

Title: Living With HD

Subtitle: Health

Second Subtitle: #0 By Fraser McGowan 2004

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Summary: Tank (my male CC) started to get lame when he was around 5 months old. By the time he was 6-7 months old he appeared chronically lame to the point where I asked my vet for a referral to a specialist orthopaedic vet.

Within the week we attended the Glasgow University Veterinary College, which is reputed to be one of the best in the country. After some X rays we were told Tank had SEVERE HD and we then discussed the various options open to us. The specialist advised that there were new hips being manufactured in the states that were far superior to those of the past and if we did have to go down that route then these would be the ones to go for. However we were advised that a hip replacement could not be done until Tank was at least 11 months old, as the bones would not fully develop until this point. The biggest blow was when the vet said "be prepared for the worst, being that the hips are so severe (no concave at all on the pelvis – See HD facts on this site) that he might not make it to 11 months".

You can imagine how I felt leaving at this point. Then to my surprise the specialist gave me some advice, which is contrary to all other advice, I've ever heard of, both with HD and large breed pups. I was told to run and walk him off his feet until he was a year old. Give him as much exercise as he could handle, almost literally until he exhausted himself. As you can imagine I was dubious at first but thought what the hell, at least if he doesn't make it to 11 months old he'll have a lot of fun and some good walks in his short life. The idea behind this is that the thighbone would hopefully keep banging into the pelvis while his bones were growing, and still soft, that it may "dent" the pelvis and almost make an artificial socket where the bone was completely flat.

At this stage I contacted the breeder, Russell Robinson, Newcastle, who showed no sign of interest whatsoever. I was not looking for compensation or the like, just some advice and to warn him of the possible ramifications from other pups from the same Sire (Campo Di Cavallo Panther) and Dam (Robinsons Holly).

Not on veterinary advice but through my own research at the time I also decided to change his diet to a BARF (see main feature on diet section) diet.

Also, via a mutual friend I got in contact with someone who produces a herbal remedy to promote joint health in dogs. (www.herbalandhealth.co.uk)

He was also on prescribed drugs from the vet: PLT and Metacalm.

Although we had a lot of fun over the next few months it was sometimes heartbreaking watching how lame he got after exercise. Also, there were many times where I really didn't want to take him out because of his lameness and inability to put one or the other leg down on the ground for any length of time. However, we persevered and gradually his lameness lessened to the point where around 10

months old he showed almost no signs that anything was wrong. At his check up when he was around 11-12 months old the same specialist was surprised to the point he jokingly questioned if it was the same dog.

I took him off the plt at around 7-8 months old, and off the metacalm another month or so after that.

He's now 3 years and 3 months old and walks, runs & plays as well as most other dogs. Having said that there have been times where the lameness has occurred, namely when he hasn't had his herbal supplement for a few days (if I've ran out of it), or when he has occasionally 'knocked' his hips when twisting or falling etc. If this happens I give him the metacalm for a few days which generally puts him right again. I have noticed over the last few weeks that his hips haven't been as good as they were however this may be due to either the cold weather, or a recent fall down a hill he had when out hillwalking. He swims regularly which I believe has helped a great deal.

He absolutely loves to play fetch with sticks etc however I have stopped throwing sticks for him as he is so eager he doesn't watch where he's going when chasing a stick, and the sudden stopping etc when he gets to where it lands wont help his hips too much. Having said that in the last few weeks he's started throwing them himself, then chasing after them.

I am under no illusion that arthritis will have already set in and surgery is certainly a possibility in the future, but for now I have a healthy happy dog who loves his long walks, chasing rabbits and deer, and playing with his other canine pals.

All in all a dramatic change from the puppy, who at 6 months had great difficulty walking.

I'm certainly no veterinary surgeon however if you do have a concern about HD please post any questions or queries on the board and I will give you my thoughts from my own experience.