



Where Are They Now?

*** Barney ***

by Jo Ann Peters



Barney (GCCR #379) became part of our family 2 years ago, in August, 2013, after spending several months in a GCCR foster home. He was not, by any means, the most attractive 8-year-old Tricolor boy. He had a severely ulcerated, opaque, and infected eye due to untreated dry eye. He also had bad teeth, poor hearing, excessive dander, and a very thin coat – all from neglect. GCCR had his eye removed to relieve his pain and discomfort. In spite of all these issues, Barney was one of the happiest, friendliest boys I had ever met. He loved everyone, especially children and other dogs. His tail wagged constantly.

After about 6 months, Barney began to show some weakness in his back legs. His nails could be heard dragging on tile floors but he was still walking and running. Our vet immediately suspected degenerative myelopathy (DM) but admitted he had never seen it in a Cavalier. It is more commonly seen in other breeds – German Shepherds, Boxers, and Corgis among others. DM is a slowly progressive degeneration of the spinal cord. Symptoms begin with a non-painful weakness of the hind legs, with the average age of onset at 7-9 years of age.

The University of Missouri is doing research on DM and has developed an inexpensive DNA test which screens for the mutation known to cause DM. The Yorkville Animal Hospital submitted a test for Barney and the results confirmed he carries the affected gene. Since Barney's symptoms were already present, his diagnosis was confirmed. The progression of DM varies and cannot be predicted.

Barney began getting chiropractic treatments which have prolonged his mobility. He currently has no use of his hind legs and propels himself around with his front legs. He continues to be a happy boy, always determined to “be where the action is”. He follows his doggie siblings, Rusty and Mia, everywhere. We have accommodated his disabilities by placing throw rugs on tile floors for traction. Barney wears a “Help Em Up” harness which is a great help with moving him from inside to outside and lifting him into the car (he is a big boy at 30 lbs.). He loves car rides so we try to get him out as much as possible. He rides in a stroller for outings, but recently we gave him a gift for his 2nd “Gotcha” birthday – a Radio Flyer™ wagon with wooden sides and a red pad for comfort. He had the biggest smile the first time we took him for a ride. He shared the ride with Mia, but she is more of a “nose to the ground” girl. Now when we are working in the yard or visiting with neighbors, he can be part of the action. The neighborhood kids are already asking to take him for rides!



Barney continues to be a joy and inspiration to us. He makes us laugh every day with his comical ways. Barney constantly reminds us to make the most of the time we have, because that's what HE is doing.

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