The Patient had been in hospital for approximately 5 months. He had very complex needs and was unable to leave his side room during his time on the ward. His wife visited every day for about 2 hours and this was his only contact with the outside world, apart from the nursing staff looking after him.

During a conversation with him one day whilst doing his dressing, we started chatting away about random things and got onto the subject of pets. His mood was very low at this time and I really thought that he would never leave hospital, that he was losing his fight. He told me he had two dogs and he didn’t think they would remember him as he had been in hospital so long; his eyes filled with tears as he spoke about them.

**Being a pet owner myself I felt really sad for him.** When I left the room I contacted infection control to ask where I stood allowing animals into the ward. I explained he was in a side room and could not leave it due to his wound and the risk of infection. I also explained that I thought seeing his dogs again would help his emotional and mental wellbeing. Infection control advised that, as long as I carried out a risk assessment, the dogs could be allowed to come in.

I contacted his wife and asked if she would like to bring the dogs in as a surprise for her husband. **To say she was delighted was an understatement!**

We arranged for them to be brought in the next day. It was hard keeping such a big secret from the patient but we managed. Unfortunately I was at a meeting when the dogs arrived, but I was told that – between the patient and the staff on the ward – there wasn’t a dry eye to be found.

**The patient’s mood lifted and he began to find that fight again to aim for home.** He was in for about another 6 weeks, and during this time his wife was able to bring the dogs in one day every weekend when there were fewer people around. **I truly believe that this simple gesture helped change this man’s outlook on life and it helped build relationships with his wife.** He has had to return to hospital a couple of times since, for a few days at a time, and always requests to come back to this ward as he feels secure and well cared for here. That is a real compliment to our staff.

**NHS Fife has updated its guidance on the management of pets and animals in hospital.**

*With gratitude to Roddy and Anthea Gairdner for allowing us to share their story.*