



# The Retriever

Official Newsletter of the Labrador Education and Rescue Network

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## Fostering Lacey By Jill Miller

Lacey was picked up as a thin, scrawny, fly-bitten stray. She had rope burns on her neck, bald patches, and a general distrust of adults. While she was at the shelter she gave birth to 12 puppies. Two of our wonderful Milwaukee volunteers managed to get Lacey and her crew off "death row" and into foster care until the puppies could be weaned. We had Lacey for 2 months. In that time we worked on many issues with her. The crankiness that she displayed when we first got her mostly went away after she was spayed. The vet discovered what could be the beginnings of a nasty uterine infection that would have made Lacey feel miserable. The rest of the crankiness went away after she discovered that no one was going to hit her or yell at her and that she'd get to eat good food every day. She was terrified of big men with deep voices for a while, but she finally seemed to be better with them, too. Her bald patches, where flies had literally taken chunks out of her, finally grew hair and she put on enough weight so that we couldn't see her ribs. Lacey wasn't the quickest obedience dog I've ever worked with, but she learned "sit", "stay", and how to walk fairly nicely on a leash. She went from a dog that would never look up at me to a dog that would sit perfectly still and gaze up at me for several moments - usually for a treat, but sometimes just because. What stands out in my mind so much is that Lacey is a natural mother both to dogs and to children. When we first got her, she didn't know how to play. My dog willingly taught her how to play and she taught him how to play nicely, just like a mother dog would. We humans were never successful at that. Lacey would also let kids get away with things that she would not tolerate from an adult. It is wonderful to see her with kids - she just looks happy. Lacey was adopted by a wonderful family who wanted a labby personality in a smaller package. She showed no fear of her new dad and was instantly in love with "her" new boy. Within 15 minutes he had Lacey laying down like a pro - something I'm embarrassed to admit I was never able to get her to do! I cried hysterically the day Lacey joined her new family - in fact they almost brought her back because they felt so bad for me! I still miss her, but I know that she's in the best home possible for her, an even better home than what I could give. If I'd kept her, I couldn't have helped other dogs like her. Lacey and I came a long way together and she'll always be a special dog in my heart.

*L.E.A.R.N.'s mission is to assist in the rescue of unwanted Labrador Retrievers by placing them in homes through fostering, adoption and referral. In addition, we strive to provide public education regarding Labrador Retrievers and to promote responsible ownership and the humane treatment of all dogs.*



*Inside this issue...a special feature on foster homes and the role they play* ♦ The costs of rescue ♦ It's Raining Labs!!! ♦ Fostering perspectives ♦ How to potty train your puppy ♦ Should you sleep (or not sleep) with your dog? ♦ What's Blastomycosis? ♦ L.E.A.R.N. joins Petfinder! ♦ Upcoming Events! And more!



## Fostering . . . or, Why LEARN Can Save Labs

Without foster homes, L.E.A.R.N. could not exist. The backbone of the entire organization, foster homes are where rescued labs live, learn, and recover from any physical or mental challenges resulting from their prior “residence.”

Some dogs come from shelters as owner surrenders or unclaimed strays and their stories can at best be conjecture. Others come from situations that exemplify man’s “inhumanity” to animals. Yet others come from a home where there has been a change—for example, the companion becomes ill and can no longer take care of others.

The importance of foster homes can be summarized in a very simple statement:

**More foster homes = More dogs saved**

Each time another home volunteers to foster, another dog can move from the waiting list into a home. As dogs are adopted, more dogs move in. Yet as we foster more and more dogs thanks to more foster homes, we experience:

**More dogs saved = More funds needed**

Here’s where our next challenge comes to play. The more foster homes, the more dogs saved, and the more funds needed to make each rescue complete. Each dog is spayed or neutered (if not already), heartworm tested, and provided with other necessary health care. Increasingly, dogs come to L.E.A.R.N. without a clean bill of health and may need surgeries or other treatment. The most common medical needs are new hips and allergy remedies. Other needs include heartworm treatment and cruciate ligament replacements. While some veterinarians discount their services to help L.E.A.R.N. dogs, the costs still add up quickly.

### How The Financial Costs of Rescue Sum Up

It’s daunting how costs add up, especially when trying to do the right thing for so many dogs in need. Here are a few all too likely scenarios for each dog that L.E.A.R.N. rescues. This is why fundraising continues to be our top priority!

#### Cost Scenarios For Saving One Dog

| <u>Expenses:</u>                             | <u>Typical Scenario</u> | <u>Intermediate Case</u> | <u>Special Needs Case</u> |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Shelter relinquish fee                     | \$50 - \$100            |                          | \$50 - 100                |
| • Spay or neuter*                            |                         | \$60 - \$150             |                           |
| • Heartworm Pills and Test (average/dog)     | \$50 - \$70             | \$50 - \$70              | \$50 - \$70               |
| • Rabies, distemper, kennel cough, vet visit | \$ 40 - \$60            | \$ 40 - \$60             | \$ 40 - \$60              |
| • Hip Replacement                            |                         |                          | \$800 - \$1,200           |
| <b>TOTAL PER DOG</b>                         | <b>\$140 - \$230</b>    | <b>\$150 - \$280</b>     | <b>\$940 - \$1,430</b>    |





## It's Raining Labs!

If you've ever considered fostering a dog, now is the time! In recent weeks L.E.A.R.N. has been flooded with so many labs that the waiting list to get into a foster home is growing faster than our number of foster homes. Some of these labs are at risk of being euthanized because shelters are full and time is running out. L.E.A.R.N. continues to juggle labs that need a space and foster home availability, often having to act fast to save a dog on faith. Sometimes L.E.A.R.N. boards a dog until he or she can be moved to a foster home.

Some people who've inquired about fostering fear that they will become so attached to their foster dog that it will be hard to let go upon adoption. No one claims it's easy, and tears are often shed. However, many more dogs in desperate, life-threatening situations are always eagerly waiting for a foster home. L.E.A.R.N. can quickly provide an appreciative new replacement for every dog that "graduates" to a forever home.

We asked our foster homes to share their perspectives and experiences for the newsletter. Each volunteer told a unique story, but the theme was loud, clear, and consistent: it's really important, it's rewarding beyond words, it makes a tangible difference, and I grow as a person for doing it.

For more information on fostering, please call 847-289-PETS or visit our website at [www.labadoption.org](http://www.labadoption.org). L.E.A.R.N. does not take a dog into foster if it is aggressive or has been known to bite, and L.E.A.R.N. covers all medical expenses.

### Fostering Experiences and Perspectives

*'I am a foster home who fosters on occasion. Since we became an organization, I've probably fostered 10 dogs. Some for a few weeks, others up to a few months. I treat my foster dogs as I would treat my own dogs. I think my biggest problem is letting go when it's time to say good bye. Almost all the dogs I have fostered played a special part in my life. There have been a few dogs that I have fostered who I would have liked to adopt, but I had to think with my brain and not my heart when it came time to adopting them out. My home and budget is big enough for two dogs, three would be pushing it. I have shed many tears but as I tell the families that adopt the dogs, "It only hurts really bad for about an hour after they're gone". Then you realize that you have saved another great dog and that it has gone to the best home possible.'* --Joanne

*'I started rescuing labs as soon as I was married. One was at a McDonald's parking lot for a week and hopped in my car with me. I found a home where he lived the next fourteen years of his life cherished and adored. My husband brought home Zeke, a dog who had lived tied to a tree for six years of his life and was going to be shot. Some of these dogs we rescued made a place in our home permanently while others went to homes where they would be cherished and cared for. Since working with LEARN we have probably fostered 12 dogs. One stayed with us for 7 months, while others were adopted in a few weeks.*

*There are times when a certain dog comes into our foster that will leave a permanent spot on my heart. Barney who it would take me several pages to write about because of the awesome dog he was. He came to us so needy for human contact, but yet frightened and fearful of what might be done to him. For how neglected Barney was, he completely forgave the human race and loved with all the 50lbs of him he could. Indy was the most unattractive elderly dog at the shelter. When I went to her kennel and saw this thin, graying lab/greyhound mix in the kennel, I almost left her. She looked as if she was on her last leg. BUT when the kennel door was opened this gentle senior walked straight to me, leaned against my legs, and looked up at me with the most pleading brown eyes. There was no way I could let her be destroyed just because she was unadoptable due to age. At home to see this dignified girl, prance across the lawn to retrieve a ball, or prance down the road on her walks as if to say, "I just love life" made me realize that fostering her was not a mistake, even if it meant keeping her for the rest of her time. If you sat on the floor next to Indy, she would lay her head on your lap, while I stroked and hugged all the stress and tension of my day away. And yes there is a home for every dog, for Indy was adopted.*

*We foster these unloved, untrained dogs because we want to give them hope. There have been times when I am glad to see some of my fosters go, and there are other times when I can't keep the tears from coming, but I have never regretted opening up my home for a time to a needy lab, and my heart always knows that the best place for them is in their very own home with their very own family.'* --Carmen



## L.E.A.R.N. Joins Petfinder!

L.E.A.R.N. is now one of many rescue groups and shelters across the country whose adoptable pets listed with Petfinder. Anyone can go to [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com) and search through thousands of homeless pets. At present, over 67,000 pets are listed in need of homes. Searches can be done by type of animal, breed, size, gender, and geography. Petfinder can also be used to locate shelters and rescue groups; browse through a resource library to learn more about caring for your pet; post classified ads for lost or found pets, pets wanted, and pets needing homes; and, sign up to be a volunteer at a local shelter or rescue group. This is a great way for L.E.A.R.N.'s labs to be featured across a larger audience of animal lovers!



## Don't Let Sleeping Dogs Lie. . .At least not on your bed, study says

By Robert Preidt *HealthScoutNews Reporter*

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THURSDAY, Feb. 21 (HealthScoutNews) -- Letting Fido sleep with you may set his tail to wagging, but it could leave your tail dragging in the morning. That's the word from a Mayo Clinic sleep expert, who discovered that almost half the pet owners in his study got woken up regularly at night by a beloved pet. And the reasons included the pet's snoring, or making noise moving around at night or taking up too much room in or on the bed.

"People love their pets just like they love their kids, so they will tolerate a certain amount of sleep deprivation from their pets," says Dr. John Shepard, the medical director of the Mayo Clinic Sleep Disorders Center in Rochester, Minn.

Shepard has been in the sleep disorders field for 24 years but never considered the impact of pets on sleep until about a year ago. He was then interviewing a woman about any possible sleep disruptions. She told him she got up every morning at 4 o'clock to let her dog out and spent 15 minutes waiting for the dog to finish its business.

That gave Shepard pause for thought. So between February and September 2001, he surveyed 300 people who came to the center for a routine consultation. He found that 157 of them had pets. Of those, almost 60 percent let their pets sleep in the bedroom.

Cats were more likely than dogs to be allowed in the bedroom and on the bed. But when a dog was allowed in the bedroom, it had a 57 percent chance of cozying up on the bed with its owner. Among these pet owners, 53 percent considered their sleep to be disrupted by their pet to some extent every night. However, only 1 percent felt their sleep was disrupted for more than 20 minutes a night on average. Snoring was reported in 21 percent of the dogs and 7 percent of the cats allowed in the bedroom. (Cats and dogs, however, weren't the only slumber stealers in Shepard's survey. There was a ferret implicated in a series of bite-by-night toe attacks.)

Shepard suspects the pet owners may suffer significantly more sleep disruption from their pets than they admit. But he has no scientific data to prove it. One thing is certain. Pets can be a factor in sleep disruption. Shepard says your sleeping environment -- sound, movement, light, temperature and humidity in the bedroom -- has a significant role in the quality of your sleep.

"Pets are just another one of those environmental factors that does contribute to sleep disruption," Shepard says.

So what to do if Spot or Fluffy is prone to disturbing nocturnal noise emissions or takes control of two-thirds of the bed? Well, the obvious answer is that it's time to consider new sleeping arrangements.

But Shepard says many people are so attached to their pets that they're willing to sacrifice some sleep so that their pet can bunk with them. One of the men in Shepard's survey slept in the same bed with three cats and two dogs. Once in a while, the man's girlfriend managed to find a spot in the bed too. "I don't think I've been able to convince anyone to have their pet leave the bedroom," he says. As for further study on the matter, Shepard says that's probably a dog that won't hunt. "If I sent in a grant proposal to study the effects of pets on sleep, they'd just laugh at me," he says.

### What To Do

For more information about sleep, go to the [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org). You should remember that allowing pets to sleep with you or your children can aggravate asthma and allergies. To learn more, visit <http://allergy.mcg.edu/advice/pets.html>.



Jenny's Potty Training Article



## Enormous Thanks!

The following people have generously donated money, supplies, time, or services to our wonderful rescued Labradors. We could not make it without their help!



# Blastomycosis --There could be a fungus among us

--By Kathleen R. Hutton DVM--

## *Introduction*

Blastomycosis is an infection found in dogs, people, and occasionally cats. It is caused by the fungal organism *Blastomyces dermatitidis*, which is found as a mold in the soil or at room temperatures and as a yeast in tissues or at body temperatures. The mold occurs in sandy, acid soils near river valleys or other waterways. Endemic in Ohio, Mississippi, and St. Lawrence river valleys, the Great lakes region, and along the eastern seaboard, veterinarians report blastomycosis more frequently in the fall.

While any dog may contract blastomycosis under the right circumstances, certain populations are at greater risk. These include the hunting and sporting breeds since their use involves exposure to soil in wet areas, and young adult dogs, which are more likely to be used in hunting or field trials than old dogs or pups. For unknown reasons, male dogs are more likely to contract blastomycosis than females. One study found that, while female dogs may have better survival rates with therapy, they are more likely to suffer relapses than males.

So, while all dogs are susceptible to blastomycosis, those at greatest risk for infection are two-to-four year old intact males of hunting or sporting breeds that weigh 50-75 pounds and are exposed to river valleys or lakes during late summer or fall.

## *The disease process*

Dogs usually acquire blastomycosis by inhaling the spores from the soil into the lungs, where it induces a self-limiting pulmonary infection. Direct inoculation of the spores into the skin through puncture wounds may cause local cutaneous infection. By far, the most common form of blastomycosis seen by veterinarians is the generalized or disseminated form, which spreads via the bloodstream or lymphatic system from the lungs to involve the eyes, brain, bone, lymph nodes, urogenital system, skin, and subcutaneous tissues.

The clinical signs of blastomycosis may vary with the target organs affected and may include one or all of the following: anorexia, depression, weight loss, fever (103 degrees or higher) that doesn't respond to antibiotics, coughing, shortness of breath, exercise intolerance, enlarged lymph nodes, eye disease, or skin lesions that drain bloody or purulent material.

## *Diagnosis*

Diagnosis of blastomycosis involves finding the yeast organism in samples from draining skin lesions or a lymph node. Chest x-rays and a complete blood count (CBC) are important tests but are not diagnostic by themselves. Serum chemistries are usually within normal limits. Fungal titers confirm the diagnosis and help differentiate blastomycosis from histoplasmosis, a related fungal condition with similar signs and geographic distribution.

About 65 percent of dogs diagnosed with blastomycosis do survive. Because the treatment is long, complicated, and expensive with the potential for serious side effects, some owners elect to euthanize affected pets. In treated dogs, survival rates are approximately 85 percent, with up to 25 percent suffering relapses. Dogs with brain or eye involvement have a worse prognosis, and dogs with poor liver or kidney function may not be able to tolerate the necessary medications that must be metabolized by these organs. If an eye is involved, it usually must be removed since eyes don't respond well to therapy and serve as a source of infection.

## *Treatment*

For many years, the standard therapy for blastomycosis has been amphotericin B. It is still the best choice for acute, life-threatening illness, and treated dogs show improvement in three to five days. Amphotericin must be given as an intravenous injection, either as a slow IV drip over several hours or as rapid IV bolus injections, one to three times weekly until a maximum cumulative dose is reached. Rapid injections increase the potential for acute drug reactions, and the drug has a toxic effect on kidney function, which requires close monitoring. The veterinarian may temporarily delay therapy while the kidneys recover from the injury. *(continued on page 7)*

*(Blastomycosis, continued from page 6)*

Ketoconazole given orally twice a day has been effective against blastomycosis. Although it may take 10-14 days to see clinical improvement with this drug, it may be useful in a dog with poor kidney function and a mild form of the disease. Given alone, ketoconazole has a lower cure rate than amphotericin, but when given together, the two drugs work synergistically, allowing veterinarians to use lower doses of amphotericin and minimize the risk of kidney failure as well as promoting a more rapid and complete cure. The side effects of ketoconazole are related to liver toxicity and include anorexia, nausea, and vomiting. It can be harmful to pregnant dogs and may also affect the fertility of male dogs.

Itraconazole is the newest drug used to treat blastomycosis. It is given orally twice a day at first, then once daily for 60-90 days. Like amphotericin, it takes effect quickly, and has the same cure rate as the amphotericin-ketoconazole combination. The side effects are related to liver toxicity, like ketoconazole, with the addition of ulcerative skin lesions and swelling of the legs at the higher dose.

The biggest drawback to itraconazole is the cost, about \$10 per day for a 40-pound dog for the medication alone, about twice the cost of ketoconazole. Because these drugs are dosed on body weight, larger dogs will have comparably larger drug costs. Blood tests and other veterinary services must also be considered in the cost of treatment. Total fees of \$1000 or more would not be unusual.

Blastomycosis is not generally considered a zoonotic disease, meaning one that is potentially contagious to people. If you have a pet with this infection, it indicates that you may be at risk for contracting the disease through a common environmental source such as contaminated soil near a waterway. Since it is the mold form that releases infective spores through the air, you cannot get blastomycosis from the air around your dog who is infected with the yeast form of the fungus.

Recent studies indicate some risk of exposure through penetrating wounds with sharp contaminated objects such as a sharp stick or a dog bite, so good safety and hygiene precautions are indicated. Needless to say, persons with deficient immune systems should not be handling infected dogs.

*(Dr. Hutton wrote this article after we received a request to report about blastomycosis from a reader who lost her Siberian Husky to this fungus disease.)* Copyright 2002 by Canis Major Publications. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Visit <http://www.canismajor.com/dog/> for The Dog Owner's Guide, one of the most comprehensive resources out there on all dog topics. Subscriptions are available and help keep this great website available.



## Fun Upcoming Events!

| <u>When?</u>            | <u>What?</u>   | <u>Where?</u>      |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------|
| • May 25, 11:00 - 3:00  | • Appearance at Petco                                  | • Lake Zurich, IL  |
| • June 2                | • Booth at Mounds Dog Fest                             | • Madison, WI      |
| • June TBD              | • Booth at Winnebago Labrador Retriever Club Specialty | • Beloit, WI       |
| • June 22, 11:00 - 3:00 | • Appearance at Petco                                  | • Lake Zurich, IL  |
| • August 23-24          | • Annual Chicagoland Garage Sale                       | • Chicaco, IL      |
| • August TBD            | • Dogwash at Pine Tree Pet Center                      | • Libertyville, IL |
| • October 19-20         | • Booth at Rockford Family Pet Expo                    | • Rockford, IL     |
| • November 3-4          | • Chicago Pet Expo at Navy Pier                        | • Chicago, IL      |



## We Need Your Help!

Summers are busy stressful times for L.E.A.R.N. Many pets are abandoned or given away as vacations approach. We continue to find more and more dogs in need of rescue, many in desperate need of expensive medical attention. This is placing a huge drain on our finances. Please consider sending us a modest donation of \$10, \$25, or \$50. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your help!

Yes! I want to support the efforts of the Labrador Education and Rescue Network (L.E.A.R.N.) as they rescue stray, abandoned and unwanted Labrador Retrievers and place them in permanent adoptive homes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my check for:

- \$10.00
- \$25.00
- \$50.00
- Other Amount: \_\_\_\_\_



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