

Update On Thelma and Louise

Marion Heise has been fostering two girls picked up off of the streets in upstate New York.

They both tested positive for heartworm and have some abscessed teeth.

Life as a foster is usually not this difficult but it happens.

Here is the story of 4 heroes:

Marion and Doug and Thelma and Louise

..... as told by Marion.

It is now nearing the end of January and Thelma and Louise have been with Doug and I for a little over two months. The vet opted for a conservative treatment protocol for the girls heartworm infestation. The first treatment was given just prior to the Thanksgiving weekend, so I was able to be home all day with them. Both seemed okay at first but after a couple of days Louise began to cough. Not the light cough a dog will occasionally have; these were from deep inside and wracked her whole body. She could do nothing but lay on her bed until the spell passed. She would cough continuously for about 10-15 minutes and then quiet for an hour or two. This pattern continued for the first two weeks with her, with the coughing lasting less time and the quiet periods getting longer. Louise was put on a course of antibiotics to make sure there were no further complications, primarily lung infection. Her eye infection cleared up after a week, so good news on that front!

Thelma acted like nothing had happened for the first week then she too began to cough but she also had blood come up in her coughing. A LOT of blood, which was very scary. Back to the vet for her and she also took a course of antibiotics. Thelma continued to cough right up until the second and third treatments about Christmas time.

The next course of treatment was two shots, given one day after another, so fortunately I was off on the holidays to attend both girls. Here is the report I made to the Trust Board after the first shot:

Today was the second treatment for both girls. When we got to the vet's, Thelma coughed up a huge amount of blood, the worse I have ever seen, right at the vet's feet. If she had to do it, I'm glad he was there to see it! He was amazed and convinced that both girls are carrying a heavy parasite load. It was a traumatic ordeal for all of us. Poor Louise just shook like a scared bunny the whole time but was ok as long as I was petting her. Thelma pitched a huge screaming crying fit when they gave her the shot. Thelma only had one more coughing incident at home, very mild compared to the vet incident and then both girls have crashed on their beds and been quiet all day. Not eating, but they are drinking and staying hydrated.

Now we just have to do it all again tomorrow, hopefully without the screaming and crying.

Unfortunately the next day was a repeat - Louise terrified, but not objecting. Thelma objecting vociferously! When finally home and back in bed (they were both very good about taking bed rest and staying in bed). Thelma curled up in the tiniest ball ever and went to sleep. Louise could not get comfortable and was obviously in pain. She cried for about 15 minutes and then finally curled up and slept. Both girls were off their food again but did get up to drink and go outside. On the third day, Louise had some mild coughing but nothing like the first treatment and she perked up and was back to her normal self; well, as normal as we've seen, that is. Thelma had a reaction at both the injection site, with a hard swelling about the size of a lemon, and the right side of her muzzle swelled up. Neither seemed to bother her otherwise. The muzzle swelling was down by the evening but the shot site reaction took about a month to resolve. Thelma lost about 4 pounds during this episode, so we started feeding her double, which she has taken to rather well!

The fourth and final treatment was done in hospital and both girls came through beautifully. Louise's HW test was negative, yeah! Thelma's test was positive for larvae, but vet thinks this will resolve with continued HW medication. Unfortunately, Thelma now has a draining abscess in one of her teeth, so she will be back at the vet to have that resolved. Once this gets cleared up, we're hoping for the OK to spay her. The vet will give the all clear on the HW if they both test negative in mid-April. Louise is also showing signs of issues with her teeth and she will have them attended to after Thelma.

Once we finally get all the medical issues cleared up, we'll be able to start getting these girls socialized and seeing their true personalities shine through! So far, Thelma's the love bug and quite a good watch dog. Louise is more reserved but likes playing in snow!

While this is one of the more difficult and involved rescues the Trust has done, the point to be made is that this pain and heartache was completely avoidable. Especially for those of you living in the 'colder' areas where 'heartworm isn't an issue', this story is what your dog faces if you chose to save a few dollars a month. The treatment is far more costly than a lifetime of prevention. Please don't forget this important aspect of your dogs care.

My most special thanks to both Sharon Roundy and Susan Spinhirne who have been my support through these past months. And to Doug, who is working very hard to get Louise to like him, even if he is a man. He's been working with Thelma on her jumping and she is now much more secure than when she first arrived.

And a heartfelt thanks to all the people who donate to rescue. Without you, these girls would have been lost. The years of neglect are slowly being peeled away from them and they will have the opportunity to live the life they deserve.

Humbly submitted,

Marion Heise

