

POPLAR FARM KENNELS NEWSLETTER

Issue 3. January 2005

Welcome to the Poplar Farm Kennels newsletter. If you wish to be added to our mailing list please email us at poplarfarm.kennels@virgin.net and we will set it up. We hope you enjoy reading this.

Dave & Rachel

Happy New Year

We would like to start this newsletter, the first of the year, by wishing everyone a very happy and healthy New Year. We would also like to thank everybody who sent us cards and messages over the Christmas period and all the kind people who made donations of cash, food, treats toys and bedding. All the support has made us all the more determined to try and make 2005 even better and more successful.

Houdi Again!!

It appears that being headline news in our last newsletter went to Houdi's head as he decided to make sure he featured in this issue as well. The day after the last letter went out I went to take Houdi for his morning walk and to my horror discovered that overnight he had attacked his bandage. Now up to this point he had never touched it but on this occasion he had bitten right through down to the skin over the operation site and made a large hole in the dressing and had also removed a few of the stitches. The leg was angry and swollen so I immediately phoned the vets but they had already started the days operations so I made an emergency appointment for early afternoon. I got Houdi out and had another look at his leg, it was swelling quite badly in the hole so we felt the only option was to remove the whole dressing to relieve the pressure. Dave and I spent the next two and a half hours taking it in turns to stay with Houdi to make sure he didn't do any more damage to the leg, whilst we tried to complete the rest of the routine kennel duties. I was outside the vets well before my appointment time but they took me straight in.

The vet examined Houdi's leg and was not happy. She felt that there must have been a reason for him to attack the dressing and she was concerned that there was infection in the bone at the fracture site and she felt that immediate x-rays were needed to see what was going on. Our branch vet does not have x-ray facilities so I put Houdi in the car for the 20 minute drive to the March surgery. There Houdi was x-rayed. He was his usual perfectly behaved self, no sedation needed although they did get me to stand with him to keep him still. The x-rays were developed and were seen by the duty vet. He was very concerned as he felt that the break was not healing, he was talking about specialists and amputation. I was devastated and asked to see the vet who did the surgery immediately. They phoned through to his branch and he agreed to see me as soon as I could get over there so I popped Houdi back in the car, picked up the x-rays and drove straight over. I was in tears most of the way but was trying to keep calm.

Once at Wisbech I was taken through to see the vet as soon as he had looked at the x-rays. He immediately put my mind at rest as he was, in fact, pleased with the leg's progress. He felt that the problem had been caused by an infection starting in the bone and prescribed long-term antibiotic treatment and x-rays in January to check progress and decide when the plate could be removed.

Hopefully by the time of the next newsletter we will have news on the next stage of his treatment but in the meantime the bills have started to arrive. We have put an appeal and

more information up on the website at http://www.poplarfarmkennels.org.uk/help_for_hodi.htm
Houdi remains oblivious to all the fuss and the only thing he wants to know is....."when can I get off this stupid lead and go for a run??"

Sad News

We had a very emotional time recently. Sally, a black Lab from Ashton, arrived at the end of November and on arrival she showed signs of being pregnant. Unfortunately after a couple of weeks she showed signs of having aborted the litter but showed no signs of ill health so we spoke to the vet and they suggested monitoring her but no further treatment. About a week later we noticed that her tummy was showing signs of expanding again. The vet suggested that she may have only aborted part of the litter and recommended continuing her feeding/worming regime as if she were still pregnant. The next week she dropped a lot of weight overnight and had strange diarrhoea so we rushed her to the vet as an emergency on the Thursday. The vets gave her a thorough check up and felt that she had lost any remaining pups and needed an emergency spay to clear out the remains to avoid the risk of infection. She was booked in for Friday so I duly dropped her off at 10.

At 12 I got a phone call from the vet saying that they had found a live pup and to get over there immediately. I dropped everything and shot off. Once I arrived at the vets I was called through to the back room to find the vet nurse and the receptionist frantically trying to resuscitate three pups. I had a pup handed to me and I started massage to try and get it breathing. Whilst we were doing that the nurse explained what had happened. On opening Sally up they had started to clear out the debris from the uterus as we had been keen to know what had caused her to lose the litter. Underneath all the mess, they found a tangled mass of three pups which were lying completely wrong and would never have been born normally.

We continued with massage and drug therapy for over 2 hours but in the end had to admit that the two larger pups were never going to breath but by a miracle the tiny little girl was breathing and seemed to be holding her own. I spent the next 4 hours sitting on the floor in the recovery room at the vets trying to keep Sally calm and keep the pup warm and trying to get it to feed but Sally had no milk. By 6 Sally was ready to go home but still had no signs of milk so we needed to look at hand feeding. She was still too weak to suck so the vet nurse showed me how to tube feed her as that was the only chance we had to get something into her system to get her going. I came home and got everything ready and, shaking like a jelly, I did her first feed. I continued to tube feed her every two hours round the clock until Sunday morning, by which time she was getting strong enough to object to the tube so I decided to try and switch her on to a bottle. It was a slow process but I eventually got her sucking so we switched to two hourly bottle feeds. She was doing well and seemed to be fairly strong and determined although she gained very little weight but on Tuesday night she seemed reluctant to take her bottle at 4am. At 6 she would not take anything at all and was the same at 8 so I decided to tube feed her to try and get something inside her stomach. By this time it was becoming obvious that she was much weaker than previously and I was sure we were going to lose her. I continued trying to feed her until 12 when I needed to go and collect some dogs. I left Dave instructions to feed her at 2 and I would be back for the feed at 4. I arrived home with the dogs at just after 4 and asked what time I needed to try feeding her again but Dave broke the sad news that she had passed away some time between two and three. I was heartbroken. The odds were stacked against her from the start and she was so tiny that I guess she just wasn't strong enough to make it, but at least we know that we gave her every chance possible but it just was not to be.

Christmas

Christmas Day here was just another normal working day. So many people had asked us what we were doing and what we were having for dinner but we just kept explaining that we were doing nothing special as the work was not going to stop. Imagine our surprise and delight when over the course of the afternoon not one but three of our supporters and friends turned up at the gates with Christmas dinners for us. One was left anonymously at the gate

(complete with printed menu and re-heat instructions) although it didn't take much detective work to work out the kind person responsible.

We would like to extend our sincere and grateful thanks to all these wonderful people who took time out of their own family time on a special day to prepare and deliver a treat for us. Not only was it lovely to sit down to proper home cooked food in the middle of a busy day but it really lifted our spirits about the good side of human nature after a pretty depressing week. It is good to know that there are so many generous and caring people out there, thank you all.

We also had a great week between Christmas and New Year. A lovely lady called Ruth had contacted us through a friend to ask if she could come here and "escape" for a few days over the Christmas period. Never ones to turn down the offer of slave labour we agreed, so Ruth arrived on Monday 27th. We allowed her a few hours to settle in but then it was straight to work down the kennels. Ruth quickly got acquainted with her new best friends (the poo bucket and shovels). I also forgot to mention that our hose pipe has a mind of its own so as well as getting completely covered in muddy paw prints from lots of very excited doggies, she also got a cold shower from the hose. Ruth took everything in good spirits and seemed to enjoy herself. The following morning we asked whether the nocturnal noises from the dogs had disturbed her but she said she had slept like a log!

Over the course of her visit, Ruth not only helped enormously with the routine chores but she also put in many hours work clearing and cleaning out our old workshop building which we are converting to more kennels. Thanks to all Ruth's efforts we were able to get the first two kennels installed and occupied early in the New Year.

We were both very sad to see Ruth leave at the end of her stay but we are hoping that she will be able to come back for another visit sometime soon.....we have plenty more work needing doing.

150 on Christmas eve

Christmas Eve was a very special day for several people this year. Poplar Farm Kennels rehomed its 150th dog for 2004 on 24th December.

Poplar Farm Kennels bring dogs in from other areas of the country and often over from Ireland, where the situation is much worse than here. 86% of strays get destroyed in Ireland, in Cambridgeshire it is only 8%.

Shelly, our Christmas Eve special, was an Irish dog. She was picked up as a stray and sent to a pound in Dublin. There she did her 5 days and was not reclaimed so on day 6 she was due to be put to sleep. A wonderful group of people from Celtic Animal Lifeline had tried everything to trace Shelly's original owners, putting up posters in the area she was found and making enquiries amongst local residents but no-one came forward to claim her. These people arranged to get her out of the pound and to a place of safety at Tralee Animal Welfare. There she was vaccinated and spayed but unfortunately she proved not to be friendly with other dogs so they were unable to find her a rescue place to be rehomed. She was sent back to Dublin but her space was soon needed to save a litter of puppies from the pound so Poplar Farm Kennels stepped in and offered her a place in England and she was sent over to us.

Shelly proved to be a very sweet middle aged little black and tan collie/spaniel girl who adored people and wanted nothing more than to lie on her back and have her tummy rubbed. We felt she needed a nice quiet home where she would be the centre of attention and where there were no other dogs.

The week before Christmas we received a phone call from a gentleman looking for a small bitch as a companion. He lived alone and wanted a dog that could come to work in his van and be with him all the time. He was keen to get a new dog as soon as possible but had previously been turned down by a number of other organisations due to working full time and

having no fencing. Shelly was the obvious choice as we knew that she would never be far from her people so the fence was not an issue, especially in a very rural location such as Derek's. We knew Derek was keen to have his new dog home for Christmas and we felt it would be wonderful for Shelly to be in a proper home for Christmas day rather than in a kennel. So, we arranged a meeting for December 23rd and it was love at first sight for both of them. Then on Christmas Eve afternoon we took Shelly over to her potential new home to do the home check. Derek met us from the car and we watched as Shelly marched across the garden straight to the back door and into the kitchen. She turned round and looked at us as if to say, well I'm home so what are you waiting for.

Everything was in order so Shelly got to stay. We heard Christmas morning that Derek was cooking Christmas dinner for two so it sounds like Shelly got to share.

This was the best Christmas present we could all have wished for.

Foster homes

In the run up to Christmas we had a lot of success with using foster homes. Three of the dogs in foster care all found new forever homes through people meeting them in their foster homes and falling in love. This success has meant that we are now looking to increase our network of local foster homes to try and give more dogs the same opportunity. We would love to hear from anyone who may be interested in giving this a try.

Surgery

We have been very busy lately with dogs having surgery. Apart from Sally, mentioned earlier we have also had Sarah our young Greyhound in at the vets for a Femoral Head removal which will hopefully enable her to use all four legs again as she has been on three for some time due to pain in the joint. The operation was done by the same vet who operated on Kurgan and Houdi and once again he has done a brilliant job for us. Sarah will be doing her initial post op recovery with us and then will soon be heading off back to her foster mum, Trish, for long term fostering until she is completely recovered. We will keep you posted on her progress. We would just like to take this opportunity to thank Ted and Jagger for their generous donation of over 50% of Sarah's surgery costs of £363.08. Without the generosity of people like Ted and all the others who have donated towards her and Houdi we would not be able to offer these dogs the chance of a normal life on four good legs. We do, however, still have large outstanding bills for these surgeries so if anyone else would care to make a donation, however small coz every little helps, then we would be extremely grateful.

Final update

Wonderful news to end on. Houdi had his follow up x-rays yesterday (Jan 19th) and it is VERY good news. There is now a full cortex of bone on both sides of the leg and it has healed remarkably well considering the extent of the injury. We are looking at having the pin removed, probably next week (I am just waiting for a phone call from the vets) and then hopefully after maybe 4 weeks recovery he should be fit and sound and able to go for a run for the first time in 3 months. Looks like Houdi will make headline news in the next newsletter as well.

Footnote from Dave

I have been very pleased with Rachel's excellent newsletters and my input is minimal. But the local press has also acknowledged her skills and 3 local papers ran the Shelly "150 on Christmas eve" story and with the help of Katrina it looks as though Houdi's story will be run this coming week. The publicity has made the phone ring and new, local homes are in the offing, the down side is that we are being asked to take in more desperate local dogs because people trust our declared "No Kill" policy.

So our list of difficult dogs is growing, a Goldie and a Choccie Lab that have bitten their owners, a GSD that scared the pants off the neighbours and was heavily sedated to come here, (it has taken a week for him to come round to us) and the one to really take the biscuit.....the GSD that we sent to the Police force direct from the owner and they couldn't even get it out of the van it was so aggressive!!!! My admiration to Roger who refused to be intimidated and got it out anyway, my thanks to Sharron who found experienced boarding kennels to take Major at a moments notice, and thanks also to Paul at <http://www.masai.org.uk/> for his help to place this lad. There is hope for him now, and if we can't place him there is time to prepare a suitable kennel here thanks to Sharron and Ted for covering the boarding kennel bill for 3 weeks.

Dave

NO KILL, NO EXCUSES.