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Nora, the Resilient Cockatiel on a Mission

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Nora is a humble 12-year old female grey cockatiel with an understated mission in life – to survive squamous cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer that can affect birds and humans. In birds, this type of cancer usually appears on the wing tips, toes, and around the beak and eyes and may occur if a bird has been exposed to high levels of sunlight. As with people, this type of cancer usually can be treated if diagnosed in the early stages. For birds, the most successful treatment for skin cancer is often surgery to remove the malignant cells.

Nora and her cage mate Nick came to Mickaboo as fosters in June 2010 after being abandoned at a veterinarian’s office. In 2011, Nora’s foster parent noticed that her skin and feathers around her face seemed scruffy so he took her to a veterinarian in Oakley where she was diagnosed with throat cancer. Nora was operated on at least three times and had to visit the vet twice a month for about three years. All of this was done with the generosity of time and care from her foster parent and financially supported by Mickaboo.

About eight months ago, Mickaboo transferred Nora to B2L House, a companion pet bird rescue organization and sanctuary, focused on providing housing and expert medical care, for hospice care. At B2L House, Nora could receive the medical attention she needed on a daily basis. While Nora always recovered quickly from her surgeries, she required a daily swab of her throat to keep it clear enough so she could eat without debris getting caught. Regrettably, Nora’s cancer came back.

After thoughtful consultation with two veterinarians at For The Birds, a San Jose avian medical center, a fourth surgery was performed on Nora. Nora experienced life-threatening complications with this surgery due to excessive bleeding and so all involved agreed that that would be her last surgery. The focus would now be to manage Nora’s health with an emphasis on its quality.

Nora continues to receive ongoing post-operative care. Nora gets steroid shots every 4 days and daily oral antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medication. All who have cared for Nora consider her a trooper, a true survivor. She is described as a very sweet patient, who good-naturedly tolerates her routine and is now thankfully able to eat well on her own.



Since her most recent surgery, Nora’s cancer seems to have gone into remission, as verified by her vets. Nora lives with four other cockatiels. Her foster mother says Nora seems to enjoy the other tiels’ company although she has yet to bond as closely as with her former cage mate Nick (Nick passed away in 2013 from heavy metal poisoning).

Nora’s life hasn’t been an easy one but since coming into the Mickaboo system she has always been well cared for and loved. Through the generous donations of its supporters, Mickaboo has been able to fund all of her medical expenses for her surgeries, treatments, and medications. We

hope she will continue to stay in remission under her current care so she can live a healthy tie1 life. Maybe too, one day, Nora will bond with another tie1.

Many thanks to Nora's former foster parent Gabe H. and her current caregiver Friederike at B2L House for their contributions to this story.

References: http://www.petmd.com/bird/conditions/cancer/c_bd_Cancers_and_Tumors

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