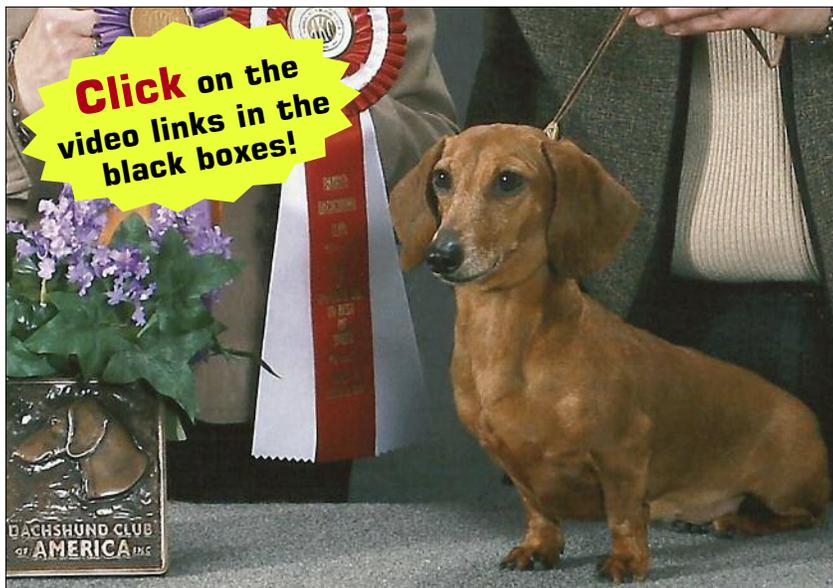


Walking Miracles

Stories of IVDD Survivors

By Cris Lewis, Penny-Lew Dachshunds

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cB7A4jRxZA>



Some call her a walking miracle. I simply call her “Sunny.” After nearly four years, Sunny made a comeback into the show ring at the March 2011 Badger Dachshund Club Specialty Show in Wisconsin.

Ch. Grandgables Simply Stunning MS did it to the tune of going Best of Variety for Smooths and BOS to Best of Breed, all from the Veterans Class. Yes, it was a nice win, but the real story is that Sunny is an IVDD (intervertebral disc disease) survivor.

As she pranced into the ring, it was once again obvious to me how much Sunny enjoyed the show ring. She did not miss a beat, stacking on the table and floor; her movement and topline

were wonderful to anyone watching, including the judge. Pretty good for a Dachshund that was paralyzed twice, endured two emergency surgeries, and three more disc episodes that were treated with conservative methods (crate rest and medications). The countless hours of rehabilitation were a fuzzy memory as I realized how happy she was in the ring! The true meaning of dog showing as a sport and hobby surfaced – personal satisfaction of doing something enjoyable, for the dog and handler, and relishing the bond between us.

The story begins 4 years ago, when Sunny was a young finished Champion and had just whelped her first (and only) litter. A few weeks later, she went down and the whirlwind or emotions, decisions and treatment options ensued. I had only read about IVDD in the DCA publications, and now it was staring me in the face. True to the Dachshund breed, Sunny was one determined dog that taught me the fine arts of patience and healing. Acupuncture, laser treatments, hydro therapy, hours of daily physical therapy and core building became routine.

Sunny was retired from the show ring for a while, but some flat surface tracking and nosework activities have kept her mind sharp. She is always “supervising” table stacking with the other dogs in our household, and sets a good example.

What was learned from Sunny’s episodes would soon be applied to other dogs in our lives, which brings me to Olympia, another walking miracle. Two ruptured discs that involved two surgeries, and a bulging cervical (neck) disc in between afflicted Oly all in 2009. She was just seven years old, but another true example of Dachshund determination. Oly had been a pointed show dog, but since she wasn’t too thrilled with conformation, we moved to other activities. Rally Obedience had been started and one leg to her title sat in limbo for a few years while IVDD took over.

Oly recovered from her many IVDD episodes, and in late 2011 finished her Rally Obedience Novice title at nine years of age. Her handler was the nervous one, because AKC Rally requires a flat collar, and does not allow a harness in the ring (Oly was trained with a harness to minimize re-injury to her neck). But, she produced scores of 97 and 100 to finish that Rally title in style, and the judge never knew that Rosan Hill Olympic Dream MS RN was paralyzed twice and was an IVDD survivor.

My reasons for sharing Sunny’s and Oly’s stories are two-fold. First, beauty is really only skin deep in their cases, because their spines are not sound. Breeders and owners have to educate themselves, ideally BEFORE a problem occurs – set up a treatment protocol with your vet and inform our puppy people on where the resources are. Hopefully, you will never need it.

It is very frustrating to see some (I said some) breeders and fanciers be too quick to dismiss the seriousness of IVDD/back issues in our breed. We need to communicate with each other about the occurrence of IVDD, as well as other health issues that can afflict our dogs. This will enable research and treatment options for our beloved dogs, help those affected and eventually improve the breed as we make breeding decisions.

Second, for most Dachshunds affected with IVDD, it does not need to be a death sentence.

Oly and Sunny and countless others are examples of the “walking miracles” who go on to live productive lives in performance events, in show rings, as therapy and service dogs, or as lifetime companion pets.

There are great resources today to help us prepare and deal with IVDD. Please take a minute to go to www.dodgerslist.com for information, questions to ask a vet, support, etc. My two walking miracles are here today because of Dodgerslist, as are thousands of other canines. There is hope.



Rhea's Story

By Lynne Dahlén

Determination and perseverance should be Rhea's registered name! Chazlyn's Purely Providence SL was placed in pet home when she was 4 years old. She was shown a few times in the first four years she was with us, pointed, but I wasn't thrilled with her rear movement and decided we shouldn't breed her.

She loved people, but was also one of those girls who wanted badly to be the "alpha bitch"

with the other girls in my pack. They had different ideas. She was spending far too much time in her crate and, as gut-wrenching as it was to part with her, I felt she would be far happier as an "only" dog. She was spayed before she was placed.

Fast forward 4 years - I received a call from a friend saying 8 year old Rhea had gone down. Unfortunately, her owner didn't call me immediately and we lost valuable treatment time. To make an extremely long story fairly short, the owner couldn't afford surgery and was not able to cope with a disabled dog. I owe a big thank you to many friends, and vets almost 300 miles away who helped Rhea get proper treatment. After assessments by 4 different vets, my friend and also a vet, Dr. Peggy Orzel, brought Rhea to the Fox Valley Referral Center in Appleton, WI. The board certified surgeon, Dr. Bruce VanEnkevort, gave her an 85% chance of complete recovery after surgery to her C3 disk.

The surgery went extremely well and the recovery was remarkable. Rhea was standing within 48 hours after the

surgery. 4 days later, Rhea's breeder, Ellen Weiland, transported Rhea half way across the state where I picked her up and returned home to northern Wisconsin. Within just a few days she was attempting to walk, and she returned to normal quickly after minimal walking therapy.

That was in February of 2011. A year later Rhea is running and playing (her buddies now are our 13 year old male Lhasa rescue and our little black house cat). We keep her separate from our other dachshunds to avoid any "issues" (so much for no dogs upstairs!) One would never know she wasn't able to walk at one time.

As Cris stated, IVDD is not a death sentence and with education and proper care, our dogs can go on to live happy, healthy and long lives. Surgery is not the only option.

As breeders, we all try to do our best to breed away from known back issues, but I'm sure the great majority of us who have had more than a few litters have had to deal with IVDD at one time or another. Rhea was the first in our 25 years of limited breeding that has had a disc problem not attributed to an injury. Luckily, she never had puppies. Surgery is not the only option - but knowing where to find the resources to help a disabled pet is the first step. A Dodgerslist brochure should be included in each and every puppy packet we give to our new puppy owners.

<http://www.dodgerslist.com/>



SAVING DOGS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURIES

ScienceDaily (Jan. 18, 2012) — Dogs with spinal cord injuries may soon benefit from an experimental drug being tested by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences — work that they hope will one day help people with similar injuries.

Funded through a three-year, \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Defense, the drug to mitigate damage has already proven effective in mice at UCSF. Now the Texas team will test how it works in previously injured short-legged, long torso breeds of dog like dachshunds, beagles and corgis, who often suffer injuries when a disk in their back spontaneously ruptures, damaging the underlying spinal cord.

About 120 dogs a year that develop sudden onset hind limb paralysis after such injuries are brought to the Small Animal Hospital of Texas A&M University, where they receive surgical and medical treatment similar to that for human spinal cord injury. Now, researchers will test whether the new treatment works on some of these dogs, with their owners' consent.

"It would be phenomenal if it works," said Linda J. Noble-Haesslein, PhD, a professor in the UCSF departments of Neurological Surgery and Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science who designed the intervention. "We are in a unique position of being able to treat a dog population where there are simply no current therapies that could effectively improve their hind limb function."

The new treatment does not seek to regrow injured pathways in the spinal cord. Instead, it aims to mitigate damage secondary to the spinal cord injury. Most spinal cord injuries trigger a cascade of chemical reactions in the spinal cord that collectively damage nearby cells and

pathways, contributing to functional deficits including hind limb function.

A few years ago, Noble and her UCSF colleague Zena Werb, PhD, showed how blocking the action of one protein found in the spinal cord of mammals can help mice recover from spinal cord injuries. This protein, called matrix metalloproteinase-9, can degrade pathways within the cord and cause local inflammation, leading to cell death.

The injured dogs offer a great opportunity to take the next step on this treatment because their injuries more closely mimic spontaneous human spinal cord injury and, as is the case with humans, no existing treatment has substantially reduced paralysis.

Noble's co-investigator on the new study, Jonathan Levine, DVM, an assistant professor in neurology at Texas A&M University, will treat the dogs through injections of a protein-blocking drug. He will then help the dogs through rehabilitation and assess their recovery. Ongoing studies at UCSF focus on further refining delivery of the drug so as to optimize recovery.

Other researchers have shown that movement can be preserved if as little as 18 percent to 20 percent of the nerve fiber tracts in the spinal cord remain intact.

If successful, the trials in injured dogs may lead to the development of similar treatments for people who suffer spinal cord injuries, Noble said. These are among the most expensive injuries: every person with an injured spinal cord costs the health care system millions of dollars over his or her lifetime.

Such costs often are overshadowed by the tragic and devastating personal price of the injuries, which dramatically alter lives and most often occur in younger people, with long lives in front of them. According to the National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center, based at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, most of the 12,000 Americans who suffer spinal cord injuries are between the ages of 16 and 30.

As of this year, some 265,000 people in the United States are living with such injuries, according to the national center. This includes many wounded soldiers who have returned home from war zones.

UCSF is a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care.