

EMMA



Breed: Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

Sex: Female

Color: Blenheim

Name: Emma

D.O.B. : 2/20/07

Owned By: Sharalyn Ezzo, LVT from Middletown, NY
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Diagnosis: Long Island Veterinary Specialists in NY- MRI (performed 8/13/09) showed severe Chiari malformation with SM. Report stated “MRI revealed severe ventricular dilation with a moderate cerebellar compression and cerebellar herniation. A syrinx in the cervical, thoracic, or lumbar region affecting 50% of the spinal cord was noted.”

Surgery: Performed at Long Island Veterinary Specialists by Dr. Dominic Marino on 8/14/09- Report stated “A caudal approach to the occipital region was performed and excellent decompression of the cerebellum was achieved. The dura was biopsied and a cranioplasty using polymethylmethacrylate and a titanium mesh with screws was placed to lessen stricture formation post-operatively.”

Emma first started showing only mild signs several months before her surgery so I did not jump to the thought of this disease right away. She would just shake her head and scratch it a lot. I am a licensed vet tech so I would have one of the vets I work with check her ears every so often but there was nothing going on. On 8/8/09 (actually 5 minutes before my boyfriend were about to leave for vacation) she had a very strange seizure like episode, she screamed in pain, became stiff and could not stand up on her own, her head was tilted to the side. As I held her I could feel her jaw muscles were very tight and her jaw kept clicking. It lasted about 20 seconds. I called one of my vets in (it was late Saturday) and he could not find anything clinically wrong and said it could have been a seizure but I was not convinced, he said

to give her Phenobarbital if it happened again but I chose not to. It happened again about 10 minutes later and then much later that night. After each episode she would crawl in my lap and pant heavily. After the third (about midnight) I brought her to Oradell Animal Hospital in Paramus, NJ, an emergency specialty center but after hours it was just interns pretty much and they just recommended to come back Monday for an MRI. She continued to have the episodes for the next several days and was very uncomfortable, she could not get comfortable in one spot to lay down, she was constantly moving all over the house. My regular vet could only find that she had some serious ear infections that started literally overnight and were not responding to treatment. Finally I found out from an old co-worker that was now a DVM all about LIVS so I brought her there that Thursday for an MRI and they got the dreaded diagnosis.

Emma was hospitalized for about 12 days after surgery and then we brought her home. She was on Cephalexin 250 mg twice daily, Prednisone 5 mg twice daily, Tramadol 25 mg 4 times daily, and Gabapentin 100 mg 3 times daily. We had to stop the Cephalexin and Prednisone about a day after bringing her home because of digested blood in the stool and an upset stomach. She was in extreme pain, she did not want to move around, she panted heavily all day, she did not sleep for about 3 days straight (I was up with her). We had to hand feed her babyfood and yogurt since that was all she would eat and we had to give her water by an oral syringe. My vet and I even applied a Fentanyl patch to see if it helped. It did very little. I finally decided that she needed to go back to LIVS for observation, treatment, and more TENS therapy. Despite my profession there was nothing else that we could do for her and I was extremely upset. She went back for 10 days and then they finally started her on Rimadyl, the NSAID that I requested toward the end of that period. They said by the next day she was like a different dog. I took her home and she was better but not great. She was happier and was eating on her own and able to walk around, but was very unsteady and would fall over a lot either when walking or just when standing in place. She also had several bad days a week where she seemed painful again, but not as bad as in the beginning. It was a very difficult and mentally painful time for us. At this point she was on Rimadyl 25 mg twice daily, Tramadol 25 mg three times daily, and Gabapentin 100 mg three times daily. Over time we slowly decreased the Tramadol and Gabapentin until stopping it about 4 months after surgery. She is still on 25 mg of Rimadyl twice daily and Cosequin once daily. Her unsteadiness

did not stop until 5 months out and then she was doing pretty good, she rarely had bad days. She had her 6 month follow up MRI done on 2/22/10 and unfortunately there was still a lot of fluid and syrinxes and not much change. She will be having another MRI performed in 8/10.

Update (7/10): Emma is doing ok but still has some bad days mostly affected by the weather. About 1 month ago she had a strange episode in which we still don't know if it was neurological or pain related. She was walking and her head turned to the side and she her front leg on that side was extended out and it was like she couldn't bend it at all for probably about 20 seconds. She was not acting right for several days after it happened. She is currently on Rimadyl 25mg twice a day, she was put back on Gabapentin 100mg twice a day, and about 2 weeks ago she was started on Omeprazole 10mg once a day to try and decrease the CS fluid. She seems to be doing better now. I am supposed to call for another update next week and another follow up MRI will be performed next month, I am so scared to do it, I don't know if I want to even know the results.

In conclusion, I hope this was not too long, I was just trying to be thorough for other people's sake and I feel so much sorrow for anyone else that has had to go through this. I have another Cavalier from a different breeder and pray that it does not happen to him. I cherish every day I have with Emma and hope that I have a long time with her from here, she is absolutely the best dog I have ever owned.

Thank You For Your Time