The Mystery of Boo’s Boo-Boos
By Doug Keene

This month’s feature article is the story of Boo and his journey from a happy, healthy, carefree Kerry to one troubled with itchy, inflamed paws combined with extreme hair breakage, and how he found relief through a simple food sensitivity test.

Boo is now several months past his fifth birthday. He’s never had an ear infection or diarrhea, and, aside from the mandatory rabies vaccination or complimentary therapy-dog eye exam, he hasn’t needed to see the vet much, either. Hands down, he’s one of the healthiest dogs I’ve known.

But at around age two, we began to notice he was losing facial furnishings and developing “poodle feet” areas on the top of each paw with little to no hair. Boo had been self-grooming, with his tongue, leaving behind a path of broken hair along with raw, red patches of bare skin. Although it was mostly noticeable on the grooming table and in the show ring, it was never a big concern to us given his overall great health.

What did become a concern—a major annoyance, really—was that persistent foot licking. Many nights, I’d awaken to the rhythmic sound of Boo’s licking—first one paw and then another. Our expressions of annoyance turned him into a closeted foot-licker: he’d secretly go at it on the stairwell landing, leaving behind a gross, viscous pool of saliva that we’d typically discover with our bare feet in the pre-dawn dark.

It was time for a competent veterinary assessment. So, several months ago, his fifth birthday in sight, I took Boo to Hemopet, Dr. Jean Dodds’ new holistic veterinary clinic in Garden Grove.

I’ve known and admired Dr. Dodds since the ’70s. She’s a major player in the veterinary world—has conducted research into Kerry Blue Terrier blood disorders and established a nonprofit canine blood bank, also part of Hemopet. Because she lectures around the world, she leaves daily operations of the holistic veterinary clinic to her associate, Dr. Adam Lassin.

Suspecting his foot licking was caused by a food intolerance or sensitivity (actual food allergies are extremely rare, they explained), the Hemopet staff took a sample of Boo’s saliva and ran it through their Nutriscan food-sensitivity test. Dr. Lassin called a few days later to tell me Boo is reactive to just about every popular dog-food ingredient. Boo’s most recent staples—chicken, corn, turkey, and potatoes—showed strong reactivity, and they’re key ingredients in even the best commercial dog foods.

Frankly, I wasn’t yet a true believer in the idea of food sensitivity. But I’d come this far, so I heard Dr. Lassin out. He scrutinized several brands of dog food, comparing all ingredients with Boo’s sensitivity profile. Finally, he concluded, there...
was just one to recommend: Canine Caviar Free-Range Buffalo.

I promised I’d give it a go, but was still skeptical. And I wondered what we’d do if Boo didn’t like something with a name that included the words “caviar,” “free-range” and “buffalo.” My local pet food store carried some Canine Caviar products, but not this one. The store clerk added to my uncertainty, kindly telling me Canine Caviar was one of the most expensive commercial dog foods. He recommended Natural Balance Buffalo kibble, which is formulated for food-sensitivity prone dogs and costs significantly less.

I bought a small bag of that stuff. But before opening it, I called Dr. Lassin to get his blessing. He looked up the Natural Balance Buffalo—and vetoed it immediately. He explained that Boo showed a significant reaction to several of the minor ingredients in the kibble. I returned the unopened bag and continued my hunt for Canine Caviar.

I located a dealer in Brea, and I made the drive to get a bag. I read the ingredient list, certain I’d discover that diamond dust and small rubies were baked in to make some sense of the price. And, I wasn’t yet sure that Boo would even eat it.

He did, and with gusto. It’s been several months now, we’ve been through a few large bags of the Canine Caviar Buffalo, and it’s clearly made a difference. His foot licking has decreased significantly, probably 80 percent. And his appetite and zest for food have increased. Before, he’d occasionally go on a hunger strike and often had to be prompted to eat. Now? No more hunger strikes. He’s always eager to eat. His hair has begun to return to the tops of his paws, and the carpet is free of squishy saliva pools. The space between his pads, once an angry red, is now a normal, healthy white.

Now I’m convinced that food sensitivity and intolerance exist. I’m sad knowing Boo was clearly uncomfortable for such a long time, probably when I began feeding him chicken and potato several years ago.

Boo also tested positive for grass sensitivity. But there’s a bonus even here for Boo: depending on the kinds of grasses we’ve walked on, he sometimes gets a saltwater footbath—and those feet are returning to proper Kerry Blue Terrier feet once again.

We extend our gratitude to Doug Keene for sharing Boo’s story in an effort to help other canine companions who may be suffering from similar food reactivity. Kerries, while a generally hearty and healthy breed thanks to the efforts of dedicated breeders, can inexplicably develop food sensitivity, all unbeknownst to their unwitting, yet loving, owners. It’s reassuring to know a remedy may be as easy as a saliva swab and simple change in diet.

NutriScan test kits can be obtained at: www.nutriscan.org

The KBTCSC will be raffling off a chance to win a sensitivity & intolerance test kit, valued at $280, at our winter specialty in January 2016. Watch for details here and on our club’s Facebook page.
Meeting Notes

The KBTCSC expresses its thanks to Richard and Carol Basler for hosting the August club meeting at their home. Not only were we treated to the delectable dishes brought by club members, we were all delightfully entertained by the talents of the Basler’s three resident Kerry Blue Terriers, Kisses, Bree, and Vanja. As to be expected, they were the hit of the party meeting.

Top on the list for discussion was the USKBTC traveling specialty, which we are slated to host in June, 2016 along with our regional specialty show in conjunction with GWTA. Next year’s shows will be expanded to four days and will include the Long Beach Kennel Club and the Kennel Club of Beverly Hills shows, beginning Thursday, June 23rd through Sunday, June 26th. The new location will be at the California State University at Long Beach’s George Allen Field. Show details will be forthcoming as we receive information.

As the inclusion of an additional specialty show puts added expense and strain on our club, we are asking that every member please help out in any way they can, whether it be in the form of a trophy donation or lending a hand with physical efforts—we need you all! Please contact show chairperson Carol Basler rabasler@aol.com for additional information.

The end
The Kerry Blue Terrier Club of Southern California invites you to join us for our Winter Specialty Show 2016 in conjunction with Desert Empire Terrier Club of Southern California and Kennel Club of Palm Springs.

Four shows: Thursday, January 7th – Sunday, January 10th 2016

Empire Equestrian Park & Polo Field
Ave 51 & Monroe St.
Indio, CA

Judges

Thursday, January 7th (Supported entry) Judith White (P) Regular class
Friday, January 8th (KBTCSC Specialty) Geoff Corish Regular class
Michael Coad Sweepstakes
Saturday, January 9th Christine Erickson Regular class
Sunday, January 10th Margo E. Klingler Regular class

Join us and see for yourselves why winter in Palm Springs is where the stars come out to play!

Entries close noon (PST) Wednesday, December 23, 2015
Jack Bradshaw, Superintendent (www.jbradshaw.com)

We will be raffling off a chance to win a NutriScan pet sensitivity & intolerance test kit valued at $280 (www.nutriscan.org)

For more information, contact: Carol Basler, KBTCSC Show Chair (rabasler@aol.com)