

Extreme makeover for fat pigs

By Sonya Bateson

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Pet pigs Piggy Sue and Lulu can see again thanks to the thousands of dollars spent on them by their doting owner Preetha David.

When the kunekune pigs were four, they put on a lot of weight and developed enlarged skin folds over their eyes, causing them to lose their vision.

Mrs David tried to get her beloved pets to lose weight and regain some vision, but after two years the duo were still relying on smell, feel and sound to get around.

In late August, the pigs went under the knife at Holistic Vets in Tauranga.

Mrs David consulted veterinarian and international pig specialist John Carr and flew him to New Zealand to assist the Holistic Vets team in performing corrective surgery to restore the pigs' eyesight.

The cost of the surgery, including bringing Mr Carr out from Australia, was about \$7000.

Mrs David also has pet goats, cows, rabbits, chickens and ducks and said she would have done it for any of them because they were highly treasured.

"Basically they weren't able to see and it's something we could fix and their quality of life really goes down if they can't see. It's like one of our babies. It's not like we're rolling in it."

The wait to see how it all went was nerve-racking because pigs were delicate and sometimes did not wake, she said.



VISION RESTORED: Piggy Sue and Lulu before they had surgery to remedy their lack of sight. PHOTOS/SUPPLIED

Mr Carr's assistance was needed because no one had done much work with pigs in New Zealand, she said.

"We were looking for a vet for two years all over the place. No one was willing to do it even with the doctor from Australia."

Dr Liza Schneider, director of Holistic Vets, said an anaesthetic machine for cats and dogs was used with a special modification to keep the pigs under anaesthetic while she, assisted by Dr Tara Buxton, performed the surgery under Dr Carr's guidance.

While the pigs were sleeping they also had hoof trims, "manicure and pedicures", dental

The operations

- Removed enlarged skin folds over their eyes which caused them to lose their vision
- Total cost of \$7000
- International pig specialist Dr John Carr flown in from Australia
- Lulu's surgery took one hour and Piggy Sue's two hours

checks and ear cleans. Blood was taken for testing.

"Piggy Sue's surgery was complicated as she also has a

condition called microphthalmia (abnormally small eyes), making it more difficult to restore her vision. Lulu's surgery was relatively straightforward.

"Lulu's surgery has been a complete success. It's expected that Lulu will have full vision permanently restored but further surgery may need to be performed on Piggy Sue in six to 12 months depending on her progress."

Lulu's surgery took an hour and Piggy Sue's two. They were back in their Cambridge home the same day.

Mrs David said they were doing well and had recovered rapidly.

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