

# ***SHEPHERD TALES***

**May 2008**

**GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB**



*of Wisconsin*  
**INC.**

**Our Aim . . . "Shepherds WELL BRED . . . WELL TRAINED."**



Best Newsletter  
1963 - 1975 - 1983  
Fourth Place  
1997  
Fourth Runner-Up  
1981 - 1982  
Honorable Mention  
1973 - 1974 - 1978 - 1987 - 1994 - 1995

Do Not Forget To Visit the Club's  
Website at: [www.gsdcw.com](http://www.gsdcw.com)  
for regular updates and special  
announcements.  
web masters: Scott & Cheri Antony  
[webmaster@gsdcw.com](mailto:webmaster@gsdcw.com)

# SHEPHERD TALES

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GSDCW, INC.

MAY 2008

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**ADVERTISING:** 1st puppy ad is free (half page)

Christmas Ads are the same price as below

Half page ad is \$7.50

Full page ad is \$15.00

Breeders Directory \$30.00 per year (due every March)

Business Card Page (runs for 1 year): \$30.00

# May 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 Training	3 Training
4 Training	5 Board Meeting 7:30 pm	6 Training	7	8	9 Training	10 Training
11 Club Match Mother's Day	12	13 Training	14	15	16 Training	17 Training
18 Training	19	20 Meeting 7:30 pm	21	22	23 Training	24 Training
				<i>Shepherd Tales Deadline May 23rd</i>		
25 Training	26 Memorial Day	27 Training	28	29	30 Training	31 Training

*See back page of the tales for the schedule and times of classes!*



**Danielle Birdeau  
Sharon Golden  
Melanie Kusch & granddaughter Ashley  
Cathy Los  
Sandy, Ron & Alexis Radtke  
Dennis Smeiska**

**answered the call to help  
instructor Cheri Antony  
on the morning of Saturday April 5th  
set-up equipment for the summer agility classes.**

**THANK YOU**

**\*\*\*\*\***

# **INSTRUCTORS**

**Next Meeting  
Saturday May 24  
at 1:00 pm**

**Please plan to attend!  
Cathy Los, DOT**

**\*\*\*\*\***



By Joe Ziino

On Sunday March 30th, we visited the Meadowmere Assisted Living Center in Mequon. It was a pleasant afternoon as we performed for about 30 residents and staff bringing a little joy to the community along with promoting the excellence of our German Shepherds.

For those of you who have never attended one of our programs, we typically start our demonstrations with an overview of how we train our “friends”, at the same time providing the audience with an entertaining program. Our program consists of general healing as a group, followed by jumping exercises from open dogs and utility work from our UD dogs. Additionally depending upon the size of the area we are working in, we perform some modified agility exercises and anything else we can think of to present our “four legged friends” in the best light to the community.

On this Sunday, we started off doing some therapy work, socializing the dogs and then went into our obedience-training program. We focused on the training for beginners and then introduced our more experienced friends. We mixed our experienced dogs with the young ones during long sits and downs, which many times are interesting especially with me running around them trying to make our dogs break. Surprisingly, the young dogs don't do badly on this exercise, which shows they have a lot of stability and confidence or maybe they think it's humorous to watch me run around..

I would like to thank everyone participating for coming out this day.

Participating Members:

Matt Lison, Willow	Rick Walen, Bear
Ethel Forster, Lexi	Sandy Radtke, Jayda
Nancy Bersch, Macy	Dave & Angela Tojek Simba & Henry
Dennis Kratz, Chloe	Christin Kratz & Tony Damato, Bear
Steve & Phyllis Griffin, Streicher	Joe & Marla Ziino, Molly, Peter

**COME JOIN US AT OTHER UPCOMING PETS EVENTS**



By Joe Ziino

On Sunday April 13th, we had the opportunity to put on a demonstration at the Veteran Administration Hospital in their auditorium. This was our first visit to the VA Hospital center in over 10 years and our first inside the hospital complex itself. From the response of the activities director; we may be back next year.

A few of our four legged friends weren't real happy with the elevator ride to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, but once they got on solid ground they were their normal happy and energetic selves. We had a good turnout of dogs and handlers for this event as we presented our demonstration of obedience and agility.

Our program started with an overview of The German Shepherd with all of our dogs together on the stage. We then proceeded to demonstrate how we train our "friends", at the same time hopefully providing the audience with an entertaining program. Our program demonstrated the different levels of training with general healing on leash, followed by jumping exercises from open dogs and utility work from our UD dogs. We followed our training program with an agility demonstration. Although the narrow high stage created a few nervous moments for our dogs, our four-legged friends as usual did a great job at this event demonstrating their obedience and agility prowess, along with providing some good therapy work before and after the demonstrations.

Thanks Rick Whalen for coordinating our return to the VA.

Participating Members, VA Hospital:

Nancy Bertsch,	Macy	Phyllis & Steve Griffin,	Streicher
Dave, Angela Tojek	Henry, Simba	Paulette Gallatin,	Zeta
Joe & Marla Ziino	Peter	Matt Lison,	Willow
Ethel Forester,	Lexi	Rick Whalen,	Bear
Danielle Birdeau,	Konrad, Barkley	Dennis Kratz,	Bear, Chloe
Lyle Lubenow,	Chuck	Patti Thor	
Jolene & Jack Zimdars,	Elsa, Brandi		



## *P.E.T.S.*

# Memorial Day Parade

## Menomonee Falls

Monday May 26<sup>th</sup>: 9:00 a.m.

We'll meet at Diane Stefonich's home at 9:00, and walk to the parade start point. As always, we party afterwards at Diane's house. Bring a dish to pass.

Address: N88 W15030 Cleveland Ave  
Menomonee Falls  
262-251-8325

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## Nursing Home Demo

Sunday June 15th, 2:00 PM Obedience, Agility  
Therapy Mt Carmel Nursing Home  
5700 W. Layton Ave.  
Milwaukee

This is our annual Father's Day event put on for the residents and guests at Mt Carmel. We typically are entertaining between 50-100 people. The demo will be in outdoors inb the courtyard, (if raining it will be moved indoors).

Contact Diane Stefonich, Carol Lumley or Joe Ziino if you have questions:  
262-251-8325 414-321-8174 920-907-1154

Attention all club members  
We need your donations!

## RUMMAGE SALE at the GSDCW

Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>  
9 am – 4 pm  
rain or shine!

Clean out your closets & basements. Donate your clean, unwanted items to the club to support this GSDCW fundraiser.

100% of all proceeds will go to the club.

Please bring your priced items to the club on Tuesday, June 24<sup>th</sup> from 10 am – noon or 6 pm – 9 pm

All unsold items will be donated to charity.

If you have any questions,  
call Maureen Young @ 262-965-3234 or  
Vicki McCutchan @ 262-662-2410

# Thank You

**April 19th started out a bit over cast but it didn't stop the dedicated people from showing up at the club to get the place looking in tip top shape.**

## **Thank you once again to:**

Mike Schnepf

Pam Stoesser

Sharon Golden

Tim Brown

Danielle Birdeau

Gene Birdeau

Ron & Camille Labinski

Dennis Smeiska

Carol Lumley

Kathy & Claude Bloskey

Angela Tojek

Diana & Andria Hoppe

Melanie Kusch

&

Ashely

Here are a few pictures that I was able to get sorry it wasn't everyone!



# German Shepherd Dog Club of Wisconsin PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

As discussed at previous meetings, there are two bylaw changes recommended by the board to the membership. As stated in Article VIII, Section 1,

“The bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the regular members present in person at any meeting or at a special meeting of the members called for that specific purpose, provided however that All proposed amendments shall be filed with the secretary at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting at which said amendment(s) are to be considered. A copy of same, together with a notice of the meeting, must be mailed to each regular member at least twenty (20) days in advance of said meeting.”

A consensus of the members present at the April general membership meeting interpreted this passage to mean that a notice placed in the TALES and mailed to each member with sufficient notice, is in compliance. The vote on these issues is scheduled for the JUNE general membership meeting.

## FIRST:

Our Treasurer, Pam Stoesser, prepared a detailed report of the club income and expense, by category, history. Our fixed income, approximately 46.1% of the total, falls short of our expenses, approximately 49.6%. We are currently running a deficit of approximately \$200. /month. As we know with our families' budget, all our costs are rising. The club is finds itself in the same position. Therefore:

## CURRENTLY:

### ARTICLE IV-DUES

#### Section 1-Membership Dues

- A. Annual dues are \$60.00 for Single Membership; \$72.00 for Family Plan Membership.....

## PROPOSED:

### ARTICLE IV-DUES

#### Section 1-Membership Dues

- A. Annual dues are \$78.00 for Single Membership; \$96.00 for Family Plan Membership.....

## SECOND:

The Board is proposing that the appointed position of Show Secretary be changed to Shows Coordinator to reflect the current environment. Our Club needs to distribute the workload of several shows per year among more members and yet maintain continuity between multiple Show Secretaries. In order to do that, the Board believes the GSDCW needs to focus on coordination, training, and documentation of the various show activities. Therefore:

CURRENTLY:

ARTICLE V-Government

Section 1. Management.

The control and general management of the affairs of the club shall be vested in the Board of Directors. The Board shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Historian, and five (5) elected Directors. The Show Secretary, .....

PROPOSED:

ARTICLE V-Government

Section 1. Management.

The control and general management of the affairs of the club shall be vested in the Board of Directors. The Board shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Sectary, Treasurer, Historian, and five (5) elected Directors. The Shows Coordinator...

Again, these proposed changes will be voted on at the June General Membership Meeting provided we have a quorum of members present at that time. This is your club, and these are issues important to you as a member. Please come to voice your opinion and cast your vote at the JUNE membership meeting. Also, please feel free to ask questions of the Board and Officers to clarify any doubts you may have.

Thank you

Nancy Bertsch, Secretary.

## *MESSAGE FROM THE HISTORIAN*

### *MAY 2008*

Due to time constraints this month, wins will not be published. All wins that have been received will be published in the *June 2008 Tales*. It is encouraging to see the quantity and quality of wins being submitted!!! Please keep submitting wins and remember the following:

- Conformation wins must be submitted with a catalog. If you are sharing a catalog with other club members, please indicate this on your form. Additionally, it is easiest if all members sharing the catalog submit win forms at the same time.
- Please fill in the sections of the win form completely.
- I prefer that you submit one win per sheet, as this makes processing the wins easier for me. I have been finding that information is often missing when multiple wins are submitted on one form.
- Please use separate win forms for each of the venues (e.g. conformation, obedience, rally, agility, other awards)
- To qualify for club points, wins must be submitted within 60 days of the event.
- If your dog has earned a title, please submit a picture with your win or a picture will not be published. If you have previously submitted a picture of your dog and you would like me to use that picture, please indicate this on your form.
- If you find errors in the Historian Report, please notify me immediately.
- If you are sending win forms to me via email, please submit the forms as PDF attachments or Microsoft Word attachments. DO NOT paste the win form into the body of the email. Electronic versions of the win forms can be found on the club website ([www.gsdcw.com](http://www.gsdcw.com))

If you have questions about submitting wins, please feel free to contact me. I am generally at the club on Tuesdays and Sundays.

E-mail: [historian@gsdcw.com](mailto:historian@gsdcw.com)  
Phone: 262-662-0720

Thank you,  
Danielle

# Tuesday Morning Obedience Training

Tuesday morning classes have started again!!

Intermediate thru Novice

10:00 am

Classes are Outside

Make sure to dress for the weather

Questions: call Mary Pluta

(414) 481-5856

## CLUB BANDANAS

have your dog dress for parades and demos  
or any time to proudly tell everyone

that they belong to

The German Shepherd Dog Club of Wisconsin!

Now available for purchase from the supply cabinet  
\$3.00 each

## WHAT IS A FUTURITY ?

THIS YEAR ON SUNDAY, JUNE 16TH, THE GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB OF WISCONSIN WILL HOST THE MIDWEST "REGIONAL FUTURITY". IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO SEE MANY ANIMALS FROM VARIOUS BLOODLINES, AT VARIED STAGES OF THEIR MATURITY, ALL IN ONE SHOW. THESE ENTRIES WILL COME FROM ILLINOIS, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, IOWA AND WISCONSIN. THESE STATES MAKE UP THE # 5 REGION "MIDWEST". THERE WILL BE ENTRIES FROM OTHER STATES AS WELL.

THE STATES MAKING UP THE MIDWEST AREA ARE WHERE THE LITTERS MUST BE NOMINATED BY THE BREEDERS; BUT, YOU MAY EXHIBIT THE ANIMAL IN ANY REGIONAL FUTURITY, 9 REGIONS IN ALL, WHERE EVER YOU CHOOSE. MOST EXHIBITORS MAKE THEIR CHOICE ON WHERE THEY WILL EXHIBIT ON WHO THE JUDGE IS FOR THAT FUTURITY. IN ORDER FOR THE LITTER TO BE NOMINATED, THE BREEDER MUST BE A MEMBER OF THE GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB OF AMERICA. THE BREEDER RECEIVES THE ENTRIES AND, IN TURN PASSES THEM ON TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE PURCHASED ON OF THEIR PUPPIES.

CLASSES FOR THE FUTURITY ARE AS FOLLOWS: JUNIOR DOGS, INTERMEDIATE DOGS, AND SENIOR DOGS. THE SAME CLASSES ARE OFFERED FOR BITCHES. THEY ARE PLACED 1ST THROUGH 4TH IN EACH CLASS, WITH THE 1ST PLACE WINNERS COMING BACK IN FOR "FUTURITY MALE" - "FUTURITY BITCH", AND THEN THOSE TWO ANIMALS COMPETE FOR "BEST IN FUTURITY" AND "BEST OF OPPOSITE". THESE "BEST IN" ANIMALS THEN GO ON TO THE "NATIONAL'S" AND COMPETE AGAINST ALL THE OTHER REGIONAL WINNERS. THE BEST MALE IS NAMED THE "FUTURITY VICTOR" AND THE BEST FEMALE "FUTURITY VICTRIX", (AS YOU MAY KNOW, A MALE "CH. STONEMAY'S UECKER" FROM OUR CLUB) WAS "FUTURITY VICTOR" IN 1994.

THE "MATURITY" SECTION OF THE SHOW IS MADE UP OF THE OLDER ANIMALS, AND THE CLASSES ARE: JUNIOR MATURITY AND SENIOR MATURITY - DOGS AND BITCHES. IN ORDER TO SHOW IN THE MATURITY, THE ANIMALS MUST HAVE BEEN ENTERED IN THE PREVIOUS YEARS FUTURITY, NOT NECESSARILY SHOWN, BUT ENTERED. PLACINGS ARE 1ST THROUGH 4TH, AND THE FIRST PLACE WINNERS COMPETE FOR "BEST IN MATURITY" AND "BEST OF OPPOSITE". THE SAME PROCEDURE AS IN THE FUTURITY WINNERS CLASS. THESE REGIONAL WINNERS ALSO GO ON TO THE NATIONALS AND COMPETE FOR "MATURITY VICTOR" AND "MATURITY VICTRIX", (A WISCONSIN BITCH "CH. FRENCH PASTRY" WAS A MATURITY VICTRIX AT THE NATIONAL'S).

Original article by: Donna Schacht



# Canine

## *Social Graces*

Things dogs do that may offend other dogs

by Roxanne Hawn

Imagine you're a perfectly nice dog out for a walk. You're on leash, minding your own business, when you spot another dog barking his head off and dragging his owner toward you. Alarms go off in your head. You're scared—even though the dog is about

the same size as you are. You think, "That dog is out of control. He doesn't know the rules."

You look for an escape route, but you're trapped by your leash. Heart pounding, you send signals to the other dog that scream "Go away!" You

lick your lips, turn your head away, and keep walking.

The other owner loses his grip on the leash, freeing his dog to bomb straight for you. "Don't worry," the man yells. "He's friendly!"

The dog slams into you. He throws a front leg over your back and slobbers all over your neck. You show your teeth, but he doesn't back off. You swing your bottom into him and move away, but he pounces again. So you spin to face him, snapping and snarling. Suddenly, everyone is yelling at you, and you don't know why.

"He just wanted to play," the man says as he drags away his dog, who is still barking and straining to reach you.

### WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS BEHAVIOR?

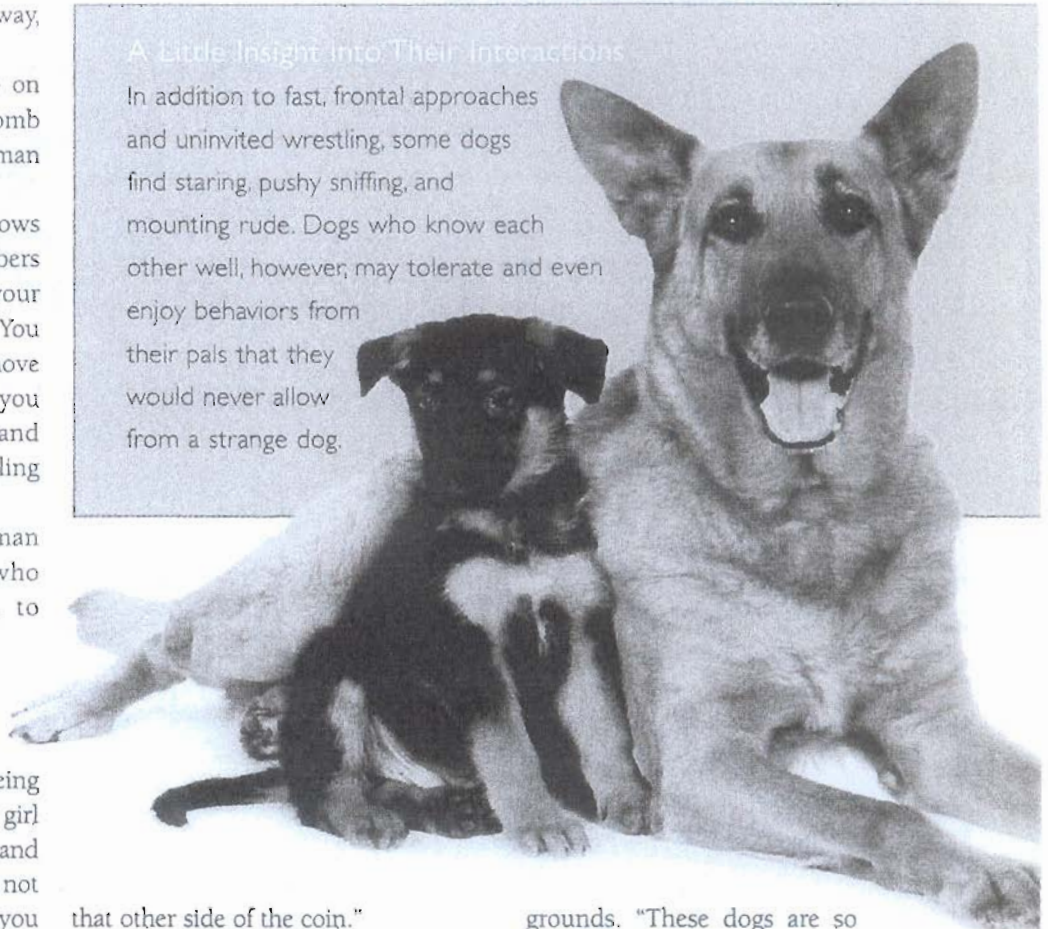
If it's hard to tell which dog was being rude, imagine the first dog is a little girl and that a strange person raced up and started hugging and kissing her. "It's not a gesture that's OK with anybody you just met on the street," explains longtime dog trainer Suzanne Clothier. It's the same, she says, with dogs. Proper social interaction deals with the use of space, the speed of entering a space, and the cues that say contact is or isn't OK.

"There is this misconception that 'Oh, well, they're dogs. They'll work it out,'" she says. "By and large, they do. However, it can go badly, and when it does, it can be unnecessarily uncomfortable."

Some dogs—and their owners—love such exuberant, determined dogs. Other dogs, however (especially shy ones or those bred for herding), may take huge offense and even develop lifelong problems after just a single bad experience. "If I had a nickel for every dog who's been horribly sensitized to other dogs to the point she was just miserable in public and needed a tremendous amount of training to get through it . . ." Clothier says. "I wish people could see

### A Little Insight into Their Interactions

In addition to fast, frontal approaches and uninvited wrestling, some dogs find staring, pushy sniffing, and mounting rude. Dogs who know each other well, however, may tolerate and even enjoy behaviors from their pals that they would never allow from a strange dog.



that other side of the coin."

What's OK for your dog might not be OK for someone else's pet. "So, if we really want to be 'dog lovers,'" Clothier says, "then we need to stop and ask what's appropriate so that we never inadvertently cause another dog distress."

### WHERE IT STARTS

Clothier has spent 30 years encouraging the revolution to positive, not punitive, dog training. Yet she wonders if training slides into permissiveness in many households, where dogs learn they get whatever they want whenever they want it, without seeking permission or first offering an appropriate behavior (such as sitting).

Sue Conklin, a dog trainer and blogger known as The Puppy Nanny, agrees and has noticed a recent increase in rude canine behavior. She points to retractable leashes, dog parks, and doggy daycares as breeding

grounds. "These dogs are so conditioned that they can go play with everybody they see," she says. "I go to the local dog park just to watch, and I see dogs jumping and barking to get inside, then being unleashed to play, which rewards them for that behavior. So, when they're on a walk and see another dog 50 feet away, the dog starts jumping and barking. Why? Because the dog has learned that that's how he gets to play with other dogs."

### HOW TO FIX IT

Always asks permission before allowing your dog to approach another. This is easier if the following training is in place:

- Train your dog to approach other dogs only with permission.
- Train your dog to sit calmly as other dogs pass by, feeding many small treats in quick succession so that

Appropriate Dog Behavior: What to Look For

Lindsay Wood, training and behavior manager for the Humane Society of Boulder Valley in Colorado, spends a lot of time managing dog-to-dog interactions. She watches for body language that shows dogs are interacting appropriately when they first meet:



- Relaxed bodies and faces on approach
- Wiggly bottoms or at least neutral tail positions (not too high, not tucked to belly)
- Curved body motion as the dogs get close
- Brief face-to-face greeting that quickly becomes an investigation of the head and rear
- Continual movement by both dogs during investigation
- Quick segue into play or an amiable parting of ways

During play, Wood looks for these indicators that things are going well—no matter how rough the play may seem to us:

- Activity shifts, where dogs move from one type of play (boxing, jaw wrestling, chasing, tug) to another
- Role reversal, where dogs take turns being on the bottom or being chased
- Atmosphere cues, where dogs use play bows, happy play faces, and bouncy or inefficient movement to indicate “whatever I do next is playful”

your dog focuses on you. (This works for playful dogs, but it's often used as a coping strategy for fearful ones too, so if you see a dog pulled aside, do not approach.)

- Honor dog body language, and decline or break off any matchups if either dog appears uncomfortable or responds badly. We don't

like everyone we meet, and neither do dogs.

If you'd like help training your dog, your veterinarian may recommend a trainer or animal behavior expert who is suitable for your dog and her situation.

\*\*\*

Ultimately, Clothier counsels us to remember that “even though our dog may be the world's biggest love bunny and wouldn't hurt a flea, other dogs may have a different background and different needs.” HP

*Roxanne Hawn is a professional writer based in Golden, Colorado. She and her border collie, Lilly, enjoy agility training together.*

## MEGAESOPHAGUS

by Peg A. McIntyre

There I sat with my Gordon Setter, momentarily paralyzed, as our veterinarian explained the diagnosis, “your dog has Megaesophagus,” and “there is no cure.” In fact, the doctor continued, “we understand very little about this disorder”. So began my mystifying discovery of and challenging attempt to resolve the symptoms of this little-known disorder, which, among others, also affects our beloved German Shepherd Dog breed.

The difficult-to-diagnose symptoms of canine Megaesophagus (Mega-E) can appear during any life stage. Megaesophagus literally means “enlarged esophagus,” but there may be other factors involved, such as foreign body blockage, strictures, dysmotility disorder, or Persistent Right Aortic Arch (PRAA). At one time experts thought that congenital Mega-E only surfaced during weaning and could either affect only one pup or the entire litter. Although true in severe cases, a mild case may not appear until months later as the disease progresses. Typically, doctors diagnose the idiopathic Mega-E in mid-to-senior years. Though the specific cause remains uncertain, it sometimes surfaces after an injury or exposure to toxic substances. Mild cases often take years to evolve and usually appear as the culmination of unmistakable symptoms. The key symptom is regurgitation. Food and/or water will roll back out of the mouth and was not able to reach the stomach. Sometimes a diagnosis occurs only after the discovery of aspiration pneumonia.

Damage or malformation of the sphincter muscle at the top of the stomach may cause regurgitation. When healthy, this sphincter quickly opens and closes during a swallow, and keeps the swallowed contents in the stomach. Peristalsis, the wavelike muscle contractions that propel food from the mouth to the stomach immediately following a swallow, might be malfunctioning. In either of these cases the food may sit in the esophagus for hours or even days. In some cases the enlarged esophagus may form a pouch that holds ingested food within the esophagus where it putrefies. Consequently the dog’s blood chemistry may change along with further organ damage; and the resulting malnutrition, loss of energy, and dehydration eventually inhibit the dog’s ability to thrive. Thus, a life-threatening case of aspiration pneumonia can quickly evolve, as food or water becomes aspirated into the windpipe and lungs where infection takes hold. One little cough often turns into an emergency and eventually a diagnosis of Mega-E.

### **What to look for?**

A dog that always seems to be hungry, one who is not gaining weight and is rapidly growing thinner, and one who regurgitates (passive act, little if any stomach muscle involvement) minutes to hours after eating, may be afflicted. A regurgitated food bolus may be funnel-shaped (often a telltale sign). Sometimes the dog may be able to hold food down but will regurgitate water along with a slimy mucous. The dog may seem to have difficulty swallowing, or you may detect a clicking noise as he moves. Additionally, the dog may stretch his neck out as far as he can reach or elevate himself during rest and play, and his breathing patterns may seem unusual – such as puffing the cheeks upon expiration. These dogs do not sleep well because the lower esophageal sphincter loosens as the rest state begins, and stomach acids seep up, causing discomfort and a burning sensation from hydrochloric acids pooling within the esophagus – this is also how erosive esophagitis occurs.

## Living with Megaesophagus

Some lifestyle changes such as those listed below can make many cases manageable:

- Place the dog in a vertical (90-degree, not elevated) position for feeding and maintain this posture for at least 20 minutes after each meal. (This allows gravity to help the food flow.)
- Feed multiple, smaller portioned meals (four to six times daily). In the majority of cases blended food with a more liquid consistency (like slurry) works best, but sometimes soft food formed into a small meatball-like shape manages to pop down and stay down more easily.
- Because many of the affected dogs have difficulty keeping water down and, thus, rarely drink water, offering solidified water (unflavored gelatin blocks) works as does providing small quantities of water apart from meals. Do both to help prevent dehydration.
- If possible encourage/teach the dog to sleep on an incline (as opposed to their normal instinct to curl up or lay very prone). Often a bolster pillow or bed or very large stuffed toy can be used to accomplish this. This will help alleviate the rest time regurgitation episodes/symptoms.
- Multiple daily sessions of coupage (burping) can be effective. Coupage is rhythmic tapping of the chest cavity on each side for about ten minutes every hour or so, and specifically during/after meals, to loosen phlegm or food particles that could be lodged and help move the food down into the stomach.
- Keep a consistent schedule and daily journal.

The disease can become progressive in nature; the progression and symptom frequency vary. Mildly affected dogs may have extended life spans with a much greater quality and duration of life after implementing appropriate treatment and lifestyle changes. Scheduling life around the multiple feeding schedule, "burping" (coupage), and rest times could be a daunting challenge, but it is now common knowledge that many of the dogs are now living three to eight years post diagnosis as a direct result of these regimens.

### Medication Options

Many Mega-E dogs seem to also suffer from food allergies and may have trouble digesting certain types of proteins, carbohydrates or fats. In some, grasses, grains and saturated fats seem to be of a particular concern. In others, high fiber content may be a problem. Offering high quality, pharmaceutical grade omegas (such as salmon oil) can be beneficial if the dog can tolerate the addition in his/her nutrition plan. It is my hope that more veterinarians will refer clients to nutritionists for evaluation as well as allergy testing, even in situations where it does not seem to fit the case.

Acid inhibitor medications may be helpful, but they will not reverse the condition. Other than heavy doses of broad-spectrum, triple antibiotic therapies lasting a month or longer should there be even a hint of aspiration pneumonia, I eventually accepted that western medicine could only provide temporary solutions. For day-to-day maintenance I elected to provide fresh wholesome nutrition, studied nutritive herbs, and used traditional chiropractic, VOM\*, and massage therapies. Others are reporting good results with acupuncture or acupressure. CAM\*\* therapies should be given equal consideration to traditional medicine, and once the correct combination is established for a particular dog, symptom response will realize heightened possibilities. Tube feeding should be considered to rest the esophagus as needed.

Many are reporting increased success by implementing nebulizer treatments. Nebulization is used during any bout with Aspiration Pneumonia, should it occur. Interestingly, many are realizing that daily nebulization helps to keep AP totally at bay.

In some cases an underlying cause may be at play, so it is imperative that a specialist examine your dog and perform a thorough diagnostic workup. Over forty different disorders can contribute to a case of Mega-E. The most common contributing conditions seem to be: Addison's disease, Myasthenia Gravis, Gastroenteritis, IBD (Inflammatory Bowel Disease), bloat (GDV)<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, Laryngeal Paralysis, Pancreatic Insufficiency, Polyneuropathies, and PRAA. Hiatal and Diaphragmatic Herniations, though rare, often may be missed in the diagnosis, especially if simple radiographs were the only diagnostic tool. These disorders can contribute to the severity of symptoms. Fortunately, surgeries are possible in these instances and often the Mega-E symptoms become increasingly mild post surgery.

## **Heritability**

Over the past decade, growing scientific evidence suggests that genetics and breed predilection play an important factor in the frequency and severity of the disorder. Often breeders believe if they cull the one apparently affected pup, and the rest appear non-symptomatic, they are not affected. Unfortunately a dog that may not appear to be affected; and, in fact, never shows any recognizable symptoms, can carry defective DNA. Some theorize that some young dogs may outgrow the ailment; and as they mature the immature, musculature and neurons that control peristalsis also mature and strengthen. While this might be true, others will progressively worsen no matter what modality or combination of modalities is tried.

Currently, no definitive genetic test exists to identify afflicted dogs, carrier dogs or even dogs without the disease, but most experts believe the illness to be genetic or congenital in origin. Because of their previous experience with and knowledge of the numbers affected in other breeds demonstrating genetic predilection, most veterinarians discourage future breeding of parents or siblings of the afflicted dogs.

Because of my experiences, it has become my mission to educate the dog community about this disorder. A specialist at Texas A&M told me they would need forty to fifty affected Gordon Setters and an equal number of unaffected dogs in order to study the genetics within the breed. I pray there will never be that many affected, but, progress will never be made if we foolishly believe Mega-E is not a potential threat to the health of the breed. Research cannot happen without the collection and storing of DNA samples, and, therefore, the Gordon Setter CHIC DNA Repository is actively seeking blood sample donations. Please visit <http://www.caninehealthinfo.org> for further information. There is also Gordon Setter specific information on the TarTan Gordon Setter website, <http://www.tartangsc.org/health-chic-dna.html>.

I hope this article will touch your hearts and reach far and wide within the dog community. I have spoken with many people from other breeds, and unfortunately Megaesophagus is making a strong, expressive statement with increased frequency. It is heart-wrenching that so much damage can be done to our beloved breed in just a generation or two.

- \* VOM Veterinary Orthopedic Manipulation
- \*\* CAM Complementary Alternative Medicine
- \*\*\* GDV Gastric Dilatation & Volvulus Syndrome

### **A Summation, by Dr. Kathy Morris-Stilwell**

Depending on the cause and the concomitant disorders present, canine megaesophagus can be a very manageable disease. Diagnostic limitations often limit veterinarians in their ability to completely evaluate each case as thoroughly as possible. The usual diagnostics are laboratory tests, x-rays (with and without barium) endoscopy, and occasionally fluoroscopy. It would be helpful if we could also evaluate each of these patients for how well their upper and lower esophageal sphincters function, as well as if they have concurrent poor motility of their stomachs or other co-existing bowel disorders such as IBD (Inflammatory Bowel Disease). As it is, once a patient is diagnosed with megaesophagus, whether congenital or acquired, and depending on if it is idiopathic, or caused by Myasthenia Gravis, hypothyroidism, etc., we are left with helping the owners develop a feeding and management protocol that works for that particular dog. This includes, but is not limited to, experimenting with food consistency, trying a variety of pro-motility drugs, using acid inhibitors to reduce esophagitis which occurs due to reflux of food from the stomach into the esophagus, preventing and treating esophagitis and aspiration pneumonia, and implementing vertical feeding. Since many of these dogs are prone to aspiration pneumonia, prevention (by feeding vertically, and encouraging the dog to sleep with its front end elevated) and treatment can be accomplished by the administration of albuterol and/or saline using a nebulizer. Ultimately, some of these dogs require minimal management while others need much more. The success depends on the dedication of the owner, as well as the willingness of the veterinarian to keep an opened mind and to not give a dismal prognosis to all cases.

#### **Online Resources:**

##### **UC DAVIS**

[www.upei.ca/cidd/Diseases/GI%20disorders/megaesophagus.htm](http://www.upei.ca/cidd/Diseases/GI%20disorders/megaesophagus.htm)

##### **Dr. Diane Shelton - Myasthenia/Megaesophagus**

Dr. Shelton includes a photo of the Bailey chair during a case presentation of Myasthenia complicated by Megaesophagus. Please visit her URL: <http://vetneuromuscular.ucsd.edu/cases/2005/may05.html>

##### **Support Group - Megaesophagus**

[pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/megaesophagus/](http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/megaesophagus/) -- support group of dedicated volunteers who work round the clock to offer knowledge and comfort to the newly diagnosed. Volunteer Veterinarian also 'on staff.'

##### **Eva's Website - Megaesophagus (Daily Care, Clinical Side Conditions, Genetic Heritability)**

<http://www.caninemegaesophagus.org/>

An active dog rescue volunteer, Peg McIntyre, founded Golden Beginnings Golden Retriever Rescue. As she walked the shelters, and her eyes met those of so many abandoned German Shepherd Dogs; Peg became one of the volunteers instrumental in restoring the GSD rescue program in the Houston, Texas area. She fostered many GSDs, but now knowing the GSD to be one breed most affected by Mega-E, she is amazed never to have encountered it before she brought a show quality Gordon Setter pup, and Mega-E hit home. Passionate about the need for research, interest and education to prevent future suffering, Peg has designed 'cmERp' - canine megaesophagus Education & Research project. Non-profit status will be finalized in the near future.

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\*Signers of the GSDCA breeders code; CH = champion; S = stud; P = puppies; D = dogs; UD = utility dog; CDX = companion dog excellent; CD = companion dog; FM = Flyball Master; FDCH = Flyball Dog Champion ; FDX = Flyball Dog Excellent; FD = Flyball Dog

## TRAINING SCHEDULE - Outdoors Begins April 1st

<b>SUNDAY CLASSES</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>TUESDAY CLASSES</b>	<b>TIME</b>
INTERMEDIATE	10:00 AM	INTERMEDIATE thru NOVICE	10:00 AM
PRE-NOVICE & NOVICE	10:00 AM		
ADVANCED	11:00 AM	CONFORMATION	7:00 PM
BEGINNERS (Even)	11:00 AM	BEGINNERS (Odd)	7:00 PM
CONFORMATION	10:45 AM	ADVANCED	7:00 PM
PUPPY CLASS (2nd & 4th)	12:00 PM	INTERMEDIATE	7:45 PM
FLYBALL (1st & 3rd)	12:00 PM	PRE-NOVICE & NOVICE	7:45 PM
AGILITY (2nd & 4th) Advanced	12:00 PM		
AGILITY (2nd & 4th) Beginner	1:00 PM		
<b>FRIDAY CLASSES</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>SATURDAY CLASSES</b>	<b>AM</b>
RALLY-BEGINNER	6:30 PM	RALLY- (2nd & 4th) Advanced / Excellent	9:00 AM
		AGILITY (1st & 3rd) Advanced	10:00 AM
		AGILITY (1st & 3rd) Beginner	11:00 AM

BEGINNER LECTURE - SEE SEPARATE SCHEDULE FOR BEGINNING CLASSES  
 PRE-SCHOOL PUPPY AT NOON - 2ND AND 4TH SUNDAY  
 TEAM OBEDIENCE - INFORMATION TO FOLLOW

**NOTE: When Radio or TV weather reports indicate hazardous driving conditions,  
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