

Animal death outrages local pet owners

Couple suspects their dog's death after a dental cleaning was tied to a mishap at a local veterinary hospital

■ MEGAN SHANNON
Staff Writer

Daniel Ehrlich rifled through the stack of toys, Halloween costumes and sweaters that once belonged to his beloved dog, Toby.

It's been two months since the 3-year-old mixed-breed dog died, but Ehrlich and fiancée Sandra Fumei are still fuming.

Toby died after getting a routine teeth cleaning at Union Park Animal Hospital.

After the couple got a letter from Union Park stating that eight other dogs had been exposed to a potentially life-threatening contamination within a short time period, the two began looking into a lawsuit.

Last week the couple got a necropsy report from the University of Florida Veterinary Medical Center stating that Toby was probably poisoned by a bacterial infection.

The couple brought their dog to Union Park Animal Hospital — which had treated Toby since he was a puppy — for a dental cleaning at the end of December. After they picked him up later that afternoon, he became ill at home.

The vet said the dog was probably just responding to the anesthetic.

As Toby's health declined, the couple became frantic. They brought him to an emergency vet two days after the dental cleaning on Jan. 1.

Veterinarians gave him blood transfusions and grilled the couple, asking them if they struck the dog, burned him or if he had been hit by a car.

Toby stayed overnight for treatment.

When the couple, sleep deprived and exhausted, picked him up the next morning, they found Toby had gotten worse — at this point he was bleeding through his skin.

The emergency vets told them Affiliated Veterinary Speciality in Maitland was their only hope for further blood transfusions.

"We went from opening Christmas presents to this," Ehrlich said. "Throughout this ordeal we were calling Union Park and begging for answers, but they said they didn't know."

Toby died on Jan. 3. The next day Union Park Animal Hospital sent them a letter that stated:

"Recent events have led us to believe that several animals (8 so far) treated at our hospital were exposed to a potentially life-threatening nosocomial disease from 12/28/06 thru 12/30/06."

They said the cause was either a chemical contaminant in the fluid bags or a severe bacterial contamination from either the hospital staff or handling procedure.

"Meanwhile we have contacted all known owners and are treating each patient symptomatically. Our hospital has been devastated by these events, and



Sandra Fumei with her beloved 3-year-old mixed breed dog, Toby, who died after a routine teeth cleaning at Union Park Animal Hospital.

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