

What Leukemia looks like - long, tear jerky for sure - but important!!!

I'm on a "Doberman List" and one of the members recently lost her boy "Titan". I asked her respectfully to tell her story so as we could learn from it. She has given me permission to post this and for others to do the same. So I'm now passing this on to everyone whom I know has dogs.

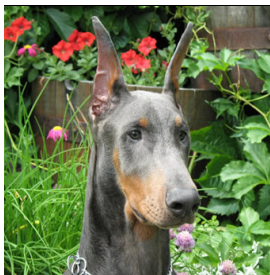
"You have my blessings to share this. If we can help one dog - then Titan is still being the best dog! Even from the bridge! My biggest fear in sharing was that someone was going to say 'why didn't you....' 'you should have ...' But this group has been so wonderful. I did not have THIS family when my Dillon passed away, and I can assure you, the compassion and kind words makes a world of difference to my broken heart. "

Here's the specs : Vwd male Dobie with CDA, low thyroid

Email # 1 : On Tuesday 6/23 he turned 5 years old. A normal day. But he started a little cough. Just a light, two or three little Huh, huh, huh"s. Seemed to do it almost every time he moved. Did not bring anything up with the cough. Wednesday 6/24 it continued. Not as frequently, but still often. Enough my husband asked if I noticed he was coughing. 'Yes, I noticed.' Our vet does small animals on Thursdays. I planned to bring him in to have a listen on Thursday. Thursday 6/25 he coughed a little less. Not every time he moved. I got my shots (I am diabetic) ate breakfast and we headed to the vet. My concern at that time was congestive heart failure. We got there and Larry listened to heart and lungs. He sounded good. No temp, no cough, no chest gurgles. He looked and sounded good. (And never coughed again.) Doc Larry kinda scolded me for being such a worrier. Could be anything this time of year. Possible spores in the air conditioner unit we had recently turned on. The next Tuesday I woke up in the morning to some spatters of blood on my bedroom carpet. A couple of clots and some spattering. We have 4 dogs in the bedroom, so I had a quick look but found nobody Bleeding. When Titan took a drink of water the water turned a little pink. Ah ha- Titan is the one. I took a closer look at him and he had a little drop of blood coming from his left nostril. I wiped it off and nothing followed it. We went outside and he did his business with no more bleeding. Wednesday morning my bed looked like a murder scene. Granted a little blood looks like a lot, but there were several pinky-finger sized clots, spatters on the wall and small puddles on the bed. It did not look like a lot of blood, and it was drying so it had happened in the night. It looked to me like he had sneezed and blown out the clots (which meant he WAS clotting) and some fresh blood followed the clots. But he was no longer bleeding.

At the same time he had/has a small scab on the outside edge of his ear, near the base. He has had this scab for some time. It was always a scab. I never saw it bleed unless when I bathed him I bumped the scab loose and then it would bleed a little. Nothing to cause me alarm. But also left side. But the Wednesday blood bath sent us to the vet. (On a non-small animal day, Larry stayed in house and saw us before going on his farm calls.) I brought along the clots and Larry looked at him. He could see a little blood trickle up the left nostril, but no indication of an injury. No fever. Heart and lungs still sounded good. Larry is a farm vet -- large animal who devotes his Thursdays to the pets of his clients. He admits his equipment is inadequate for the complexities of a Vwd Dobie with CDA, low thyroid... He does the best he can with the knowledge and resources available to him. He told me he could not see anything in there but he could not see very far in there. He advised if I wanted a better diagnosis I could take him to the University. He said this could be an injury or it could be a tumor or it could be things he has not even considered. The University would be the best bet for a good educated diagnosis. And it would likely be thousands of dollars. The next few days there were a couple drops of blood on the floor. No blood in the drinking water, no blood on the bedding or carpeting. It appeared to be healing -- whatever was going on in his nostril. The next week (4th of July week) he was leaving drops of blood occasionally, but again nothing to cause me great concern. Stuff I could wipe up with a tissue. The blood I was seeing was not causing me alarm. Obviously it should have.

Last week I had him back at the vet on Thursday. But I honestly don't remember what sent me there that time. I will probably remember a couple of weeks from now, but right now last week escapes me.



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THIS Thursday there were more drips on the floor. 4 or 5 spots, not as small as pencil eraser but not as large as dime. I sat there debating do I run him in again or don't I. Then he came down stairs and looked at me. That was it – we are going to the vet! His left eye looked like a Bassett hound. His right eye looked fine. But his third eyelid was covering at least half his eye. I had not looked any further than that. I called to make sure Larry was in, and off we went. I am thinking tumor, and it is growing.

Larry looked at Titan, Larry's head dropped and he got on the phone looking for a competent internal medicine vet with the tools to look deep into my boy. In the past week Titan' gums had gotten very pale, he had hemorrhages on his ... lips? The part of his face that covers his teeth ... his temp was 103 and his eye had something seriously wrong. Vet choice #1 was not available till Monday, Vet choice #2 was also not available till Monday, Vet choice #3 was in and with a patient and would give us a call back.

We sat there and waited for the phone to ring. After 15 minutes Vet #3 called. Larry explained the situation to her then handed the phone to me. She would see him, squeeze him between patients -- get there as quick as we can.

In tears I drove home. The look on Larry's' face told my heart that this was really really bad. He kept shaking his head telling me he wished he could help us. He had heard this vet was really good and told me to keep him posted. I got home, piddled Titan (and me), got something to eat (blood sugars crashing from stress) and headed the other direction out of town.

We waited at the other vet for an hour and a half before she saw us. And once she saw Titan she picked up her pace. Very worried about the gums. Very pale. Hemorrhages. Not the sort of thing they get from raw hides. She asked about possible exposure to poison. (Not much chance but we are on a dairy farm ... there is always SOME chance.) She ran a full chem panel (results not back yet). Believed he needed thyroid meds but wanted the values first, gave him Vitamin K injection and sent him home with vit K tablets, treated his eye lid with steroid and ear ointment for the scabby thing that had opened up and was always wet with blood. Not actively pouring blood, just wet. She considered giving fluids but he had been drinking and did not appear dehydrated.

Friday morning he was worse. A LOT worse. He had an accident on the floor – poo running out like water, or more like watered down Elmer's glue, but it was dark dark dark brown. Looked black till I wiped it up. He did not squat doing this accident, just bent his back legs a real little bit. His gums were more pale. He had new hemorrhages, and his lips were tacky. Not moist at all. I was in a panic. I called the vet (not Larry) and was told to bring him and they would have a look and run fluids. We did that. She acknowledged his gums looked different but not think they were necessarily worse. She did not notice any new hemorrhages. I had not looked at his gums since being at Larry's, so perhaps he had new hemorrhages between Larry's' and Vet #3. Left him at the hospital with an IV with orders to pick him up around 4. If he took a turn for the worse they would call. They did not call.

I got permission for an extra long lunch so I could pick him up and get him home. He was sooo happy to see me. Wiggle wiggle wiggle tail big Dobie smile. They brought him to my side and he collapsed. ??! This is new! I stressed to the technician that he had not ever done that before. She attributed it to having been in a small crate for most of the day except for one potty break. They did another pac cell count and it was 16. It was 20% in the morning and 16 was what they expected after almost 2 liters of fluid. I took him outside while they prepared the bill and he piddled but did not poo. He was very unsteady. Teetering like a person right off a carnival ride. He did hop into the car though, and rode home alert to his surroundings. I will finish this later. He went downhill fast from here.



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Email # 2 : GETTING HOME

When we got home he got out of the car, teetered to the tree beside the drive and piddled then collapsed again. After a little while he got up and walked soooo slowly toward the door -- where he collapsed again. I could not coax him to rise, but looked again at his gums and he was more pale than the morning, and he had new hemorrhages. I called Larry and he stressed DON'T LET HIM MOVE! Put him in a place where he does not have the opportunity to get up or down. Make him comfortable and keep him real quiet.

Well, there were storm clouds rolling in, I was not going to leave him in the yard so I persuaded him to get up and in the house - where he collapsed again. Now he was where he could feasibly fall down the basement stairs. So we looked for gates to put across the doorways so he has only access to the foyer. One gate was in the shed so I went out and got that -- which brought Titan to his feet cuz he needs to be with me. When I came in he was laying in the mud room. This was okay -- there are doors to that room so we don't have to gate off the house or worry about him falling through the gate. We got him bedded down and offered food and water. He did drink but did not eat. I went back to work. (no option).

When I came home 3 hours later there was a pile of black (old blood) vomit at he door. Bless his heart he must have realized he was going to be sick and went to the door. He was not lying on the bed. I went around the corner and he was standing in the laundry room oh So happy to see me -- wiggle wiggle wiggle. He went to the door and insisted he wanted out. I debated -- keep him quiet (He was already up and wanted out. Argue with him or let him out to pee? I let him out and he took three steps and collapsed. Legs sideways like Bambi on ice.

I ran inside-in tears -- and grabbed a dog bed thinking we would be sleeping there, but he was at the bottom of the stairs when I got back, so he had stood up and maneuvered the steps then gone down again. I put the dog bed down there. The sky had cleared so we could sleep outside. He looked so sad. No wiggly tail. No joy in his expression. The change from the morning was horrific. I called the vet clinic that ran fluids and asked if they could transfuse, and they could but not till morning. He needed blood. Call in the morning. (I really did not think we had that long.) I called Larry and asked if he could, but he did not have the anticoagulant needed for the donor blood, but if the clinic could provide that he would do it -- he'd supply the donors. He just needed the equipment. I sat with Titan on the lawn then he rose and started walking. Thinking he needed to piddle I steadied him but he just collapsed again. From where he fell he tried to crawl under the lilac the bushes. My heart sank. He knew. He knew there was not much time.

He never rose again. When my family came down from the dairy barn we built a sling and we carried him inside to this room -- where he and I spent most of our inside time. It is hard not having him on the floor beside me. He laid here, drank some water, leaned on me quite a bit. I held him, curled up around him on the floor, stroking his beautiful face, telling him what a good boy he has always been and that I loved him so so so much. At 1:30 am he started to cry a little, a few whimpers, then he would quiet. He was hurting.



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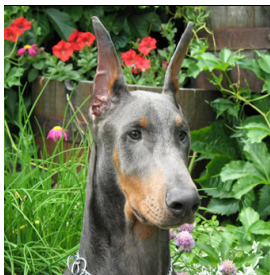
At 3:30 he looked at me and asked for help. He pleaded for help on the road he was traveling. I knew then we were not far from the bridge. I cried into his neck. "Not till morning, baby. Come morning maybe we can get blood into you. If not, Larry will come and we will help. But not till morning. Hang on Baby." By 4:00 I told him it was okay. It was time and we would be okay. I don't know if he understood through my sobs, because this decline came so fast. A day before he looked fine, strong, steady, a little bleeding but his happy self. Then the eye lid thing sent us to the vet and now he was laying in my arms unable to rise, unable to catch his breath. His breathing had gotten more labored all evening. His exhales were forced. But 5:00 he was at that point. He being the 4th that I held as they passed I knew where he was. And I sobbed and sobbed and kept telling him he needed to let go now. It's okay Baby, I love you so much but you need to let go. I stroked and stroked his neck and shoulders. He was such a massive dobe. Ask he opened his mouth as they do, and I knew it might be the last inhale, he did two more and stopped. With my hand resting on his heart the end came... And then the tears got flowed. My wailing had woken my daughter, so she was with me and Titan as well. He was the best best dog. Jim posted a new photo of him, if you get a chance take a look at his pro photo. His elegance and power is apparent. The blood work is still not in. It should be here tomorrow. The vet feels it is Vwd that killed him, but I agree it looks to me like poison. He does not go on adventures, there is no poison around here. There was some poison put out 2 years ago when there was a rat nest in IN my car, but that has long since been cleaned up. But the symptoms look to me poison. The vet disagrees. She took blood right away and ran some tests so perhaps she checked that as well. It was the first question she had. And she said Vwd does not often present this way, but it can. And that so much was going on the left side -- it could be a left side injury that precipitated all this. I am not cutting him open to see that it looked like inside.

Thanks for listening. And thanks for all the well wishes -- it helps so much!

Email # 3 - Results : A different kind of poison. Leukemia, amplified by Vwd. No rat poison.

Thank you all again for all your well wishes. It has helped tremendously. Thoughts of him still make me cry. Laying down for the night is hard, getting my shoes on is hard - because if I put my 'work' shoes on, he would stay laying by the patio door, but if I put my tennies on, he knew I was NOT going to work. He would stand beside me waiting to hear me say, "You want to come along?" and it would be OH JOY! OH Joy ! YES! I want to come along!!! You know that look when your kids ask if they can do something and you don't answer right away - that WELL? look - he would do that. Sometimes I would just look at him and smile - and it would be the same OH JOY! Cause he understood me so well. GOD I miss you Titan!... but today I was able to come home and although still feel the pain, the tears did not flow. I am healing.

Deb



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