



Princess Leah: a story and a lesson

by: Janice Selemba

It had been only three months since we lost our last girl, a true diva by the name of Tasha whose zest for life was not enough to overcome the lung cancer which stole her from us. When I contacted Keeshond Rescue Ontario and they indicated no dogs were currently available, that was O.K. because I figured I needed the time to heal. However, Marlene contacted me within a week about a Keeshond bitch in Michigan who was in the care of a Keeshond Lovers United rescuer, sent me her story with a picture, and said "just in case" And so of course we went to the foster mom's house, "just to see."

Leah was only two-thirds of her body weight when she was found; she was eating her own feces to survive, and had had her leg broken when she was still young so she was left with a permanent limp. When we brought her home, her breathing was rapid and shallow when she slept, she barked at everyone who came into the house, and she was afraid to leave the one room she was first brought into, without peeing. She would not even go outside to pee if it was raining, unless someone were standing outside far away from the door and with the door left open.



When you get a puppy from a breeder, you get a lot of joy and sheer pleasure just in watching the puppy develop and learn and grow. With a rescue it has been completely different. We have watched Leah overcome her fears, and have marked her progress by the milestones with which she has integrated herself into our lives.

At two weeks, she stopped eating her own feces;

At month two, she ventured by herself beyond the family room into the hallway;

At month three, she stopped barking at every single person who came into the house;

At month four, she went upstairs to the bedroom – *on her own* – huge!

At month six, she started giving us kisses, beyond the tentative hand licks.

Leah has taught us a different kind of patience, understanding, and tolerance.



We just celebrated our one-year anniversary with Leah, and she is still overcoming her past fears, but she is very trusting of the two of us. Leah is *very* cuddly, wanting to climb into our laps, and actually jumps up to be picked up and held in our arms! She has an amazingly beautiful coat, a playful spirit, and the well-known Kees "independence." Squirrels get her quite excited, and, Roseann, she still madly wrestles her toys after every meal!

Although I thought I wasn't yet ready to give of myself when we first met her, Leah has touched my heart deeply. It is so hard to fathom how anyone could put her through what she has obviously endured, and yet she still has so much love to give, so we do our best to return that love. Given her past, she deserves to be treated like a princess!

Leah is a rescue, but it is also us whom she has rescued: she has filled the hole in our hearts, and whilst we will never forget Keisha, Bear and Tasha whom she never met, the undeniable unconditional love she gives has eased the pain. In return, Princess Leah, we promise to keep you safe and secure.

Thanks to Marlene for her persistence in connecting Leah to us, to Roseann for rescuing Leah and taking care of her for six months; and to Sarah and Richard for managing the home adoption process and visiting us with their three boys – who made me realize how much I missed and needed the Kees love!

Heartworm

Leah was diagnosed with heartworm when she was rescued. Coming from Ohio and fostered in Michigan, areas where heartworm has not been that common, proved a challenge even for the local vets.

What is important to know with heartworm is that the preventative medication (which, by the way, is chemoprophylaxis) which we give our dogs during the six-month period in Ontario during the summer/fall, is to prevent infection and/or kill off baby worms only. It is effective only against worms **less than 2 months old**.

Dogs do not test positive for heartworm until the worms are **at least 5-6 months old** and usually **at 9 months old**.

Adult worms can be treated with an injection of Immiticide. Immiticide is arsenic. It only kills adult worms, and only those **over 4 months of age**. So you see, your dog can have heartworm but you may not know it, and he or she can test positive some months later. So what do you do if your dog tests positive for heartworm, and there is a possibility that there are worms between 2-4 months old present in your dog as well?

The U.S. Heartworm Society recommends that when a dog tests positive, that, for the first 2-3 months, the dog be treated with the preventative medication. This will prevent any new infection that would otherwise be created by the fertile adult worms. This will also allow the "junior" worms over 2 months to age sufficiently that they will be affected by the adult heartworm treatment, i.e. Immiticide. At this time, an "alternate, 3-injection protocol" is recommended: one injection, followed by 2 injections 24 hours apart, 1 month subsequent. During this 60 day period, the dog must be kept absolutely quiet, (including minimizing the barking), in order to avoid pulmonary thromboembolisms caused by the "disintegration" of the worms.

As there is no guarantee that 100% of the worms are destroyed, it is recommended that the monthly preventative treatment be maintained continuously around the year (regardless of where you live) to "sterilize" the adult worms and prevent them from creating any new worms. This is true, even if there is a negative heartworm test shortly after adult treatment. The lifespan of an adult heartworm is 5-7 years.

Continue testing the dog during this period every 4-6 months.

Source: <http://www.heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/canine-guidelines.html>