

A veterinary first for Singapore

A SINGAPORE veterinarian has performed what is believed to be the world's first stem cell transplant on cats.

The successful operation was performed by the Animal Recovery Veterinary Centre's Dr Jean-Paul Ly on three-year-old Fifi, a local cat left without the use of her legs following an accident seven months ago.

Said her owner Lim Yi Xian: "We found her in the neighbour's garden; one of her legs was half-severed, while the other leg was fractured.

"She was in tremendous pain."

Since then, Fifi has undergone about 10 operations at a total cost of about \$20,000, none of which were successful.

"We were feeling helpless because the future for Fifi was very bleak at one time. We didn't know whether she would survive, and we didn't know whether she would keep her legs," said Ms Lim.

The family's dedication to their pet paid off eventually.

Since undergoing stem cell transplant — conducted by harvesting cells from the cat's own body, and placing them where needed — Fifi's condition has improved tremendously.

"Fifi's recovery was excellent. She grew new bones and now she has recovered almost all her abilities, though they're not as good as before," said Ms Lim.

Dr Ly said Fifi was the second cat to undergo such a treatment under his care, and only after all other options were exhausted.

"These two cats were so far gone. There was nothing else we could do for them. I've heard of this stem cell being used experimentally in horses and I spoke extensively to the doctors and researchers involved in stem cells. They encouraged me to try this," he said.

Encouraged by the success, Dr Ly said he would recommend the transplant for other seriously-injured animals in the future. — 938LIVE