



Living With a Disabled Dog

A K9 Magazine Special Report



Legal Notices

Legal Notice

© K9 Media Ltd. All rights reserved.

This ebook is copyright protected. This is only for personal use. You cannot amend, distribute, sell, use, quote or paraphrase any part or the content within this ebook without the consent of the author or copyright owner. Legal action will be pursued if this is breached. Please appreciate the hard work done.

Disclaimer Notice:

This book is for personal use only. It should serve as a reference only with no guarantee to any personal or financial gains. Results from usage of materials described in this book varies. By reading this material, you agree that the author is not liable on any consequences arising from usage of the information contained within this book.

About the Authors:

This book has been carefully prepared, researched and edited by a team of canine information experts. Our authors are, first and foremost, passionate about dogs and share a mutual satisfaction in assisting people who are experiencing problems with their pets. Our works have been read by more than 12 million pet owners globally.

Living With a Disabled Pet: Special Report

Cherie Kendal was just a normal, devoted dog owner, until her pet was involved in an accident and she had to radically re-think how she went about her life. Since the accident, Cherie has focused on exploring pet disability and care, whether caused by trauma or illness, it's a massive adjustment for the human but surprisingly easy for the dog. Her understanding and pragmatism offer a refreshingly candid account of what it means to care for a disabled pet - and it very rarely involves doom and gloom.

God forbid you ever have to face the day if your family pet gets one of its limbs torn off by a hit and run. This nightmare happened last year to our four-year-old Beagle. Here is an account of what happened:



Every morning we had the same routine; Cleopatra would scratch at the door to wake me up at dawn. She would get all excited knowing that her morning walk was just a few minutes away. Slowly I would get out of bed to wash my face and make my way to the living room, all the while my dog would practically dance circles around me with excitement.

Our morning walks were not just for her to use the bathroom. We had fun. I brought treats and Cleopatra would show me tricks for praise and a tasty snack. With the beach only a few minutes away we would race each other down the shore. It was beautiful. It

was heaven - until that terrible morning. The street that we lived on was typically non-existent with traffic during our walks, but this particular morning I was sick with the flu and did not get up until hours hours after our normal 6am time.

As I slowly made my way to the front door and to leash up Cleopatra, I decided to open the door first to grab the newspaper. But I forgot to leash her first. That was a mistake because as soon as I opened the door a neighbour's cat crept by and its eyes locked with Cleopatra's eyes.



That was enough to send my dog racing like there was no tomorrow to catch the cat. The next thing I hear was a "THUMP" and then a screeching halt by vehicle tires. As I turned the corner to see what was happening all I saw was smoke from a white truck taking off as he spun his tires whilst my dog was laying in the street, blood everywhere, her back leg hanging on by a thread of skin.

It was terrible. And through several operations and much love and patience from her family, Cleopatra would then become used to living with three limbs. But it was hard, more for me and the rest of the family than for the dog. It was almost as if I was the one amputated, not the dog.

What Would You Do?

Think for a moment if your dog was in an accident and had to have one of his limbs surgically removed. How would you feel? Do you have any idea how your dog would feel? Do you think you could handle the daily challenges of assisting your pet in getting used to

his new life? How about if your dog was stricken blind by a debilitating disease.

Are you confident that you know enough to make the right decision? Preparation is key to making the adjustment. Broken bones and minor lacerations are undoubtedly as common with animals as they are with children. While it is rare to find an owner who is unwilling to cooperate when treatment is required for relatively minor problems such as these, many owners hesitate at the thought of subjecting their pet to a more serious – perhaps even disabling – surgery, such as amputation, enucleation (removal of an eye) or other such procedure.

There may also be a hesitancy at the prospect of maintaining their animal throughout a long, complicated process. But things aren't always as bad as they seem. Far from being an enormous burden, the disabled pet quite frequently suffers little or no permanent psychological impairment at all and promptly learns to live with, or around, his disability, no matter how great.

Trauma is trauma, whether experienced by a human being or by an animal – but many factors exist that give the dog an enormous advantage in coping with traumatic injury or serious disease. After the initial recuperative period required following major surgery, your pet should once again be capable of functioning in a manner not far removed from normal.

Animals Have Far Greater Capabilities To Recover Than Humans

Animals, like humans, learn to compensate for missing limbs and faculties by utilising other resources at their disposal. Thus, the three-legged animal soon builds up muscles in his remaining limbs to take over for the missing one. The pet who has lost an eye learns to use his senses of smell and hearing to a greater advantage, providing necessary clues to his environment. The animal whose hearing has diminished, or is non-existent, employs other faculties to make up for this lack.

Many diseases, such as diabetes and idiopathic epilepsy, require only minimal daily medication and care to assure a happy, healthy existence. Even such severe problems as hind-end paralysis, commonly associated with intervertebral disc disease (seen frequently in Dachshunds, Beagles, Poodles, and Cocker Spaniels), can be managed at home once the animal's condition has been treated and stabilised by a veterinarian. There is no doubt that the owner of a disabled pet must make some adjustments, more perhaps than will be required of the animal himself.

Your pet feels no embarrassment about his condition, nor does he consider himself any less valuable as your companion and friend, but you might. This is one of the advantages animals have over us, they don't do self pity. Please try and keep in mind that your pet will not be resentful or hostile about his infirmity, nor will he spend anxious hours worrying what his friends or family will think of him now that he's disabled. He will accept his somewhat modified life with equanimity and good nature, and, undoubtedly, will make

every effort to return to a relatively normal existence as quickly as possible.

For the animal who has sacrificed a leg to an auto accident, gunshot wound, or other tragedy, life will be a series of spills and falls until he learns to make use of a totally new mode of locomotion and a vastly modified sense of balance. There is no need to race to his side each time he tumbles, nor is it necessary to lift and carry him from place to place. This places an enormous strain on you, his owner, both psychologically and physically and delays his adjustment to his condition indefinitely.

Owners who keep unnecessary sympathy upon an injured animal soon find that pet totally dependent upon their ministrations and incapable of sustaining itself in even the most basic situation. Exercise (in moderation) is important to build up muscle mass and remaining limbs, so don't insist that your pet be totally inactive. On the other hand, don't force him to exercise should he feel the need to rest. Just relax and play it by ear.

Disabled Vision

Losing an eye creates a distinct problem for anyone, pets or human. However, since dogs and cats have far more sensitive senses of smell and hearing, they also have a distinct advantage over their human counterparts. Family members of an animal who has lost an eye must become accustomed to approaching the animal from his sighted side, not his blind side, to avoid startling him if he is not otherwise aware of their presence.

For the animal who has completely lost vision in both eyes, whether due to old age, disease, or injury, management is slightly more complicated but by no means impossible. Care should be taken with an animal afflicted in this fashion to alert him to your presence by calling his name or otherwise appealing to a remaining faculty so as not to startle him.

Furniture should, if possible, be left unchanged – or if a rearrangement is necessary, the animal should be gently introduced to the situation and familiarised with it before being left unsupervised in the area.

Doors to cellars, or steps between floors, should be off-limits to the sightless dog. Baby gates (available in supermarkets or pet shops) are an easy solution to restricting particular areas of the home to your pet without limiting human access to such places. The animal should be allowed to sniff his food before it is placed in front of him and may, in fact, have to be guided to the bowl's exact spot.

Routine is extremely important and managing sightless animals, many of whom are older pets with multiple problems. They may have gradually lost vision but can still remember where food, water, furniture, a favourite bed, and the door to the outside are situated. Even the slightest change in the position of familiar objects may elicit an enormous confusion and even result in serious injury to the pet who can no longer see.

Verbal encouragement is important to reassure your pet that all is well and that the world

he once saw is still intact - if only he can call upon his memory to find it. Any animal with seriously impaired vision should not be left unsupervised in unfamiliar places or out of doors where there is obvious danger within easy access. It is far better to confine such a pet to a small, safe room than to allow him to wander through unfamiliar areas.

Loss Of Hearing

Loss of hearing is not always readily apparent when dealing with animals – except when total deafness is congenital, such as in some Dalmatians. Owners of deaf animals, or those that are hard of hearing, learn to use vibrations to communicate with their pets, stamping on a floor to alert the animal of their presence nearby. Training a deaf dog consists of the use of hand signals and leash corrections. Deaf animals, obviously, must not be allowed to run free since they are at a great disadvantage in an unprotected and unrestricted environment.

Paralysis

Paralysis is often a stunning blow to the owners of those animals prone to such a disorder. The animal is generally in little or no discomfort, but tends to be quite confused, which is only natural.

Frequently, control of bowel and bladder is impaired or temporarily destroyed. When this is the case, hospitalisation will be necessary to express the animal manually and help him adjust until he is accustomed to his condition. When control returns to the sphincter muscles, the animal may be discharged with a "doxie cart" to help him remain mobile while waiting to regain control of hind-leg movement. Often, this gradual improvement takes months – but when use of these limbs returns, a prophylactic surgical procedure known as fenestration may be undertaken to prevent paralysis from re-occurring. Handling the paralysed animal requires little effort on his owner's part. Placing him in the cart several times a day for exercise periods and to allow him to relieve himself is a simple task.

It is always essential to provide adequate support when carrying such animals by placing one arm between the front legs and under the sternum and the other between the hind legs and under the abdomen. This will preclude further injury to delicate spinal tissue. Once properly fitted with a doxie cart, the paralysed animal soon becomes quite self-sufficient, learning to backup, navigate around obstacles and even lie down. Of course, he must not be left unsupervised while sporting his "wheels" since accidents can always happen.

Illness And Disease

Illness, like injury, can afflict your pet and create an animal disabled by a need for continual monitoring and medication.

Idiopathic epilepsy is quite a frequent occurrence in domestic animals, with frequent incidents in the German Shepherd, Poodle, and many of the smaller, more excitable breeds. However, any animal, mixed or purebred, can be born or become epileptic. Convulsions can be as infrequent as two or three times a year or as frequent as several times a day, as mild as a slight twitching or as severe as violent running fits. Many veterinarians do not begin treating epilepsy until the seizures increase in intensity, duration, or frequency.

The epileptic animal may experience convulsions during periods of excitement when the general household tenor is a high pitch, or when subjected to stress such as travelling or being exposed to strange people or places. When such is the case, the animal may be sedated or confined to an area where a quiet, relaxed atmosphere prevails. Modern medication, given orally on a daily basis, is generally all that is necessary to completely eliminate (or greatly limit) the severity and frequency of epileptic seizures, thus allowing the animal to live a completely normal life.

When convulsions do occur, first aid consists primarily of preventing the animal from injuring himself during mad dashes around the house, thrashing about on the floor, or other linked behaviour. Remember though that your pet is not in control of his actions while experiencing a convulsion, so keep your hands a safe distance from his teeth. Contact your veterinarian should the convulsion last more than a couple of minutes or seem unduly violent.

Diabetes And Daily Treatment

While relatively simple to manage, the diabetic animal must be under strict supervision by his owners.

However, the task depends on daily shots and it seems that more people harbour a deep revulsion for needles and syringes than most of us realise. As a result, when the subject of canine diabetes comes up, a look of horror generally leaps into the eyes of owners who are themselves terrified of injections. Treatment requires stringent dietary controls, a daily urine sample check for glucose and, of course, daily injections of insulin. Animals, luckily, have a vast subcutaneous layer into which the insulin may be injected, thereby causing far less irritation than for similarly afflicted humans. After an initial period of adjustment for both owner and animal, the routine of caring for a diabetic becomes second nature.

Eventually, the pet will actually approach when the insulin is removed from the fridge, knowing full well that a tasty meal follows the minor inconvenience of an injection.

No matter what the illness, no matter what the injury, once your pet becomes familiar with his new limitations, he generally adjusts quite readily to living within his newly defined parameters. And just as often, he astounds observers by his refusal to be limited, to act the invalid, or to be waited on by doting often guilt-ridden owners. He does the best he can, often far surpassing what is expected of him by his humans and occasionally

returning so nearly to his former self that uninformed observers can hardly pinpoint his affliction.

Handling the disabled pet is often quite a bit simpler than owners expect. Animals are wonderfully adaptable and resilient. Their natural instinct for preservation and their devotion to their families provides more than adequate motivation to allow them to adjust to whatever life has in store for them. Caring for a disabled or limited pet is a rewarding and enriching experience, see the positives in it and remember, your dog really doesn't care if he hobbles, wobbles, squints or rolls - as long as he's with his family, he'll be happy..

RESOURCES:

Hopefully this report has proven valuable to you. Listed below are some further resources that we think could be of interest:

Waterproof dog beds (for the older dog who maybe struggling with bladder control):
www.waterproofdogbed.org

Older Dogs advice and tips for living with an older dog www.olderdogs.co.uk

Insurance for pets invaluable at all times www.insurance4pets.com/bestdeal

Dog joint supplements www.dogjoints.co.uk

Folding dog ramp ideal for dogs with mobility issues [link](#)