

Suffield Veterinary Hospital March 2010 Patients of the Month

Meet George, a 12-year-old Border terrier and his four-month-old son, Timmy. Full disclosure here: these two are my (Dr. Huntington's) family pets, so they had an inside track at being selected to this vaunted position. But they do have a story to tell.

At Suffield Veterinary Hospital, we are strong believers that you spay and neuter your pets. We encourage it for the obvious reason of preventing unwanted puppies and kittens, and also because there are significant health and behavioral benefits for the pet. In intact males the age of George, about 40 percent will have prostate problems, many serious. In addition, an unneutered male terrier is extremely likely to urine mark his territory, and not always outdoors.

Yet here, shown in a great portrait by Motophoto in Enfield, is George with a very young son. Do we not practice what we preach? George was a show dog when he was young, becoming an AKC champion early in 2000. Knowing that there might be breeders that wanted to add his best qualities to their lines, I collected samples from George to store in our sperm bank. By the summer of 2000 George had plenty of potential breedings preserved in liquid nitrogen, and he was neutered. Since then he has been a treasured companion, well behaved and loving. Okay, not ALWAYS well behaved. His predatory instincts have led to a painful tussle with a porcupine on West Suffield mountain, and he's managed to bring down a couple of my chickens despite my best efforts to prevent that. But the behaviors that are testosterone-related are controlled, and he is a very healthy old man.

Last summer a Border Terrier breeder from Danbury remembered George, and contacted me to see if he was still around and available for breeding. I was glad to be able to offer her the stored samples, untouched all these years. On October 1, Timmy and his brother and two sisters were delivered, all spoken for before they were born.



While most dogs don't have the background or qualities that would put their pedigree in demand, for male dogs that do, cryopreservation of genetic material offers the best of two worlds: healthy living and the potential for future breeding. For being extremely cute examples of this, we are proud to name George and Timmy our March 2010 Patients of the Month.

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