

The power of one

One Irish Setter named Darrowby has given hope to many who cannot afford one type of epilepsy medication. One Dalmatian named Emma has given life to a web site and a support group for owners of pets affected by epilepsy. And one Maltese named Stormy has given additional insights into a neurological disease that affects small breed dogs.



Darrowby enjoyed a "powerful life force."

Neurological disorders annually affect a significant number of dogs in the U.S.; diseases such as epilepsy, encephalitis, and spinal disorders can be long-lasting and devastating, not only physically but emotionally and economically.

Mel Krauss, owner of an Irish Setter named Darrowby, knows the challenges of having a dog with neurological disease. "Darrowby," says Krauss, "was an incredible dog in every way." The Irish Setter began suffering from seizures at age six. Initially managed by standard anticonvulsants, the seizures increased in frequency and intensity; at age nine, Darrowby began receiving Keppra (levetiracetam), one of the newer epileptic drugs used to treat humans.

"Keppra did such a tremendous job controlling his seizures that I believe we added at least two more years to his life," says Krauss. "Veterinarians who worked with Darrowby said that they had never seen a dog go through so much yet have such a powerful life force. Darrowby had such a spirit that even with his spinal problems, he was able to run when he wanted to."

Due to the increasing spinal deterioration, Darrowby was euthanized on March 1, 2007. In honor of his pet, Krauss established the "Darrowby Fund" to help other owners pay for Keppra, which can cost hundreds of dollars a month. The owner must meet certain criteria, part of which includes being

a Veterinary Teaching Hospital client under the direction of neurologist Dr. Karen Munana.

Emma was an energetic Dalmatian with penetrating eyes who, because her life intersected with Marion Mitchell's, has helped bring about a change for hundreds, if not thousands, of owners whose dogs have been affected by epilepsy.

"For many years, Emma was known throughout the world as the 'Face of Canine Epilepsy,'" says Mitchell in describing her journey of love and discovery with the Dalmatian. It was the search for the causes and cures of the disease that spurred Mitchell to honor Emma by creating the Canine Epilepsy Resource Center, an online information



Emma: the "Face of Canine Epilepsy."

and support site at www.canine-epilepsy.com.

In addition to providing owners with valuable information and offering emotional support, the site encourages veterinary research. A link on the site details Emma's life with epilepsy and explains that "even though she is now part of the universe, her light still shines into the dark corners of canine epilepsy."

Donations solicited through the site support CVM research evaluating the genetic basis for epilepsy, fund clinical drug studies that target anticonvulsants, and secure diagnostic equipment. The "Emma Memorial Fund" is managed by the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Foundation and all donations are used for epilepsy research, diagnostics, and treatment.

The Maltese came into Chelle Zulick's life like a "little storm," full of energy and power. "Sassy, so very sassy," says Zulick, remembering how, in meeting the pup, an initial nip ensured that her attention would be focused on the little dog that came to be known as Stormy's Sprite.

Unfortunately, Stormy became ill at about age three. After a battery of tests, including an MRI scan and spinal tap, she was diagnosed with an inflammatory brain disease called Granulomatous Meningoencephalitis or GME. This disease is seen in small breed dogs and, to date, does not have a known cause or cure. Medications were prescribed to reduce her neurological symptoms, but after a valiant struggle, Stormy succumbed to the encephalitis disease.

"I never knew that I could love such a brave little dog so much," says Zulick, noting that Stormy lived longer with GME than many of the other patients. She credits the care the dog received from VTH neurology resident Dr. Edward MacKillop for extending Stormy's life.

Zulick hopes that through the Clinical Research, Education and Treatment for Encephalitis (CREATE) Fund, the legacy of her Maltese will live on and that other dogs will benefit. Zulick has information about the

CREATE fund and her life with Stormy on the website www.yorkieangelpatrol.com/gme.htm. Information on canine encephalitis can also be found at www.cvm.ncsu.edu/docs/encephalitis.html.



Stormy waged a long battle against GME.

— Julie Anne Nettifee Osborne, RVT, BS

For more information on any of the funds listed above, contact julie_osborne@ncsu.edu.