

Mr. Wilson's Journey: Flip: a CMO 'Survivor'

By Susie Stone

Mr. Wilson was born into a litter of 5 in July of 2008. His name, Mr. Wilson, may have come from Tool Time, as opposed to a great comedian, but when he was a tiny pup, he kept flipping over in the puppy pen, and a sweet 6 year old girl dubbed him "Flip". The pups, two girls and three boys, enjoyed a fun upbringing, with many visitors and lots of new experiences. However, as time went by, Flip grew quieter. It really wasn't that noticeable, and he endeared himself with many of the visitors because he became the cuddly lap pup. He ate well and though he seemed happy, he played with the others less and less. As a breeder who had never experienced Craniomandibular Osteopathy (CMO), I just didn't notice the classic symptoms. (See the Spring 2013 Westie Foundation of America (WFA) newsletter *Westie Wellness* article "Research – It Takes Time" and in this issue on page 7 about CMO).

In October that year, I visited my good friends and mentors Anne Sanders and Sandy Campbell, with the 3 month old litter in tow. Immediately, Anne noticed a big difference in Flip's behavior, and as soon as she held him in her lap and opened his mouth, it was obvious by his painful reaction that he probably had CMO. We confirmed this by a visit to her vet which included very telling X-rays. Flip had an especially severe case with large, painful circular lumps just under his ears, and I felt so terrible that he had suffered with this for probably at least four weeks. He was immediately started on prednisone therapy, and within 48 hours, he was a different puppy, tumbling and roughhousing with his littermates. He really didn't want to be on your lap! The prognosis was fairly good that he would outgrow the painful buildup of bone by age 20 months.



Flip--On the Road to Recovery.



Xray of Westie with CMO



Flip with his Littermates (second from right).

I had planned to keep one of the girls in the litter, the pick puppy, but after Flip's diagnosis, I wanted to keep him close so I could monitor his meds and his progress. He went through some tough times getting the dosages just right, and the lumps were always painful. I learned how easily stress adds to this: Christmas of that year we visited my niece's home with all the chaos and fun associated with kids and grownups alike. Flip loves those kids, and he played with them and seemed to be enjoying himself all afternoon. Toward evening I noticed him stretched out on the floor. Resting up, I assumed. But when I went over to him, I noticed his horrible "garlic" breath and his panting. When I touched him, he seemed in a good deal of discomfort. By the next day, and with a little more medicine, he was back to normal. We found that he would occasionally 'relapse' sometimes during growth spurts, stressful times and sometimes for no apparent reason. We always wanted to keep him on the lowest dose of Prednisone possible, and later he was weaned off it and took Rimadyl in its place.

My sister and her husband, who never had dogs before, took one of my mature bitches the year before, and what a fabulous place for her: total attention, long walks and fun trips in cars and boats. I left Flip with them a couple times when I needed a reliable place for him to stay – he needed his meds carefully monitored and special attention given. The third time they dog sat him, I never got him back. He graduated from obedience class with the first place "best trick" honor, and he was the demonstration dog for crate training: You can say "Where do good puppies go?" from anywhere in the house, and it's a race! Cookie??



Flip Today!



Flip Diagnosed with CMO.

Samples were collected from Flip and all his relatives and submitted for the CMO studies that WFA has sponsored. Late last year in a research breakthrough, Swiss researchers, partnered with WFA, isolated the gene mutation that caused the condition in 100 percent of the CMO affected dogs. Now there is a DNA test for CMO to predict which parents will likely produce affected puppies since both parents must be carriers to produce the disease, and breeders can have much more information available to them in choosing breeding partners (See the bottom of page 7 in this issue.).

Flip has had a long and painful ordeal, but he is now a healthy, happy adult. He still is cuddly and sweet, but he is also full of all that terrier-ness we love in our Westies. He walks 4 miles each day, is off medication and has few bad days. The lumps are still there, but most all the other symptoms have gone. I am forever grateful to my mentors for all their help in getting Flip the help he needed, and of course to my sister for giving Flip such a wonderful home. And we have the WFA to thank for all that this organization has done for Westie health. If we can prevent the suffering CMO causes, it will all have been worth it.