



The Dober Dispatch

The Newsletter of Illinois Doberman Rescue Plus

Summer 2010

A letter from the BOD

We can't believe it's mid-summer already. The longest day of the year has just passed, and we're heading into the dog days of summer. Believe us, our days are certainly dog-filled.

Although the economy still is causing owners to have to give up their beloved friends, we are finding wonderful adoptions still taking place—just more slowly than usual.

We are looking forward to our July adoptathon and the potential for many orphans to find their forever homes. We are also looking forward to our summer fundraisers.

This year has seen a bumper crop of new, energetic volunteers with fresh ideas to offer. We on the Board of Directors are constantly amazed, gratified and humbled by the time and effort our volunteers put into IDR+. If the animals could speak, they would echo our sentiment.

We also are very grateful for our wonderful adopters who continue to give our orphans forever loving homes. Our hope for the rest of the year is a decrease in orphan animals needing homes (yes, that's not likely though) and an increase in our success stories.

Enjoy this wonderful newsletter and have a great summer!

Sincerely,
The Illinois Doberman Rescue Plus Board of Directors

IDR+ fundraising: Meat, sports, lures & shampoo

By Lauren Kelliher

Times are tough, and everyone is cutting back. Unfortunately, donations are down at IDR+, so we have come up with some new ideas to generate funds.

IDR+ volunteer Jo Giovannoni knew about a local bar holding meat raffles that raised funds for various groups and causes. In January, Tinman's Pub in Fox River Grove hosted a meat raffle that benefitted IDR+. Fortunately, the bar already had a healthy following of meat raffle fans, and the event was well-attended.

Some people were new to the concept of a meat raffle, but once the first batch of winners collected their juicy prizes, everyone jumped on board. Patrons bought raffle tickets for each of the several rounds of drawings. Winners had their choice of quality cuts of meat.

IDR+ also raffled off fantastic baskets and some bigger prizes, which generated even more donations. Chuck Schubel and the Wednesday Night Live Band donated their time to provide music during the event.

For the past two years, volunteer Sue Lakics has organized the Bears v. Lions football viewing parties with great success, so she offered to expand into baseball. In June, Crossroads Tavern and Eatery in Wood Dale hosted the Cubs/Sox viewing party with a food buffet and a room full of televisions. Fifty people enjoyed the game,



Photos by Lauren Kelliher

Cubs and Sox fans joined fundraising forces at the inaugural Cubs/Sox viewing party on June 13.

food, and drinks while raising money for the rescue.

"It is hard to pass up a night out with a great group of folks raising money for such a worthy cause," said IDR+ volunteer Kristen Carey.

IDR+ plans to hold the third annual Bears viewing party on October 17 against the Seahawks at the same location.

The dog wash is an old favorite for IDR+. Last year, we added an agility fun match to the event. Prior to getting a

bath, ear cleaning, and nail trim, experienced agility dogs got dirty running an agility course. IDR+ volunteer and Board member Amy Wukotich is an agility trainer and organized the fun match.

"IDR+ gives a whole new meaning to 'clean run' with our agility fun match & dog wash event. Work on your agility skills, then sit back and relax while our volunteers give your dog a spa treatment. You get

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Fundraising: Tough times call for creative events

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to take home a tired, clean dog —what could be better?" said Wukotich.

The next dog wash is August 15 at Tracy's Doggone Farm in Wadsworth, IL. Check the events page at www.ILDobeRescue.com for more info.

If your dog loves to run and chase anything that moves, the lure coursing event is for you. On September 19, Lure Coursing Fanatics in Sommers, WI, hosts the annual IDR+ event. Participants make a donation to enter the fully fenced one-acre field to chase a lure (a pelt or something visually stimulating) around the area. The dog's instinct is to chase the lure, and at the end of the day, you have a tired dog. Everyone is invited.

Please check the events page on our website frequently. We hold a variety of events throughout the year. You and your friends are always invited.

Photos by Lauren Kelliher

Many of the fundraising events have a raffle table full of great prizes (left). IDR+ alum Mayo chases a lure at a past lure coursing event (bottom left). IDR+ volunteers Gerri Albright and Nancy Crivellone wash a dog at a past dog wash (bottom right).



UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars!

August 15:
Dog Wash & Agility Fun Match at Tracy's Doggone Farm in Wadsworth, IL

September 19:
Lure Coursing at Lure Coursing Fanatics in Sommers, WI

October 17:
Bears v. Seahawks viewing party at Crossroads Tavern & Eatery in Wood Dale, IL



The Dober Dispatch

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Dober Desires

We try to keep our adoption fee as low as possible to encourage adoptions. Your donations will ensure we can continue to help save lives. Dober Donations are always accepted for our orphans:

Dober-Dwellings: a forever home for everyone or even a foster home!

Dober-Dens: large or x-large metal or plastic crates (gently used or new)

Dober-Duds: these cool collars and leashes can be donated on our site at www.ildoberescue.com/doberduds.htm and some training collars (medium weight prong collars). Coats for our seniors (Velcro up the back-easier to put on), etc., would be great, too.

Dober-Dozing: large or x-large dog beds or comforters.

Dober-Doodoo Defenses: laundry detergent, paper towels, cleaning fluids, etc.

Dober-Diversions: rawhides, nylabones, Kong toys, stuffed toys, etc.

Dober-Desk: postage stamps, manila file folders, copy paper, envelopes, etc.

Dober-Driving: supplies for our rescue mobiles, such as gas cards.

Dober-Dollars: used for the vet bills, phone bills, boarding, microchips, etc.

A first-time transporter gets a surprise

By Kandice Kretler

At the beginning of May, I volunteered to help out IDR+ by picking up three dogs on an incoming transport. I went over to one of the kennels and picked up the “Dobervan,” IDR+’s vehicle equipped for traveling with multiple dogs.

I began my drive over to the area where the dogs were due to be dropped off. I have to admit, I was a little nervous about the whole situation, as I didn’t know what to expect but confident that I would be able to handle what might happen.

I was interested to volunteer for this particular task as I wanted to learn more about the process of how rescue organizations are given dogs (besides owner give-ups and from shelters). I was about to find out! As I pulled into the parking lot, I couldn’t believe my eyes!

There was a very large rental moving van parked in the lot, with about twenty people milling about; dog carriers and crates were everywhere, dogs barking, and there was a slight sense of chaos. I parked the Dobervan and went to speak to the woman in charge of the transport to find out if the dogs I was to pick up were there.

Once I tracked down the organizer, I found out that the three dogs I was scheduled to pick up were coming in a separate vehicle and that they were still quite a bit away. I had been cautioned that this would be a lengthy process and to be prepared to wait.

I just couldn’t believe how many dogs were there of all shapes and sizes. The dogs were barking; there were people all over taking dogs as they came off the van, filling out paperwork—just a sense of organized chaos.

As I sat and waited for the



Photo by Lauren Kelliher

Kandice volunteered to transport three dogs from a multi-rescue meeting place to one of the kennels IDR+ uses; however, she got a big surprise when the dogs arrived.

Doberman transport to arrive, I couldn’t help but think what an amazing operation this was and how so many dogs were just saved.

Finally, after waiting over two hours, I was told that there were more than three dogs...there were six! I was only prepared to pick up three. It turns out that a breeder was shutting down, and if the women handling the transport did not take all of them, the breeder planned on taking them to an auction.

I wasn’t sure what to do or how to handle this, so I checked in with Pam Abare-Newton, the president of our organization. I was given the go-ahead to take all six. But now I had to figure out what to do with the extra three since I only had three crates.

The women handling the transport assisted me in loading the dogs into the crates I had available, and we secured the other dog with a leash in the van. Once all of the dogs were safely contained, I headed back to the kennel and had to try to figure out how I was going to

unload all of the dogs.

Fortunately for me, several IDR+ volunteers were already at the kennel that day, and they were a great help as each dog was unloaded, named, checked over, and placed into a kennel run. Overall, it was a tiring, hectic day, but I would volunteer to help out with another transport again in a heartbeat.

I loved being part of such an experience, and being just one of many volunteers that has helped to make a difference for a dog. Oh, and by the way, the dogs I picked up were the -andy girls (and boy) and include: Brandy, Tandy, Mandy, Zandy, and Kandy. Kandy and Tandy were recently adopted, but the others are still available for adoption.

I can tell you from personal experience that they all seem to be great dogs. If you’d like more information about any of them, check out our website to read their bios.

To volunteer for IDR+, email Kelli, our volunteer coordinator, at dobejazz@sbcglobal.net.



Toxic corner: Summer hazards for animals

Summer has arrived, and we are all enjoying the longer days and participating in activities outside. It is helpful to be reminded of the potential hazards posed to pets if they get into lawn and garden products, toxic plants and mushrooms, and other outdoor hazards such as charcoal lighter fluid and pool chemicals. Below is a list of relative toxicity of various summer hazards to which a pet may be exposed.

Low toxicity (may cause gastrointestinal upset, but unlikely to cause serious problems unless very large amounts are ingested):

- Glow sticks/jewelry
- N-P-K fertilizers (no added insecticide or herbicide); iron level Bone meal (no added insecticide or herbicide)
- Mosquito coils (foreign body potential from coil material)
- Mosquito Dunks (*Thuringiensis*, *Bacillus thuringiensis*)
- Charcoal briquettes (unused, no added lighter fluid)
- Termite stakes, ant baits, yard insecticides, and roach baits containing sulfluramid (N-Ethyl Perfluorooctanesulfonamide) or hydramethylnon (2% or less)

Although the above agents are noted as low toxicity, it is important to be watchful of



Photo by Lauren Kelliher

Several summertime items are hazardous to your pets' health.

pets that may have ingested any of the above agents. If signs of any kind develop, it would be prudent to follow up with your local veterinarian or contact the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center to further discuss the exposure**.

Moderate toxicity (may cause significant signs beyond mild gastrointestinal upset):

- Charcoal lighter fluids
- Moldy items from trash, yard or compost pile (tremorgenic mycotoxins)
- DEET-containing insect

repellents

- Citronella lamps/torches
- Spring blooming bulbs (see our website under Publications for more information)

If you suspect or witness a pet ingestion of any of the above agents, it is best to contact your local veterinarian, veterinary emergency clinic (if it is after hours), or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center to further discuss the exposure**. There may be preventative measures that can be taken to decrease the potential severity of the

exposure.

High toxicity (potential for very serious or life-threatening signs):

- Pool chemicals (concentrated hypochlorites and bleach, cationic detergents, and algaecides)
- Diazinon or chlorpyrifos (Dursban) granules (>2%)
- Metaldehyde containing snail/slug baits
- Zinc phosphide-containing systemic insecticides
- Methomyl-containing fly baits
- Disulfoton-containing insecticides (found in some rose and flower care products)
- Rodenticides (anticoagulants, bromethalin, cholecalciferol)

If you suspect or witness a pet ingestion of any of the above agents, contact your local veterinarian, veterinary emergency clinic (if it is after hours), or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center to further discuss the exposure**.

There may be preventative measures that can be taken to decrease the potential severity of the exposure. In some cases, immediate, emergency veterinary treatment may need to be administered so time is of the essence.

**A \$65 consultation fee, payable by credit card, may apply when contacting the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center. This includes follow-up consultation(s) should you or your veterinarian need further assistance with your pet's case.

IDR+ returns to WGN for adopt-a-pet segment



Photo courtesy of WGN-TV
Animal lover Allison Payne (right) interviews IDR+ volunteers Tasha Huebner holding Hugo (left) and Lauren Kelliher holding Lucy (center). Hugo was adopted immediately, but Lucy is still looking for a forever home where she can be an only dog. To watch the interview online, click [here](#) or visit www.wgntv.com and search "doberman" in the site's search field. The November and May interviews are available to watch.

The above information was printed in an electronic copy of the June 2010 ASPCA Veterinary Lifeline Partnership Newsletter. Similar information is available on the ASPCA website at <http://www.aspcapro.org/summer-2007.php>.



Maxwell's prison sentence ends with smiles

By Lauren Kelliher

Maxwell, a former IDR+ orphan, is finishing up a three-month stay in a state penitentiary in Michigan. He didn't do anything wrong; in fact, it's a privilege to be where he is. Maxwell was selected to be a part of Refurbished Pets of Southern Michigan's Canine Correctional Program (RPSM), run by IDR+ volunteer Cathy Gray.

Cathy and two dozen other volunteers select dogs from kill shelters, humane societies, and owner surrenders from southern Michigan and northern Indiana to live in the Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater, Michigan, with prisoners in their cells. Dogs of all breeds, mixes, and sizes are eligible; however, temperament is the most important characteristic.

"We choose dogs that are friendly and outgoing, not fearful or aggressive," said Cathy.

Dogs live in a foster home for a month to be further evaluated and fully vetted. Then, the dogs move to the prison for three months of training.

A professional dog trainer instructs the pre-screened inmates how to teach the dogs basic commands. In the end, the dogs learn how to be great dogs for their future families, and the inmates are rewarded with the companionship of a dog and the responsibility of training someone's future animal companion.

Cathy and a few volunteers created the RPSM Canine Correctional Program over two years ago, and the group has trained and placed 200 dogs into loving and permanent homes. Sixteen graduates, including Maxwell, will move into forever homes this month.



Photo courtesy of Cathy Gray

RPSM President Cathy Gray with Maxwell at the Lakeland Correctional Center, where he lived and was trained by an inmate for three months.

Maxwell is the third Doberman to be trained and find a forever home through RPSM.

The inmates who apply to work the dog training program are carefully screened; they must have at least a GED, be misconduct-free for at least one year, and not in the prison for criminal sexual conduct. Many of the handlers are serving multi-year sentences for felonies, and some are even in for life. Cathy says the dog training program is the most desired of the prison work options, which include cooking, gardening, janitorial, and laundry work.

"It's something for them to do that's not just sitting idle in their cells," she said. "It keeps the men out of trouble and away from the riff-raff."

The dogs live with their trainers, but it's not behind floor-to-ceiling bars. The men in the dog unit have earned the privilege to live in large cubicle-like spaces that are 10-by-6-foot wide with 4-foot-tall walls.

Due to the longer sentences of many of the men, RPSM has a low turnover of dog trainers, and several of the inmates have trained multiple dogs. And

due to the adopter application process, the program also has a very low dog return rate.

"The application process for the prison program is modeled off of IDR+'s," said Cathy. "IDR+ really helped guide me when we were starting the program—especially Pam Abare-Newton." The adoption process mirrors IDR+'s with an application, references, vet check, and home visit.

Another aspect of the prison program that is similar to IDR+ is how the program is funded: donations. Donations to RPSM cover the food, supplies, and vet care for the dogs in the program. To make a donation or for more information, visit www.rpsm.us. The program is also on Facebook.

Although Cathy is the president of the Refurbished Pets of Southern Michigan's Canine Correctional Program, she still has her roots in Illinois Doberman Rescue Plus. "I wish I had more time for the Dobes, but this is an important program because it's a beta site that could be a model for more programs like it in other prisons. I'll do anything to volunteer and help the dogs."

Excerpts from Maxwell's trainer's journal

Week 1:

We have been working on our bonding and getting used to the surroundings. He loves all the attention he is getting. I am looking forward to working with Maxwell.

Week 3:

We have been working on sits, stands, and downs. Maxwell is doing great. He is always ready to work or play.

Week 5:

We worked on his sit and down stays from a short distance. Next week I will increase the distance. He continues to impress me.

Week 6:

I cut Maxwell's nails. He did super. I think he is ticklish. I gave him his favorite toy to hold in his mouth and laid him on his side and clipped away.

Week 8:

Maxwell's down stays are doing great! I placed him in the hallway and put him in a down stay then cleaned my room. People were walking by with other dogs and a lot of other distractions, and he just stayed right there and watched me.

Week 10:

Everybody likes Maxwell, and he's made lots of friends on the yard. When people ask to pet him, he just leans against their legs happy as can be.

Week 12:

Maxwell is getting to be a lot of fun to work with. He is near perfect on walks and great to just hang with under a shade tree. He has become a big part of everyone's lives here at Lakeland, and we will all miss him when he goes to his forever home.



Where are they now: Hugo the 'big head' Plus

By Tasha Huebner

While all of the dogs that make their way to IDR+ occupy a special place in our hearts, there are some that tug at the heartstrings even more due to their personalities or simply the circumstances by which they came to be under our care.

Hugo—or “Big Head” as he was affectionately nicknamed to avoid confusion with a Dobe of the same name—was one such dog.

Hugo came from a shelter, and although he had a large tumor on his leg, we assumed it was a fatty tumor that could simply be removed. In addition, he had been born with a fused tail that was permanently in a down position. Because he couldn't move it out of the way when he went potty, it was decided to dock that at the same time.

Unfortunately, the tumor turned out to be a grade 2 mass cell tumor, and even though the vet felt he got good margins, with cancer there are no guarantees.

Hugo's future thus looked a bit uncertain, at least in terms

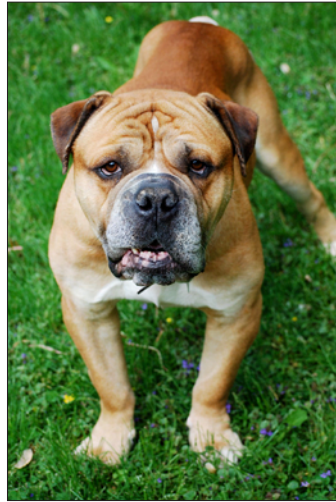


Photo by Lauren Kelliher
After everyone at IDR+ fell in love with him, Hugo was recently adopted and is enjoying his new life with his forever family.

of finding adopters who would open their hearts to a wonderful dog with his kind of medical history and the possibility of a cancer recurrence. In the meantime, Hugo was endearing himself to everyone at IDR+, always on his best behavior, showering everyone he met with love and affection. And naturally, with an insistence on being petted!

Of course, as we like to say, for every dog there's a perfect

home, and vice versa. And so it was when adopters Melanie and Joe came to meet Hugo. While looking through Petfinder for a companion for their adopted puggle Josie, they came across Hugo's picture and knew they had to meet him right away.

As Melanie puts it, “within two seconds of seeing Hugo come tumbling out of his foster mom's door with his lanky body, big paws, and even bigger head, we knew he had us.”

Hugo went home with Melanie and Joe that day, and as Melanie further notes, “We knew that he recently had a cancerous tumor removed, but that didn't matter to us—we were just grateful to be the lucky ones to give him a good home.”

Happily, Hugo is now living the good life in his new home, as he proudly goes for walks around their Chicago neighborhood and in Grant Park, sitting and waiting at each crosswalk to get the okay to cross the street, and only causing problems for Melanie and Joe because so many people stop to admire him, pet

him, and tell him how beautiful he is.

Melanie notes that “we've even had people holler out at us from their cars as we cross the street, admiring him! He's just irresistible with those eyes and that smile.” Hugo even got to go on a “canine cruise” on the Chicago river as part of a fundraiser for a local animal shelter—again, in his element among the other dogs and dog lovers.

Hugo has also perfected his methods of getting all the attention he feels is due him—and rightfully so—as he's learned to put one of his monster paws on whomever is closest to him, as if to say “I'm here, pay attention to me!” Clearly, Hugo takes after our “velcro Dobs” in this respect.

And while Melanie and Joe note how grateful they are that Hugo is part of their family, as they look forward to many adventures and memories together, IDR+ is equally grateful that this wonderful couple took a chance on a great dog that many might have overlooked.

New Dobermart items are now available on Cafe Press!



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Planning for your pets after you're gone

By Lauren Dorman

As pet guardians, we often plan carefully for the end of our pets' lives, but how often do we consider the consequences if we should become unable to care for our pets, due to critical illness or death? Probably not often enough.

If it's important to you to have an estate plan that details how you want your assets distributed, and to select the best person to serve as your human children's guardian, then you'll want to consider the needs of your pets in your estate planning as well.

Mentioning your pet in your will isn't sufficient. Since pets of all varieties (dogs, cats, horses and even gerbils!) are not considered "persons" under the law, they cannot own property and so they can't be a beneficiary of any assets under the terms of your will.

However, in the last decade, about 40 states have enacted laws to allow the establishment of pet trusts. Illinois has a pet trust law, and so do all adjoining states except Kentucky. Pet trust laws vary by state, so it's important to consult a reliable legal expert in your jurisdiction if you wish to establish a pet trust. Here are some issues to consider as you plan for your pet's future.

How would you like to fund the pet trust? It can be from your estate's assets, such as securities, bank accounts or real estate proceeds, or you can designate a life insurance policy to provide the funds necessary for the care and wellbeing of your pet.

How much funding should you set aside in your pet trust? That depends, based on the number of your pets, as well



Photo by Lauren Kelliher

Discuss options for caring for your pets with your legal adviser.

as their ages and medical conditions.

Review your records and total your annual expenditures for food, vet care, boarding, and other pet-related bills, and multiply that sum by the estimated life expectancy of each of your pets.

Consider the impact of inflation and final expenses for your pet, such as burial or cremation.

Keep in mind that pet trust laws in many states, including Illinois, allow a court to reduce the amount of property transferred to the pet trust after the owner's death if the court determines that the amount is substantially more than what it believes the pet will require, so the amount you specify should be reasonably related to the actual needs of your pet, and those expected needs should be spelled out in the trust document.

A sound pet trust should be very specific about who you want to care for your pet if you are not able to do so. Select a primary caretaker (and secondary and tertiary caretakers as well, to be safe)

who knows your pet and is able and willing to care for your furry friend.

Be sure you've discussed your wishes with your selected caretakers and secured their agreement before your trust document is prepared. Your legal advisor will also ask you to name a trustee and a successor trustee who will administer the funds in the trust, and will guide you in selecting the ideal trustee.

Finally, in most states the trust document must include a "remainder beneficiary," which is an individual or organization that will receive any unused funds after the death of the last pet named in the trust. You might want to consider designating Illinois Doberman Rescue Plus as the beneficiary of any remaining funds in your pet trust (See sidebar).

We all have a tendency to stall on planning for the future, but having an estate plan provides great peace of mind. As you work with your legal advisor, remember that your pets should be part of the discussion.

In lieu of flowers

IDR+ is always in need of contributions so we can continue to provide high quality vet care for all our fosters, especially those with serious medical conditions.

It's easy to donate through PayPal or your credit card on www.ildoberescue.com, and of course we love to receive check donations sent to IDR+ directly at P. O. Box 435, Barrington, IL 60011-0435.

But you may want to consider some other ways to show your financial support of IDR+.

If you're working with your legal adviser on your estate plan, consider naming IDR+ as a beneficiary in your will.

If you're establishing a trust for the continuing care of your loved ones after your death, you can identify IDR+ as the "remainder beneficiary" of any leftover funds after your children or pets no longer require care.

Finally, don't forget to let friends and family members know that IDR+ is your favorite charitable organization.

Instead of gifts or flowers to celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or to honor a loved person or pet who has died, contributions to IDR+ have a lasting impact in improving the lives of animals who depend on our organization.

IDR+ is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization, so all gifts to IDR+ are tax deductible. For more information, contact IDR+ directly or search for IDR+ on www.guidestar.org.



Wobblers and Dancing Doberman Disease

By Erin Magnani

IDR+ has two wonderful dogs available for adoption currently, but their medical diagnoses might be scaring off some potential adopters. Here is some information on their medical conditions to help dispel myths and shine a spotlight on these great dogs.

Dancing Doberman Disease

Sophie is currently up for adoption, and she has been diagnosed with Dancing Doberman Disease. She is a beautiful 4-year-old blue girl with natural ears, and she loves to play in the yard. The only thing her condition prevents her from doing is standing still on solid footing. She is not the first IDR+ orphan to have this diagnosis, and she won't be the last.

Dancing Doberman Disease (DDD or Distal Polyneuropathy) is only seen in Dobermans. DDD is a progressive disease, causing weak hind legs and muscle atrophy, with symptoms normally appearing when the dog is 6-7 months old, but it can appear from just 4 months to up to 10 years. When the dog is standing, one of its rear legs will suddenly flex.

Over the course of several months, the other hind leg will start randomly flexing as well. Dogs with DDD eventually end up alternatively flexing and extending each rear leg while standing, movements that resemble "dancing."

Also, these dogs will frequently knuckle over with their rear paws and prefer to sit or lie down rather than stand. There are no signs of pain associated with DDD, and the dogs are still capable of running and playing normally. Generally, these dogs will live out their lives as regular animal companions.

There is no known cause of

this disease, but the presumption is that it is genetic, as it has never presented in any other dog breed besides the Doberman Pinscher. This disease is progressive, incurable, and, at present, untreatable.

DDD can mimic many other conditions, such as lumbosacral disc disease, cervical vertebral instability (CVI), inflammation

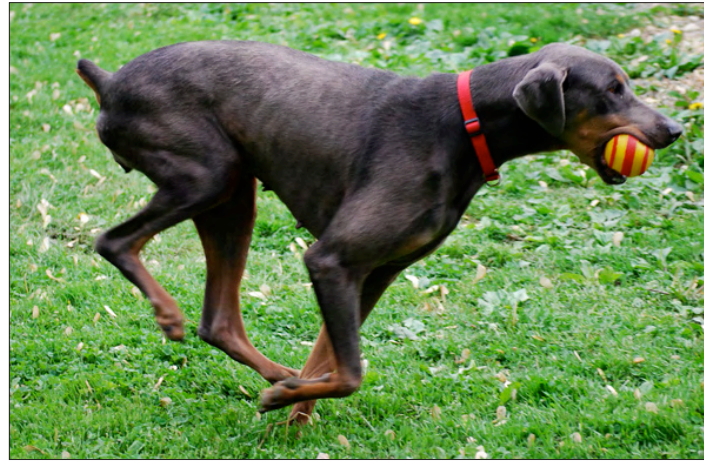


Photo by Lauren Kelliher

Despite having Dancing Doberman Disease, Sophie loves running in the yard. Please consider making her a part of your family.

of the spinal cord, spinal arthritis, and spinal tumors. It is likely the condition is more prevalent than previously recognized because there is a general lack of awareness on the part of veterinarians and breeders, and, therefore, the condition is often overlooked as a diagnosis.

Wobblers Syndrome

Flyer came into our program about a year ago, and right away we noticed he had an unsteady gait and would sometimes stumble. This doesn't hold Flyer back at all, and his foster mom Sandy says he's just the happiest boy and quite the goofball.

"Nothing stops Flyer. He runs with the best of them, is very happy, loves people, and is good with dogs and cats. He just trips once in a while," said Sandy.

Flyer has a diagnosis of Wobblers syndrome. This is caused by a narrowing or

malformation of the spinal cervical vertebrae, which causes pressure on the spinal cord by the cervical vertebrae due to either a malformation of the vertebrae or a malocclusion (when the vertebrae do not come together properly). The spinal cord compression occurs mostly in the vertebrae c5, c6, and c7 (cervical or neck vertebrae).

Wobblers can cause anywhere from a mild to severe effect to the dog's gait. It affects the ability to stand, move properly, and to be pain free. Symptoms usually appear first in the rear legs as mild uncoordination (ataxia) in gait and/or dragging of the toes. Dogs often have a crouching stance with a downward flexed neck. Wobblers syndrome tends to be gradually progressive and will advance to the front legs. Some dogs also experience neck pain.

This disease occurs most frequently in Great Danes and Doberman Pinschers. In Great Danes, younger dogs are more commonly affected, and in Dobermans, young dogs can be affected; however, it's more commonly seen in middle-aged to older dogs (3-9 years).

Flyer was estimated to be about 5 or 6 years old when he came into our program,

and he was already displaying symptoms.

But not all symptoms of an unsteady gait automatically mean Wobblers. Since other conditions can mimic Wobblers syndrome symptoms, diagnosis is usually done via a procedure called a myelogram, where dye is injected into the spinal column and then the neck is flexed and x-rayed. Recently, MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) has actually been shown to be more effective at showing the location, nature, and severity of spinal cord compression than a myelogram and is a much less invasive procedure. Most large specialty veterinary practices have MRI available.

Treatments are available, but they depend on the severity of the spinal compression. Treatment usually starts with doses of corticosteroids to help reduce inflammation of the spinal cord and crate rest. Special neck wraps are often used in conjunction with both the corticosteroid treatments and surgery. The surgery fuses the two unstable vertebrae, which relieves the pressure on the spinal cord; however, it unfortunately also puts further stress on adjoining vertebrae, which can cause instability to recur.

Alternatives to spinal fusion are Gold Bead Implants—magnetically charged gold-plated beads implanted in the dog wherever pain needs to be relieved (more about this in a later section)—and acupuncture. While these treatments do not "cure" the disease, they lessen the pain and can lessen the severity of the symptoms in some cases. Chiropractic adjustments are also sometimes used, but in certain cases, that can lead to severe complications.

Since coming into our

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Wobblers, DDD: Wonderful dogs available

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program, Flyer has been given two supplements—NZymes and VetriDisc—but he has not had any other treatment. Sandy, his foster mom, said she hasn't noticed any progression during the one and a half years she has fostered him. She also doesn't have to do anything "special" for Flyer because of the Wobblers. Flyer is kept loose in the kitchen, babygated away from the other dogs in the house so they don't jump on him, and generally kept on the first floor of Sandy's house so he doesn't have to navigate stairs. However, Flyer is just like any other dog and wants to be where all the action is and loves to play with his foster siblings.

The cause of Wobblers Syndrome is unknown, although a link to fast growth and genetics is suspected. According to the Merck Veterinary Manual, "The cause is unknown, although rapid growth rates and nutrition, mechanical factors, and genetics may be implicated." The genetic link is being researched further as experts now believe that the prominence of this disease in these two breeds (Great Danes and Dobermans) lends itself to more of a genetic component with environmental influences.

Gold Bead Implants

A few IDR+ dogs that have displayed symptoms of Wobblers have been taken to a specialist to attempt to treat them with the Gold Bead Implant procedure. However, the Gold Bead Implant procedure is aimed at stopping progression, but it can't reverse any damage done or cure the disease.

Gold bead implants can be effective for many severe, degenerative conditions, such as Wobblers syndrome, degenerative myelopathy, hip dysplasia, elbow or knee arthritis, and epilepsy. The gold

beads are gold-plated magnets placed in specific acupuncture points, which vary depending on the medical condition and the individual animal.

Each point receives three to five beads delivered with a special needle. The number of beads depends on the size of the patient and the degree of pathology. The beads remain for



Flyer wears a harness to decrease the pressure on his neck. He was diagnosed with Wobblers syndrome, and his symptoms have not progressed further since taking some supplements.

the life of the patient, stimulating acupuncture points and meridians permanently. Gold wire is sometimes also used, but it is more expensive.

In Wobblers syndrome, where the spinal cord is compressed, the beads help tighten surrounding ligaments and connective tissues to help stabilize the neck. The patient may feel better soon after implantation, but improvement potentially occurs over several more months because it takes time for calcium to be reabsorbed and pressure to be lifted from the spinal cord.

Success depends on whether the body can repair damage from having the spinal cord pinched. Patients still have to be put under anesthesia to ensure they stay still for the surgery, but the procedure is short and because no incision is made,

healing occurs quickly.

Patients normally go home the same day of surgery. Wobblers patients go home with a large neck wrap that provides stability and helps allow for healing. And like many other forms of holistic medicine, the beads will not harm the pet.

Hank, a rescued IDR+ alum, came into our program at 4

like a regular dog.

Sadly, after Hank was adopted into his loving forever home, he passed away about a year and half later from a heart attack, which was unrelated to his Wobblers.

"He had no problem running, going on walks, even swimming—but he was not a fan of the pool. It was perfect, though, because there was no gravity in water," Andrea said. "I always took him places with me—picnics, my parents, and even when I lived in an apartment at the time we would go to the tennis court so he could run around and play ball. Even in his last moments, we were on a walk."

So please open your hearts to one of these wonderful dogs. Their diagnoses of Wobbler's and DDD are not as scary as they first sound. They often live long and happy lives in their new forever homes.

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Photo by Lauren Kelliher