

Managing Tony's Addison's Disease

By Linda Martino

I have two Westies, a 15 year old female and a 12 year old male named Tony. I purchased Tony when he was four months old. He was a very vocal and presumably healthy Westie. I was told that his breeder had had a hard time finding a home for Tony because he was vocal. I loved this trait in him. I felt he was a very special dog who seemed to connect with my soul. People being dog lovers will understand. From the beginning, he was very needy. He needed an owner that was patient and would love him unconditionally. I am glad I was here for him when I found out later that he did have Addison's disease.

I am an advocate of providing good dog food and additives for my dogs. I researched the Internet and found the site "Pet Food Advisor" and found a food from the list. I chose Acana, pork and squash, a four star rated dog food that my dogs will eat.

Because my dogs were presumably healthy, I had no problem going out of town to visit my mother. It was a few days into my vacation, March 2010, that my husband

called me that he thought Tony was sick. He and I agreed that he should take Tony to the vet. Tony had the symptoms of being lethargic, would not eat or drink and was throwing up yellow bile. Tony was 7 years old at the time, not an extremely old dog.

My husband took him to the vet and they proceeded to give Tony IV's of fluids and medicine and wanted to keep him for a few days of observation. The vet did not have any idea what was wrong with Tony. There were a few vets at the animal hospital and they collectively eliminated what was wrong with him. They did have Tony stabilized with meds, which I cannot remember what they gave him, and special vet diet and was released from the hospital.

I brought him home and that very day Tony had another crash, symptoms of lethargy, would not walk, eat or drink. I immediately took him back to the vet. I later found out these symptoms were classic for Addison's disease. The vet immediately administered fluids, meds and a blood test called Adrenocorticotropic Hormone (ACTH). Because

Tony had come into the hospital with what appeared to be an Addisonian crisis, the vets thought he had an imbalance of electrolytes. In an ACTH test, Tony was given an injection of adrenal stimulating hormone ACTH. A normal dog will respond by having an increase in blood cortisol. Tony did not have an increase in blood cortisol and he was diagnosed with Addison's. The blood chemistry showed other counts that proved he did have Addison's.

The vet hospital started Tony on fludrocortisone, a generic form of florinef. This drug is given to stabilize the potassium and sodium levels. It took about a month of regulating the dose and blood work, to see if the amount of meds were correct. Tony ended up taking 2 mg. of



Tony at home.

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fludrocortisone a day. Since that time, we have upped his meds gradually.

At present, Tony is taking 3 mg. of fludrocortisone a day. I also give Tony prednisone, when I feel a stressful situation is going to happen. After the event, boarding, grooming, car rides or if I am leaving town for an extended period of time, I will wean him off the prednisone because I fear that there are side effects for prolonged use of prednisone.

When I found out that Tony had Addison's, I researched the Internet for any informative information on the disease. I went to the search engine Google and found many, many articles that described the symptoms and treatment of Addison's. The sites I found to be informative, to name a few:

www.westiefoundation.org
2nd choice, Addison's
Wikipedia, Addison's disease
Peteducation.com
Vetspecialistofrochester.com

There are many sites that can help you better understand the disease. I also frequented Facebook, who had support groups for dogs with Addison's disease. I feel I read so much information, that it could blow your mind. But, with that said, trust your vet. He or she will also help you with the best treatment for your dog.

I know Tony and I are not alone as there are many pet owners who own a dog with Addison's. These pet owners are here for me and for you. Tony is living a quality life. I continue to give him his meds every day, provide lots of clean fresh water, good diet and am aware of outside stimuli that might stress him out. I also know that the meds do make him urinate more often. We continue to enjoy cuddle time watching TV and of course, he does sleep on my bed. I think he has more years of being happy and living with Addison's.

I hope my and Tony's experiences will help anyone who has a dog with Addison's.



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