

Three Cheers For Princeton!

The Upside of Recognizing Early Indicators of Kidney Disease

By Wendy Carver-Herbert

Princeton turned four this Spring! I'm inspired to share his story as we celebrate his vibrant life and the joy he brings into our home. There have been times that I've wondered if he would make it to four years old, and it's a mystery as to whether he'll make it to age five, eight or 13. You see, Princeton was diagnosed at 11-months old with persistent proteinuria, likely resulting from glomerular disease (a form of kidney disease).

I feel compelled to tell Princeton's story because of the great discussion and helpful information sharing that takes place on the Dalmatian Copper Storage Disease Facebook Interest Group page. I'm encouraged by the increased attention from owners and breeders who are electing to do baseline blood work on their dogs at an early age to identify possible liver issues. With that, I encourage Dal owners to keep kidney disease in mind as well and to make sure that blood work always includes a SDMA test, and remember to do a full urine analysis to monitor urine protein levels.

While I'm a huge proponent of baseline blood and urine analysis at 12-months old, followed by annual work ups (or at a minimum of every couple of years), it's even more important to inform our vets of all the health issues that are cropping up in Dals so they can monitor test results with a critical eye and begin treatment to help prolong their lives.

That's why we caught Princeton's issue at 11-months old. After explaining issues with copper storage and juvenile renal disease in our breed to my vet, we decided to do baseline tests during a visit about another health matter. As a result, she decided that normal, but high values on his SDMA and blood/urine analysis were worth

investigating further with an ultrasound. That ultrasound revealed his kidneys weren't normal.

Ironically, it wasn't until after we met with an internal medicine specialist following the ultrasound that a second urine analysis revealed signs of proteinuria. This set us on a course to eliminate possible underlying causes such as a urinary tract infection, heartworm, lyme disease, environmental poisons, and a host of other diseases. All of



Princeton

Many of us know there's no cure for kidney disease in dogs. Most often it doesn't get diagnosed early because lost kidney function doesn't show up on blood tests until the kidneys are nearly destroyed and a dog is very sick. That is until recently!

There's promising news that the SDMA test, which is offered by IDEXX Laboratory, can identify loss of kidney function much sooner. However, it's my opinion, there may be another indicator for catching early kidney disease in young Dalmatians by monitoring their urine protein/creatinine ratio (UPC), which is determined through lab analysis, not just the Sulfosalicylic Acid Precipitation (SSA) test that is usually done in a vet's

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office and measures protein as trace, 1+, 2+, etc. A UPC analysis is the measurement that definitely identifies proteinuria.

Persistent proteinuria (repeatable on multiple tests over the course of several weeks) is often the best indicator of glomerular disease. I've learned that early detection and management of glomerular disease can increase positive outcomes. However, left unchecked, glomerular disease is known to increase the severity and progression of kidney disease.

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those were eliminated, so the course for his treatment was set with a KD diet (kidney diet low in protein) and 10 mg tablet of Enalapril, twice daily. We now follow-up with blood work, full urine analysis and blood pressure monitoring at least once a year.

It's important to note that glomerular disease cannot be precisely diagnosed without a kidney biopsy. While Princeton is a proud participant in the Dalmatian Renal Disease Research, and we have provided vet records, pedigree, urine and blood samples to researchers, we've decided to hold off on a biopsy.

After conversation with two vet specialists and careful consideration of the risks and benefits of doing the procedure on such a young, vibrant dog we decided to wait. Since we eliminated many other possible causes of proteinuria, glomerular disease is the most likely diagnosis, which was corroborated with information from the analysis report we received after submitting

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his samples for the research. Our decision was influenced by the fact his treatment would likely be the same regardless of knowing the precise diagnosis. I am 100% committed to providing a kidney tissue sample to researchers at some point in his life, even if it's postmortem.

According to this article and supported by my conversations with the researchers conducting the Dal renal disease study, "canine glomerular disease is often associated with chronic kidney disease which may progress very slowly, very quickly, or anything in between. Some dogs live for several years with undetected glomerular disease. The likelihood of such an outcome is far greater with appropriate treatment and monitoring." <http://www.pethealthnetwork.com/dog-health/dog-diseases-conditions-a-z/glomerular-disease-dogs>

I certainly hope and pray this is the case for Princeton. Through treatment, his protein/creatinine ratio (UPC) has progressively come down from a high of 2.97 when first diagnosed, to 0.9 for the past four UA tests (UPC results greater than 0.5 are considered proteinuric), and his SDMA has held steady at 14 ug/dl, which is the highest point of normal. Princeton is a soulful and handsome boy that makes us laugh everyday. I'm grateful for each day I have with him and we're doing all we

can to make sure his medical care and the quality of his life are the best they can be, for however long that will be.

It's also my hope that all breeders are taking proactive steps to educate their puppy owners about these serious health issues, so owners can be better prepared and perhaps take steps to prolong the life of their precious pets if something questionable shows up. Finally, it's my sincerest plea that all breeders take the courageous step of working with their puppy owners to make sure to all kidney-compromised dogs are enrolled in the Dalmatian kidney disease research. By doing so, we may be able to eradicate, or at least limit this

treacherous disease in our beloved breed.

I'd love to create a more dynamic place for sharing on the Facebook, "Dalmatian Renal Interest Group"

page. If you'd like to get more conversation going on the subject and raise awareness about early intervention and driving greater awareness that can support research, please join me! Or, if you'd like to have a private conversation, don't hesitate to reach out to me at collegiatedalmatians@gmail.com.

Do you own a Dalmatian that has been diagnosed with chronic proteinuria or kidney disease?

You can make a difference by participating in the Dalmatian Club of America research on Early Onset Renal Disease. Participation is confidential.

Visit www.thedca.org/studygp and/or www.dcaf.org/research for more information, or contact the lead research investigator:

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