- No history of having received a transfusion

If anyone has a potential life saver at home or wishes to discuss this further, please contact us via hello@blaise-referrals.com with a brief description of your pet and providing details on how to contact you.

Practice Standards Scheme

We're delighted to announce that Blaise Veterinary Hospital has received the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) accreditation from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) as a Small Animal Veterinary Hospital and Small Animal Emergency Service Clinic





The RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) encourages teamwork and a shared commitment to continuous improvement over the long term. It provides a clear and structured framework for managing a veterinary practice or hospital, ensuring that all team members follow consistent processes and uphold high standards. Achieving this accreditation is widely recognised as a mark of excellence within the profession.

When a veterinary practice applies for the RCVS PSS, it undergoes a comprehensive initial assessment conducted by experienced veterinary surgeons. During this visit, the assessor evaluates key areas such as documentation, facilities, and equipment to ensure they meet the required standards and are well-maintained. The assessor also engages with team members to assess their understanding of and commitment to the practice's standards.

Following the assessment, the practice receives a detailed report outlining the findings and any recommended improvements. Once these actions are addressed, the practice is awarded the appropriate accreditation. Reassessments take place every four years, with the possibility of unannounced spot checks in between to ensure continued compliance. This structured approach not only upholds high-quality care but also supports ongoing growth and improvement.

As a referral hospital, Blaise's dedication to expanding and enhancing services for patients, pet owners, and referring vets is essential. Maintaining the highest standards provides a strong foundation for:

Advanced procedures

A solid framework supports the introduction of complex treatment options, improving patient care.

Team development

A commitment to excellence fosters ongoing training and professional growth, helping team members enhance their expertise.

Collaboration with referring practices

High standards build trust and strengthen partnerships with referring vets, facilitating smooth communication and cooperation.

Client confidence

Knowing that Blaise operates at a high level reassures pet owners that their animals are receiving top-quality care, boosting client satisfaction and loyalty.

By striving for excellence, we not only strengthen our veterinary referral hospital but also contribute to the broader veterinary community and the overall standard of care that pets receive.

If you'd like to learn more about the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme and how this contributes to our patient care, please contact our team.



Sky's road to recovery

Sky is a sweet eleven and a half year old female German Shepherd who has had remarkable patience throughout her treatment journey. Her case has been especially unique, requiring an innovative and multifaceted approach to address her chronic wound.

Sky developed a non-healing wound on her left elbow due to chronic ulceration, which resulted from thin skin over a thickened, osteoarthritic joint. In addition to this, she suffers from osteoarthritis in multiple joints.

Initially, the wound was treated as an open wound due to infection, and we performed debridement and closure twice. While the wound initially healed, it dehisced due to pressure necrosis of the skin over the elbow joint, despite efforts to provide deep bedding for protection. To further promote healing, the wound was debrided once again, and a bipedicle skin flap was performed. A cast was applied for two weeks to immobilise the area, aiding the healing process.

We then designed a fully articulated, padded orthotic to alleviate pressure on the wound site when Sky lies down. The orthotic is removable, allowing Sky to exercise freely. Thanks to these interventions, Sky's elbow wound has healed completely. The medial releasing incision has nearly healed, while the lateral incision is taking a little longer to recover. The orthotic was designed with the flexibility to accommodate dressings if needed, and we continue to change these every few days until the wounds are fully healed.

Sky will need to wear the orthotic long-term to prevent the recurrence of the ulcer, but as shown in the photos, she has adapted to the orthotic exceptionally well!



FREE

Upcoming CPD Events



Mapping Your Way Through Mast Cell Madness

Margo Ossowska, Oncology Specialist
Lara Dempsey, Head of Soft Tissue Surgery
Maria Dalla Fontana, Soft Tissue and Orthopaedic Surgeon

Tue 8 Apr, 19:30

Managing Pain

Jacques Ferreira, Head of Anaesthesia & Analgesia

Thu 8 May, 09:00

How to Get the Most Out of Your Haematology and Biochemistry Results

Camilla Piazza, Internal Medicine Clinician

Tue 20 May, 19:30

Triaging the Emergency Patient

Hannah McCormick, Emergency Day Nurse
Linda De Jonge, Emergency Night Nurse

Mon 2 Jun, 19:30

Orthopaedic Case Discussion

Vassilis Chantziaras, Orthopaedic Surgeon

Tue, 24 Jun, 19:30

Feline Spinal Disease

Emma Suiter, Veterinary Neurologist

Tue, 8 Jul, 19:30

Feline Hearts: Nursing Cats with Cardiac Disease

Lauren Osborne, Senior Cardiology Nurse

Wed, 13 Aug, 19:30

Veins, Drains and Tube Feeding Meals

Sophie Evans, Neurology & Anaesthesia Clinical Team Leader
Georgia Bollington, ECC Clinical Team Leader
Taylor Burgess, Multidisciplinary Nurse

Thu, 4 Sep, 19:30

Let's Talk Lymphoma

Margo Ossowska, Oncology Specialist

Tue 23 Sep, 19:30

How I Met Your Diagnosis

Camilla Piazza, Internal Medicine Clinician
Andrew Kent, Clinical Director & Internal Medicine Specialist

Tue 7 Oct, 19:30

A Practical Approach to ECGs in Dogs and Cats

Xavier Navarro-Cubas, Head of Cardiology
Ela Mederska, Cardiology Specialist
Lauren Osborne, Senior Cardiology Nurse

Sat 15 Nov, 10:00

Transfusion Know-How for Veterinary Nurses

Lisa Astbury, Multidisciplinary Nurse

Mon 1 Dec, 19:30

How to refer to Blaise

We are keen to make the process of referring as easy as possible for you, so we are happy to take referrals in a number of ways.

Routine referrals

Online www.blaise-referrals.com
Email hello@blaise-referrals.com
Call 0121 238 2000

Emergency referrals

Most emergency referrals (same day, evening, weekend) at Blaise are seen by our expert Emergency & Critical Care service.

If you need us urgently then please call 0121 238 2000 and speak to one of our ECC clinicians

Refer a patient

Scan the QR code to refer a patient quickly. Once you have made a referral, we take care of the rest while keeping you fully informed throughout the whole referral journey – it's that simple!



Advice

We are always happy to offer advice on cases that cannot be referred or in advance of referral. You can contact us on the details above or contact our discipline teams directly.

Medicine	birmingham.medicine@blaise-referrals.com
Soft Tissue Surgery	birmingham.softtissue@blaise-referrals.com
Orthopaedic Surgery	birmingham.ortho@blaise-referrals.com
Oncology	birmingham.oncology@blaise-referrals.com
Cardiology	birmingham.cardiology@blaise-referrals.com
Neurology	birmingham.neurology@blaise-referrals.com
ECC	birmingham.ecc@blaise-referrals.com

Please note that discipline mailboxes are generally monitored Monday to Friday during office hours so emails outside that time may not have an immediate response. Urgent queries are always best sent to hello@blaise-referrals.com and accompanied by a telephone call.



Book your tour

Our doors are always open, and we'd love the opportunity to say hello and show you round. You'll have the chance to explore the hospital, meet our dedicated team and understand more about how we work.



0121 238 2000

hello@blaise-referrals.com

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