

March 23, 2013

Westie Rescue Michigan volunteers

All of you are aware that we lost little Daisy Mae recently. We haven't imparted many details but now some time has passed and perhaps it is time to explain a bit more.

Daisy came from a shelter. She was adopted out and returned once. Then one of our applicant homes adopted her. They had her for a couple of weeks and it went from delight to a situation where they were worried that she would bite. She had not bitten and we hated to have her go back to an animal control with two failed adoptions on her record. We brought her in and she was with her first foster home for two weeks. There were incidents but no actual bites. When that foster mom had to go out of town, she moved to another foster home. There she had her ups and downs. But over time, as seems to have become a pattern, she became more aggressive and finally bit. After the bite she became uncontrollably aggressive and had to be sedated to get her to the vet. After 75mgs of a tranquilizer, she was still alert and threatening. The vet was able to restrain her and she was put down. Her behavior was so over the top at that point, that there was some fear of rabies. We had her tested and recently, thankfully, got back a negative on that test.

We will never know exactly what caused her to decompensate so badly. But this whole situation reminded us of a lot of things that we thought should be covered with all of the foster homes for future reference. We are very grateful to Julie and our foster homes that things were handled correctly in her case. But we want to take this opportunity to remind everyone of why you must do certain things at certain times.

IMMEDIATE VET CARE UPON INTAKE

Julie tries to get the owners to get the dog updated on all shots. Sometimes they do and sometimes they do not. Regardless, it is very important to your safety and that of your family and other pets that you get the dog into the vet immediately. Julie will try to work it out so that you can get a vet appointment before the dog is surrendered and then time the surrender to match the vet appointment. If you are unsure about fleas, give the dog a Capstar immediately upon surrender.

Capstar can take an hour to work but it will begin to kill fleas and save you from getting fleas in your home.

IF THERE IS A DELAY WITH VET CARE AND THE DOG HAS NOT BEEN UPDATED OR IS COMING FROM A LESS THAN IDEAL SITUATION

(shelters, strays, homes where the dog has not been kept up to date on vaccinations or just looks unkempt)

Keep the dog isolated from your pets and from other humans until after the vet visit

This is not always convenient but it is very important. Isolation means things like,

- Don't stop at a petstore on the way home and take the dog inside
- Don't invite a friend over to see the new foster dog
- Don't separate with a single baby gate so that the dogs can still meet face to face (at a minimum, set two gate at 90 degree angles and slightly back from the door so they can't really see each other).

Dogs coming from shelters may have been exposed to airborne disease with a incubation period. Seeing the vet doesn't totally protect but it gives a fighting chance of avoiding cross-contamination. If the dog is far enough along with something, the vet may find it.

Dogs without the rabies vaccine may have been exposed without our knowledge. Getting the vaccine isn't 100% protective since it won't stop a prior exposure and there is a period of time needed for it to take effect, but it is a necessary precaution.

DOCUMENTATION

Make sure there is written documentation on vet letterhead of the various vaccinations and medical items on our checklist. A rabies tag on a collar is not enough to prove the dog has had a rabies shot. Daisy's collar number came back to a Boston Terrier. It was only upon finding a vet bill that we were able to verify the dog had been vaccinated. This was something that the health department needed to know. Without this proof, we would have looked like a very bad, lax rescue group. With it, they only tested because we insisted.

GET THE DOG GROOMED EARLY ON

The grooming will eliminate any concern about undetected fleas and ticks. With Westies they can hide more easily than in a thinner coated breed. The groomer will also be hands on with the dog and often can tell you of any strange bumps or lumps or sore areas that you might miss for a while. The groomer can tell you how the dog behaved and give you an idea of things you might need to work on or have checked by the vet. And their nails are almost always too long and need trimming. (Always give the groomer permission to use a muzzle if there is any question as to safety!) If the dog is going to have a dental or spay/neuter, the vet will appreciate having a clean dog to work on. Depending on the surgery, the dog may not be able to be groomed again for a while and you and your family may appreciate not having to live with a smelly dog during the recovery. And being human, you will treat the dog differently if they are pleasant to be around vs. stinky and dirty. Finally, we depend upon good photos for publicity towards adoption and fundraising. A groomed dog takes better photos and presents a much better picture of our rescue to the neighborhood folks who will see that dog while in care. (Note: You can't always get the grooming done before the spay/neuter. If you can't, please do an "at home" bath instead and then do the grooming as soon as the vet gives permission. This can be when the stitches come out or, if your vet does laser surgery, it can be sooner.)

MAKE SURE YOUR OWN DOGS ARE UP TO DATE ON VACCINATIONS INCLUDING BORDETELLA

We ask our dogs to take on a lot of responsibility when we care for foster dogs. Let's make sure we are protecting them to the best of our ability. Some do not "believe" in vaccinations and, in the end, it is your choice and your responsibility, but remember that you are exposing your dogs to things they might not run into otherwise. Be sure you keep them up to date.

PICK UP UNTIL YOU GET A CLEAN FECAL CHECK ON THE DOG

Until you know the new dog has a clean fecal check, be sure to pick up all pooh immediately! Don't risk contaminating your dog yard. Consider walking the new dog in a separate area that your dogs don't visit until the check is done and clean. If the ground is contaminated and your dogs walk on it, they may pick something up. And you know your dogs are going to sniff or more. So again, protect your dogs.

GET THE DOG'S DENTAL DONE VERY EARLY ON

Way too many times, we have delayed on the dental only to find out the dog has a serious, painful mouth issue which we could have alleviated much sooner. And sometimes it has contributed to issues which we attributed to behavior. The vets don't always find the dental issues during the checkup....they often find them during the actual dental. This is also a great time to do other work such as cleaning out badly infected ears, putting in the microchip, etc.

We would like to let you all know that the shelter who released Daisy to us has been notified of the outcome. While they are sad to hear it, they did write back, *"Julie take care and thank you again for everything, it is groups like you that really care that help shelters like us keep going, knowing that there are wonderful people like you willing to help gets us through the day"*

Remember Hill Street Blues, "Let's be careful out there!"

Westie Rescue Board