

# A Profile in Graceful Aging

By Susie Stone

This is Westie “The Outlaw Jesse James” who will be 15 December 30th this year. JJ is a Canine Good Citizen and dabbled a bit in tracking and Earthdog in his day, though his most recent look down the tunnel was followed by scathing stare over his shoulder: Not going there! He has helped raise and train many puppies, and every morning he absolutely insists the ball be thrown. He has spent most of his life in beautiful NE Washington and is healthy, happy, and so far disease free, though he went through a tough period two years ago.

In 2013 I notice a big slow-down in JJ’s energy. His tail was down, he didn’t insist on the ball game much, and just seemed a little miserable. He has eaten raw food for many years now, but he began to seem ambivalent at mealtime and suffered nausea more often.

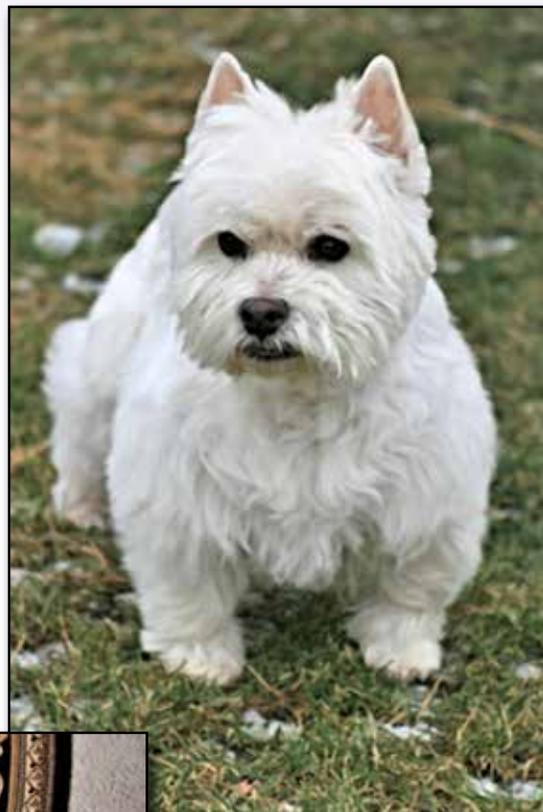
In the past few years, I had been getting my dogs’ teeth scaled instead of a regular dental with anesthetic, with good reason. I’d lost a healthy 8 year old bitch under anesthetic. No one including Washington State University could find a reason why. We even consulted with Dr. Alan Williams who I consider the finest Westie vet in the Pacific Northwest. With no real answers, I began to avoid anesthetic with all my dogs whenever possible.

But when JJ continued to fail, I scheduled a wellness check with Dr. Williams. He did a careful exam, did blood work, and sat me down: JJ’s teeth were in horrible condition - he had inflammation and infection up under the gum line where scaling can’t reach, especially in the back. He convinced me the risk of anesthetic was the only way to get a thorough cleaning and exam done. Terrified, I took him in for his appointment, and 3 hours later Dr. Williams called to say all was well and that JJ had needed 4 teeth removed, two terribly infected. The dental xrays said it all!

It took two cleanings and more extractions that year, but the change in this dog was amazing! He became his old, hungry, happy self. He plays with the others like he was 6 or 7. He eats with gusto and is never nauseated unless he gets other food than raw. The change is miraculous, and I am now faithfully getting thorough dentals done on all my dogs.

It’s important for me not to overestimate his good health. He sleeps lots more than he used to. Like most Westies, he is competitive and loves to go when I walk the 4 dogs. It’s so hard to deny him. He is stoic when he is uncomfortable, so I will have to watch him closely. Yesterday I overestimated the distance on our walk and had to carry him home.

This morning he is the first one up, and breakfast must be right now! Presently he is sleeping, but soon he will get to go in the car. Exciting things will happen today, and his energy is infectious. So many dogs to discipline, so many toys to inventory, so many posts to inspect. May all your dogs have this much fun!



“The Outlaw Jesse James”