



The real Christmas angels: Vets Now staff use £200k fund to help critically-ill pets over festive season

Spaniel Marley becomes 50th pet to benefit from lifesaving Angel Fund initiative

They're the veterinary profession's real-life Christmas angels.

Scores of Vets Now emergency vets used their Angel Fund allowance over the festive period to come to the rescue of critically-ill pets who might otherwise have been put to sleep.

The £200,000 Fund — the biggest of its kind in the profession — was launched last year to help vets provide emergency care to animals whose owners couldn't afford their treatment costs.

But it really came into its own over Christmas and New Year when Vets Now's nationwide network of clinics and emergency and specialty hospitals were at their busiest.

One of the vets to use the Angel Fund was Sophie Day, principal vet in Salisbury, who chose to spend part of her £1000 allowance on treating a Labrador after he'd impaled himself on a railing.

Sophie said: "In this case, I was concerned that some fairly extensive soft tissue surgery, or even multiple surgeries, might be needed.

"But the Lab's owners confided that they'd struggle to afford this level of treatment. We discussed amputation or even euthanasia and they were understandably upset about the whole situation.

"In the end, they agreed that we could sedate the dog so we could properly assess the extent of the damage. Under anaesthetic, I was amazed to see that somehow the railing had avoided all of the important structures in the leg and groin. What a lucky dog."

Sophie added: "There was still a lot of work to be done to close the wounds so I felt this would be the perfect case for the Angel Fund so that wound construction could be attempted.

"I can't express how grateful I am that the Angel Fund exists. In this case, the dog had an unforeseen accident, which occurred just before Christmas, meaning that finances were already stretched. It feels so nice to have saved a dog's life and helped a loving owner at the same time."



All of Vets Now's vets have been allocated an allowance from the Angel Fund. It's at the vet's discretion how they spend their £1000, as long as the pets they choose to treat have a good chance of recovery.

Vet nurses and other clinic staff are encouraged to nominate suitable cases for treatment.

As well as benefiting sick pets, it's hoped the scheme will help combat compassion fatigue, which often affects people in caring roles and can lead to stress and burnout.

Since its launch last April, more than 50 pets have benefited.

Among them was Larry the cat who was rushed into Vets Now in Gateshead on December 30 suffering from a high temperature and dehydration.

Sara Jackson, principal vet in Gateshead, said: "We did some investigation but the owner couldn't afford our treatment plan.

"We knew Larry would have an extremely good chance if we could get his temperature down, as it was causing a number of changes to his metabolic processes.

"The treatment plan was quite straightforward but would make a world of difference whereas, not having it could have caused significant deterioration. It was the ideal case for the Angel Fund. He made a great recovery and was much brighter the following day."

Anneka Phillips, principal vet at Vets Now in Bristol, used part of her Angel Fund allowance to treat Woody, a miniature Jack Russell who was suffering from a serious fish hook injury.

She said: "Unfortunately, cost was a massive concern for Woody's owner and he was only able to pay part of his bill. I chose to use my Angel Fund allowance for this case because Woody was a young healthy young dog with a very good prognosis.

"I'm no different to any other vet or vet nurse in that I entered the profession because of my love of animals and desire to save lives and as Woody's case showed, the Angel Fund helps us do just that.

"It's really is a godsend for clinical staff who are often forced to make extraordinarily difficult decisions when an owner says they can't afford to pay for their pet's treatment."

Laura Playforth, head of veterinary standards at Vets Now, said the Angel Fund has given vets and vet nurses more peace of mind when it comes to treating pets whose owners are struggling to make ends meet.

She added: "The Angel Fund allows our clinical staff to do exactly what they entered the



profession for, which is save lives. This is regardless of whether they're treating a stray who has been brought in by a worried member of the public or a pet whose owners are simply struggling to make ends meet.

"This means so much to them, the pets they see and their owners.

"It's particularly poignant that it was used to save lives over Christmas and New Year as, at this time of year, our vets and vet nurses always put their patients before themselves and their families."

The latest research shows the overall cost of owning a dog is between £21,000 and £33,000 depending on size and breed. With dogs generally living for more than 10 years, that adds up to more than £2,000 a year. Cat owners should expect their pet to cost at least £12,000 over their lifetime.

Given these huge sums, Vets Now strongly advocates pet insurance to help with unexpected medical bills.

-Ends-

For media enquires contact Gail Chalmers on gail@gailchalmers.com or 07919411402

Vets Now notes to editor:

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for small animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service.
- Vets Now employs over 1000 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country's top Emergency & Critical Care Specialists.