



# Newsletter

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## Client's Stories – Our Benji

Mrs. Paula Brogan

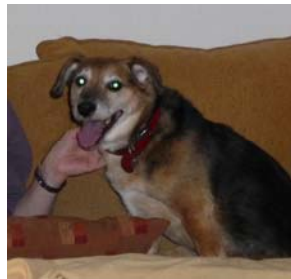


Today My Humans collected me from Earlswood! I've been coming here when they go on their holidays, since I had my operation in 2003. I get lots of attention and good food, (although the nurses do try to make me slimmer!). They take me for walks and help me with the loo, (which My Human does at home).

Oh! I forgot to tell you my name is Benji – I'm always in

a rush and forgetting stuff. Like trying to answer the door-bell at home and forgetting to wait to have my wheels put on!

I hurt my back when I was five, and needed an operation. Unfortunately my back couldn't be fixed, and I can't use my hind legs – so I got a trolley, to help me get about and do Dog Stuff. I forget all my legs don't work – because my



wheels go really fast and I can race My Human to the gate in her slippers every morning, full pelt! I chased a sheep out of the front garden last week, which was great fun!

Some humans say silly stuff when they see me on my wheels, "What a shame about that wee dog!" They think disabled dogs shouldn't be allowed to live – that we've no fun. But they don't

know me. I'll be twelve in August and I do everything able-bodied dogs do; I go to the beach, sail about in a car and play with my two Cat friends at home. My favourite things are chasing the post man, followed by a snooze on the sofa, (after all, I am getting on a bit).

I know it's a Dog' Life – but some-ones' got to do it!



## Choosing a Boarding Kennel



Unless you have a relative or friend who can care for your pet in your own home, holidays away mean you will be looking for a place to put your greatly

loved friend while you are off enjoying yourself.

Some advice gleaned from years of seeing clients and answering this query showed up a few facts.

1. Find a kennel by recommendation and preferably ask to go and see it, even if you do not go, their willingness to do this speaks volumes.
2. Make sure you start looking early because good Kennels get booked up very quickly.
3. Ensure your vaccinations are current and include Infectious Bronchitis (kennel cough). These should

be boosted annually.

4. Be aware that not every pet settles in every kennel. Like ourselves we may love a hotel but a friend may not, for a whole variety of reasons, but usually an animal will settle in well.
5. If they have the facility to walk dogs, that is great, but these can be few and far between. Cats do not require this and are happy to lounge about in their hotel room.
6. If your dog has special feeding

requirements a good kennel will accommodate this but it may cost extra as might a pet on daily medications.

All in all, animals will survive their spell away from you,



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but keep in mind we also have an alternative - house sitters. Many hotels also accept pets which means you may be able to take your pet on holiday with you.

There is also the facility to take pets abroad and bring them home without going through quarantine but only if they have a Valid Pet Passport. Your vet will advise you about all of the requirements but be aware that it takes a few months to complete what is needed and there is an expense involved. Before setting off, always be careful that your pet is comfortable going on long car journeys and will be happy in the climate you might be holidaying in.



# Hip Dysplasia and its Treatment

Desmond Thompson OBE BA MVB MRCVS



Hip dysplasia is an inherited development problem which is very common in large breed dogs over 25kg weight. The Golden Retriever, the

Labrador and German Shepherd are high up on the list of affected animals.

The condition is inherited but fortunately there is a scheme run by the British Veterinary Association and the Kennel Club to control it. All breeding dogs of the commonly affected breeds should be X-rayed at one year of age and their x-rays submitted to the scheme. X-rays are submitted to a panel of experts who score each hip individually the ideal score being 0-0 and the worst possible score is 53-53. Anyone who considers buying a puppy belonging to the commonly affected breeds should ask the breeder two questions - have the parents both

been x-rayed and what were their scores. By doing this it is considerably less likely that the new puppy will have badly affected hips.

It is unusual to be able to recognise the problem in a 6-8 weeks old puppy. In most cases signs of lameness, stiffness or difficulty in getting up and down will begin to show at between 4-8 months. If any of these signs become apparent it is important to take advice as soon as possible because the best treatment available depends on the severity of the condition and the length of time it has been present.

With hip dysplasia there is no prospect of cure because the hips have failed to develop properly. Although cure is not possible, in many cases the situation can be improved to such a degree that many dogs can live a completely normal life with freedom from pain. Depending on the severity of the condition there are three main methods of treatment, conservative, triple pelvic osteotomy and hip re-

placement.

## CONSERVATIVE TREATMENT

The objectives of treatment for any disease are to achieve the best possible resolution with the minimum interference and/or minimum medication. For this reason if the degree of lameness and stiffness, and the degree of hip abnormality on x-ray, are relatively small then by restricting exercise many dogs will be able to manage very well. If with conservative treatment there is little improvement within a few weeks it is best not to persevere for long but opt for surgery.

## SURGICAL TREATMENT

With severe abnormality and clinical signs the preferred option for dysplastic dogs is to carry out a triple osteotomy at the earliest age possible. This is major surgery and is a question of changing the shape and alignment of the pelvis in such a way that the alignment of the hip joint is significantly improved and the dog can manage much better. Pro-



vided it is done before arthritic changes develop the results with triple os-

teotomy are very good

It is not often that it will be beneficial to carry out a triple osteotomy after 12 months of age as if there is significant stiffness and/or lameness it is likely that there will be osteoarthritis present and unlikely that a triple osteotomy will improve the situation. In these cases the best treatment may well be total hip replacement which is now available in the Province with excellent results.

Although both surgical options can involve a significant degree of expenditure it is likely that the dog will be able to lead a completely normal life without any drugs. Ideally, if all breeders availed of the KC / BVA Hip Dysplasia Scheme the incidence of this disease would be very markedly reduced.

# Aqua Treadmill

The new "aqua treadmill" at Earlswood is an effective underwater



treadmill system that provides an aid to reducing pain and improving the quality of life for our patients - your pets. It utilises the properties of water to mini-

mise damage and inflammation to soft tissue and maximise functional training.

The principles and properties of water that achieve this are density, buoyancy, viscosity, resistance, hy-

drostatic pressure and surface tension. These properties allow active muscle contractions to take place with minimal pressure in the bone and joint.

The benefits are many including a reduction in pain and an improvement in psychological well being. Limb usage is facilitated allowing rapid recovery after surgery, illness, trauma or debilitation.

We can also achieve an increase in the patient's strength and agility with improved muscle function and aid joint range of motion. All in all the treadmill allows an animal a more rapid return to normal function.

Patients which would benefit from using the treadmill unit include those suffering from osteoarthritis, cranial

Siobhan Menzies BVM&S MRCVS LFHom (Vet)

cruciate ligament repair, possible operative fractures, hip dysplasia, excision arthroplasty, patella surgery, neurological conditions and tendonitis.

Contraindications to use of the treadmill unit are open wounds, surface infections, cardiac failures, severe respiratory dis-



ease and diarrhoea.

## Nurse Clinics

For Free Veterinary Nutrition Advice visit our Registered Nurse Clinics and take time to discuss a programme that best suits you

## Meet our Staff



**Charlene McIver BSc** joined Earlswood two years ago following completion of her Marketing Degree at Jordanstown. Having always owned a pet and loved animals, it

seemed natural to pursue a role which could

combine her love of pets and her customer service background. Since joining the front office team as Receptionist, Charlene, in addition to her reception duties, has enthusiastically taken on responsibility for the weekly Belfast Newsletter newspaper Vets slot, updating the Company's Web-

page, the production of the quarterly in-house newsletter and is currently working on a new hospital brochure. Charlene is currently studying for the Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA) qualification regarding the dispensing of animal medications.