

# TATTLE TAIL

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**H**ank first came to our hospital as an eight-week old ball of fur. From the very first, he had the Hospital staff and waiting clients enthralled.

As time went on Hank developed into seventy five pounds of standard poodle; with a highly developed personality. He relished any type of attention even if it meant the indignity of having his temperature taken, or the discomfort of his annual injections. He seemed to sense that he was one of the hospital favorites.

On one visit I made the usual inquiries about any problems or questions. Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith agreed that they had to keep an eye on their laundry basket, or they would find dirty laundry strewn about the house and yard. We discussed various options and strategies, and I cautioned them that dogs were capable of eating some rather strange things. In the past I had removed everything from rocks to false teeth.

A few months later Hank was brought in by the Smiths, and it was immediately apparent that he was not a happy camper. He gave a half hearted greeting to the staff, and had all of the signs of abdominal distress. The only other sign that the Smiths had noticed was that Hank refused to eat breakfast, and that is what had alarmed them. I asked if there had been any vomiting or diarrhea and they said no. The index of suspicion for an intestinal obstruction had risen to the point that

I recommended hospitalization and X-Rays, and they readily agreed.

The first two film showed nothing, but a lot of gas in the G.I. tract, so we decide to administer barium. We expected the first picture to show the stomach outlined with barium, the fifteen minute film should show barium in the small intestines, and the one hour film should have the barium in the large intestines. The barium had not moved from Hanks stomach after an hour so it was obvious that surgery would be needed to see what the hold up was. I discussed the situation with the Smiths who readily agreed to an exploratory procedure.

Once the stomach had been opened we located a fabric mystery mass; that was later identified as a man's knee high sock. The next morning the old Hank we all knew and loved was ready for breakfast, and was dismayed at the scant offering. He was able to rally when he realized that a number of small feedings would be offered throughout the first day.

On day two the elated owners arrived, and we discussed after care, laundry precautions, as well as laundry addiction. Seven days later Mr. and Mrs. brought Hank back for suture removal; and Mr. Smith said the lid on the laundry basket had been secured with a leather strap.

Things were uneventful for about a year; when poor old mopey Hank returned with two distraught parents. It was apparent to

all that something might be missing from the laundry basket, and it was time for an additional work up. It did not take long for a barium series to confirm our worst fears. The Smiths were notified, and the second surgery was authorized.

On inspection, the stomach was greatly distended indicating a much larger obstruction. The removal of the object and closure were uneventful. It took a while for the techs to untangle and clean the mass, revealing an intact pair of panty hose.

The next day Hank was totally unconcerned about the previous days event, but was a bit put-out about his restricted diet, and cage confinement. He finally put the muscle on my wife, Jean, who let him stay in the grooming room at the office, where he could supervise. This seemed to compensate for any abuses real or imagined.

The Smiths arrived day-three post surgery. Mrs. Smith was overjoyed to see her miscreant. Mr. Smith seemed distracted about the family budget. I advised the family that Hank was officially a Certified Garbage Hound, and that recidivism was to be expected. Mrs. Smith seemed a bit confused, so I clarified by saying once a sinner always a sinner.

The months passed uneventfully, and Hank came faithfully every six weeks to see Jean for his regular grooming and trim. Jean always gave us an update on his condition

cont. - and weight since he seemed to be larger than your average standard poodle, but his personality remained true to his breed. He was always happy to stay with her in a supervisory capacity. Then one January day, Cecilia, our receptionist said “ Hank’s mother is on the phone and needs to talk to you.”

When I answered the phone Mrs. Smith was in tears, and said “Doc, I think he’s done it again.”

I advised her to come right in so we could check him out. In a few minutes the Smiths rushed in, Hank was obviously in distress, Mrs. Smith was still tearful,

and Mr. Smith concerned about cost; but agreed to proceed when his wife stopped crying and looked at him.

At this point I felt reasonably certain that I could diagnose Hank without the benefit of a barium series, but prudence dictated that we needed one to justify a third surgery.

True to everyone’s suspicions the barium was unable to pass the obstruction. I called and advised Mr. Smith that a third surgery would be needed if Hank were to survive. He half seriously asked if I could install a zipper, but I assured him this was beyond my area of expertise.

This time no pre-wash was required to identify the foreign body. It was immediately apparent that we had recovered a bit of intimate apparel... Mrs. Smith’s bra.

Once again Hank spent his recovery in Jean’s grooming room as happy as if he had good sense. The Smiths arrived at the appointed hour of departure, and assured me that they were well versed in Hanks post surgical requirements. I gave them Hank’s medications in a plastic bag along with the newly laundered bra. Mrs. Smith looked at Mr. Smith, and said, “That’s not my bra.”

Seven days later Mrs. Smith brought Hank in to have the sutures removed. 🐾

