

What A Difference A Year Can Make!

It's hard to believe that it has been just over a year since the first time I saw Sammy. Now officially known as "Smilin' Sam I Am", Sammy was the first Nashoba Valley rescue of 2006. He was dropped at a Massachusetts shelter on New Years Eve, rescued by Nashoba Valley Rescue Chair Anya Wittenborg a few days later and came into the program with a medical file an inch thick. He is a pet store pup, the product of a Missouri puppy mill and his health problems run the gamut from severe allergies to major orthopedic issues. We all knew his care would require time, patience and surgery, but his deep soulful eyes and typical Berner temperament captured my heart and he came to live with Toby, Lucy and myself on January 21, 2006.

As a result of his allergies, Sam came into rescue with a double ear infection; a torn ear flap from shaking his head so fiercely; a nasty nasal discharge; raw, chewed up paws; a brittle, hardly existent coat, a rat tail and he reeked of yeast. His orthopedic issues are many...he is overextended in both hocks, has luxating patellas in both knees, Fragmented Coronoid Process in both elbows - the right required immediate surgery and a valgus deformation of his left carpus (probably due to a car accident when he was pup), he was also very over weight. Sammy was described by several vets as a "train wreck" and "a genetic mishap", but I knew in my heart he deserved a second chance. I hoped that with a proper diet, a little rehab, consistent exercise and a whole lot of help from our Berner community, he could live a content and comfortable life.

And Sammy proved us right! He underwent surgery to remove the bone fragments from his elbow and quickly began rehab with eight weeks of hydro-therapy sessions. He was evaluated by a holistic vet, who helped to identify his allergy issues and begin the long detoxification process to stimulate his immune system and get his digestive system functioning properly. Detox was a tough run for Sam, he had been on antibiotics, steroids and pain killers for most of his life. His symptoms were textbook and extreme, running the gamut from diarrhea and vomiting, to hot spots and hair loss. But he came out of it just fine...day by day he improved and he has become a happier, healthier and stronger Berner.

Sammy also became a poster dog for the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America when his story graced the BMDCA web site helping to explain to PPOs the myriad of problems associated with pet store puppies. He also attended the 2006 BMDCA National Specialty in Michigan, where he was treated like a superstar. In Frankenmuth, Sammy was a part of the first rescue gallery, participated in several Berner-U workshops and had his portrait taken by our infamous Berner photographers Pat Long & Joye Neff. He made many new friends and captured many hearts.

Today, Sammy is a different dog. His coat has become black & shiny, his paws are stained but healed and his tail is coming back. He has lost 20 pounds, can walk a mile a day, chases Lucy across the yard and has even shocked all of us by participating in our occasional walk in the woods of Rhode Island. His diet must be monitored carefully, any food allergy trigger can send him into days of itchy-scratchies, both overall he has come full circle. Sammy passed his CGC test at the NV Spring Fun Day and is now beginning to train for his TDI certification. He is happy, active, very loved and will make a fantastic Therapy dog someday.

Michelle Keck...Toby, Lucy & Sammy, too!



Smilin' Sam I Am

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