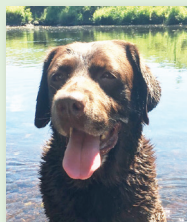


Suffield Veterinary Hospital October 2018 Patient of the Month

Meet Dexie, a nine-year-old Chocolate Labrador Retriever who was adopted by our practice manager Shane Lawless when she was a little over a year old and has been his pride and joy ever since.



Dexie has always been a happy, healthy and energetic dog. Shane's goal has always been to give her the best life a Lab could ask for, with top-dollar dog food and plenty of outdoor activity. She has led a very active life of hiking, swimming, and long nightly walks. And like many Labs, tiring her out was a nearly impossible task. That was until May of last year, when Dexie's energy was suddenly non-existent. She became lethargic and did not seem to be up for the many activities she had previously enjoyed. In an attempt to determine what might be wrong, a chest X-ray was taken, which showed a noticeably enlarged heart. We referred Dexie to see specialist Dr. Larry Berkwitz of NEVCCC who, after performing an echocardiogram, diagnosed Dexie with Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM), which is a form of heart disease. Her heart was functioning at less than half of what it should have been and would likely continue to get worse as the months progressed.

Dexie was prescribed medications but was told the heart disease would likely take Dexie's life within a matter of months.

What was most surprising about this diagnosis is that DCM commonly affects dogs such as Boxers and Dobermans but does not often affect Labrador Retrievers. Nonetheless, Shane began researching what else he could do to help slow the progression of this awful disease. He comprised a list of heart-healthy amino acids, vitamins, minerals and fatty acids, and consulted with Dr. Berkwitz who gave many of the supplements his blessing. Shane began administering taurine, carnitine, CoQ10, and EFA/DHA along with Dexie's prescribed medications. Even if these supplements did nothing to help, Dexie was worth every penny.

At Dexie's three-month recheck with Dr. Berkwitz, the result was astonishing. The expectation was that Dexie's heart disease would have likely progressed since the initial diagnosis. However, Dexie's heart function was significantly improved. In fact, her heart appeared to be almost normal! And Dexie's energy level and happiness had returned to normal as well. This improvement was nothing short of a miracle. The only thing Dr. Berkwitz could say was "it must be the taurine." A year later, Dexie is as happy and energetic as ever, and her heart is still functioning as it should.

Over the past year, many accounts similar to Dexie's have begun to gain attention in the veterinary community. Dogs of all breeds, ages, shapes and sizes that are not genetically predisposed to DCM have acquired this awful disease. While the cause has yet to be proven, all these dogs have had one thing in common: they were being fed Grain-Free diets. It's believed that these grain-free diets are either too low in the amino acid taurine or may contain ingredients that inhibit the absorption of taurine. There are now several important research projects addressing diet and DCM in dogs. The good news is that taurine is something that can easily be supplemented, and for Dexie, has likely extended her life and improved her quality of life as well.

For helping to shine a light on this emerging problem with grain-free diets, and for maintaining a positive attitude every step of the way, we are pleased to name Dexie the October 2018 Suffield Veterinary Hospital Patient of the Month.

Suffield Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Ann Huntington ❖ Dr. Anita Sabellico

Dr. Dawn Burke ❖ Dr. Daniel Rothbart

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View all of our Patients of the Month on our web site, www.suffieldvet.com