

## Suffield Veterinary Hospital May 2009 Patient of the Month

**P**ictured here is 7-year-old Samson, an amazing retriever owned by the Flores family of Agawam. Samson entered our office with tail wagging and that happy-to-see-you look that so many of his breed share. It actually took a couple of minutes to see past this charming greeting to his unusual condition. Do you notice it in the photo, taken by the talented portrait photographers at MotoPhoto in Enfield?

Samson was the largest of 10 puppies in what some dog breeder's refer to as an "Oops Litter." His mom, a golden retriever, got out and was wooed by a labrador from down the street. Oops! Donna Flores, still grieving the recent loss of her 15-year-old lab, went to look at the litter, and was smitten immediately and forever. He was as a youngster he helped her smart, loving and attentive and even get through a long illness. Sadly, at only 5 months of age Samson became weak in the rear legs, and was diagnosed with severe hip dysplasia, a malformation of the hip joints that can lead to crippling arthritis. It was so severe that his doctors in Springfield said he'd be unable to walk by the age of two, so the Flores' decided to have corrective surgery. The first procedure was on the right hip, and went very well. Six weeks later the left hip was operated on and, for reasons nobody quite understands, the nerves used that leg again. to the left leg were injured so badly that he never



For a full year Samson was treated with a variety of braces, physical therapy sessions and orthopedic visits, all with no results. His left foot began to develop sores from dragging, so the difficult decision to amputate the limb was made. (Did you see that in the photo?) For months afterward he slowly recovered, but by the end of the summer he was in the pool swimming, running and playing.

Now it is difficult to recognize the handicap because his happy, eager to play demeanor is so outstanding. He swims in the summer, plays soccer fall and spring (a great goalie!) and chases snowballs in the winter. He loves to ride in the car and will stalk you for Dunkin Donuts coffee. He is an especially loving, and beloved, pet.

There are two important lessons to learn from Samson's tale. First, when you're selecting a puppy, ask questions about the health clearances of the puppy's parents. Responsible breeders screen both sire and dam for hereditary defects like hip dysplasia. Second, and most important, if confronted — for whatever sad reason — with the need to amputate a pet's limb, don't reflexively choose euthanasia instead. Samson is living proof that, despite the loss of a leg, a long, happy, love-filled life is possible.

For the chance to highlight the wonderful life that can be led by a 3-legged dog, and because he simply has the best "can-do" attitude we've seen in years, we are proud to name Samson the Suffield Veterinary Hospital May 2009 Patient of the Month.

### *Suffield Veterinary Hospital*

Dr. Ann Huntington ♦ Dr. Anita Sabellico ♦ Dr. Dawn Burke ♦ Dr. Jean Herrman ♦ Dr. Griffin O'Connor  
577 East Street South (Route 159), Suffield, CT 06078 (860) 668-4041 ♦ [www.suffieldvet.com](http://www.suffieldvet.com)