

# Bichon Bits & Bytes

August 2012 Bichon FurKids Rescue

NEWS FLASH 8/16/12 ... Just 24 hours after surgery, Sailor is now walking on wobbly legs. Says his very excited surgeon: "This is amazing!"

## Update on our Brave Little Sailor

Sailor's surgery began at 4:52 in the afternoon on August 15th, and he was in recovery an hour later! Dr. Lipsitz (<http://www.vshsd.com/specialties/neurology-and-neurosurgery>) did the surgery



and said that he was pleased with how it went. The surgery indicated that Sailor had a chronic disk problem between T12-13. He expects Sailor to have a full recovery.

"Sailor the Survivor," as he is nicknamed, will be returning to his foster home on Saturday and then will go back to the surgeon's office within two weeks for a post-op check up. At that time Dr. Lipsitz will assess his progress and determine which (restricted) activities he can participate in going forward.

Sailor's bichon foster brothers and sisters are anxiously awaiting his return, along with Foster Mom and Dad, Kathy and Bob. Kudos and many thanks to Sailor's foster family for helping this plucky little FurKid through his medical treatments, office visits, and recovery.

Sailor's medical costs have now reached \$5000. Of course we believe that every life is priceless. If you care to contribute to Sailor's care, he would appreciate your kindness. So will his 'aunties' and "uncles" at BFK. To make a donation, go to the BFK donations web page at <http://www.bichonfurkids.org/donations>. Or, you can send a donation to the address shown beneath the "Contents" on the right side of this page.

Many thanks to Dr. Lipsitz and his staff, and to the dedicated and compassionate dog lovers who donated their time and dug into their wallets to help Sailor regain his health and get ever closer to the day when he finds his forever home.

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*In memory of...*

## *Mimi: Our baby girl...*



When we first saw Mimi after she had been rescued, she was a shy, chubby little eight year old girl showing great patience for her wild, race everywhere, "brother", Frankie. With lots of love, and some "doggie aerobics", Mimi shed those extra pounds and became our beautiful little daughter, who loved strolling around her new home and yard while Frankie raced around her.

After nursing her through several surgeries (bladder stones), giving her little treats (her favorite time of the day), she truly became a loving part of our family...putting up with Frankie, and us!

Mimi gave us such joy, many laughs, and some tears. When she left us, way too early, in July 2012, she took a huge piece of our hearts with her. We miss Mimi, always will, and...we will always love her! We think of her often, and we know that she's having a wonderful time playing with all her friends at the "Bridge."

*Mike  
and  
Charlie*



# Avoid Unnecessary Vaccinations with Titer Tests (Part Two)

Editor's note: There are few issues in veterinary medicine as controversial as the debate about administering annual vaccinations for our dogs. For many of us an annual titer test, to check a dog's level of immunity, has replaced the annual 'booster' shots that have been a traditional part of veterinary care. The article that follows is the second in a two-part series - and is an important topic for you to read and consider. To read Part One, see the July 2012 newsletter at <http://www.bichonfurkids.org/News>.

By Jan Rasmusen

## How often should I test titers for parvo and distemper?

You're going to have to decide for yourself. Some vets recommend testing yearly, but this can be expensive. Others test every three years. Still others test five to seven years after vaccination. Why? Challenge tests show that successful vaccination against parvovirus gives most animals at least seven years of immunity. Distemper provides immunity for at least five to seven years.\* Dr. Ron Schultz, one of the most renowned pet vaccination experts in the country, believes that once a test yields strong titers, you need not test again.

## Does a weak titer mean that the dog needs a "booster" shot?

Maybe not for dogs that have previously shown strong titers. Many experts, including Dr. Schultz, say the dog's immune system will have produced "memory cells" that will produce antibodies when they're needed. Think of memory cells as reserve forces. When known foreigners invade, they remember how to attack them.

## Should I test my puppy?

Yes! If so, when? Ideally, puppies should have had their last vaccination after 16 weeks of age then should be tested to see if further vaccination is necessary. There's an excellent discussion about testing puppies in the 2006 American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) Canine Vaccine Task Force Report (page 13) entitled What Are The Possible Applications of Serologic Testing? It reads, "Such titer testing is the only way to ensure that a puppy has developed an immune response after vaccinating."

## What do titer tests cost?

Testing costs vary widely from practice to practice, so shop around. Some vets do in-house testing. Others use outside labs. Some mark up tests and services a little; others, a lot. You should be able to have parvo/distemper tests done most places for less than \$100.

Rabies tests, on the other hand, can cost considerably more, in large part because they are sent overnight to a lab. (Ask your vet to have a Titer Testing Day so that they can send multiple tests in one package and save considerably on shipping costs.) Consider contacting Hemopet, Dr. Jean Dodd's nonprofit organization, for their pricing. When comparative shopping, make sure pricing includes blood draw and shipping.

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\* Challenge studies prove immunity by exposing an animal to a disease. These studies show distemper immunity given by the Rockborn Strain gives 7 years immunity; the Onderstepoort Strain, 5 years. Ask your vet which strain was used to vaccinate your dogs.

# Avoid Unnecessary Vaccinations with Titer Tests

## (Part Two, page 2)

Wait! Before jumping to the conclusion that vaccinating is much cheaper than testing, remember that testing can be a one-time (or at least rare) expense and is no riskier than any simple blood draw. Vaccinating, on the other hand, can potentially cause a lifetime of illness.

### Should I test for rabies antibodies?

The rabies titer test will give you an indication of your dog's immunity if he or she is at particular risk for contracting rabies. It may also be required prior to international travel. Test results will NOT be accepted by Animal Control and most others as a substitute for vaccination of healthy dogs as required by law. If your dog has documented health problems or documented adverse reactions to shots, your vet may be able to get your dog an exemption to rabies vaccination. (Learn more at [www.Truth4Dogs.org](http://www.Truth4Dogs.org).)

A rabies titer test is not usually necessary when requesting an exemption but may be useful when re-applying for a denied exemption. It may also give you and others piece of mind if you're contemplating an exemption. (Note: a French challenge study has shown rabies vaccination gives immunity for at least five years. In the U.S, the Rabies Challenge Fund is doing concurrent tests for five years and seven years to extend the period between shots. This important nonprofit study is funded solely by donations from dog lovers like you.)

### Can I test titers immediately after vaccinating?

To get an accurate test, you must wait at least 14 days after vaccination before testing.

### What if your vet, groomer, spouse, best friend, kennel owner or day care proprietor says titer testing is "voodoo science," that your dog needs continued vaccination even if testing indicates otherwise?

Know that vets out of school longer than 10 years received little or no immunology or vaccinology training in school; they shouldn't be considered experts unless they've devoted hundreds of hours to research and training. Others who want to influence you may have no training at all and may be acting out of fear. Do your own research and advocate for your dog.

I hope I've given you enough information to make reasoned decisions. The subject is hardly black and white; it is riddled with shades of gray. I'd like to thank veterinary crusaders against over-vaccination Drs. Margo Roman and Tamara Hebbler for their help with this article, and Drs. Jean Dodds and Patricia Jordan for answering my many questions about vaccination over the years.

For more vaccination information, see my "**Rethinking Vaccination**" chapter in my award-winning book, **Scared Poopless: The Straight Scoop on Dog Care**.

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(c) Jan Rasmusen. Jan Rasmussen is the Author of "Scared Poopless" and winner of the Best Health book and Best Animal Pet Health Book. You can email her at [Dogs4Dogs@aol.com](mailto:Dogs4Dogs@aol.com)

# My Life with Mom and Dad

by Toby, A Bonafide Bichon FurKid



"Another notch on the belt of bichon-kind." That's what I said when mom realized she had fallen in love with me. It didn't take all that long, either, because I am good at my job. I know it surprised her, this falling-in-love-with-me business, because mom is a very logical, analytical person who hardly ever shows her emotional side.

Dad, on the other hand, has a strong emotional side. He fell in love, sight unseen, based on my picture and profile. Sort of like online dating. **But mom had this list of requirements**, I remember, because dad had insisted on a dog, and I think mom just wanted to be nice.

**Allergy-friendly** (geez, at first I couldn't figure out why she was rubbing her face in my curls for like ten minutes, so embarrassing).

**Small enough to fit in the bag that goes under the airplane seat** (FYI at 20 pounds I'm no lightweight and that bag is pushing it, a little, for me. But if mom and dad are stuck in economy class for a few hours, I figure I can handle the tight quarters too). **And so on.**

When mom met me and agreed, all of our fates were sealed. We drove back from my foster home (somewhere in **Orange** County, thanks David!) in the convertible. Dad drove, and I got to sit in mom's lap for the ride to **La Jolla**. I didn't make a peep, stealthily letting my love reach her by osmosis.

When we got home that night, I adjusted pretty well. The house is on a hill, with several levels kind of going down along the hillside. So mom closed the bedroom door, hinting to me that me and dad should stay in the bedroom and bond (and so I wouldn't accidentally get lost in the house) while she went upstairs to make dinner. But dad and I bonded really quickly, and I'm a bit of a show-off anyway, so... in my very best Houdini impersonation, I snuck out the doggy door, and circled all the way around the outside of the house and up the hill, **IN THE DARK**, mind you. There I found the open door to the kitchen.

I went in and presented myself to mom, "ta-dah", pretty sure I had figured out this little puzzle faster than anyone else could have done it. Boy was she a little freaked-out or what? At first Mom couldn't figure out how I got up there! She even went downstairs to tell dad he should have kept the door closed.

But guess what, the door was still closed! Dad didn't even know I was gone. I just wanted to make it clear to mom that I was going to find her and be with her, no matter what -- and I have done so for the last three years.

(Please go to the next page...)

## My Life with Mom and Dad, continued...



Well, obviously, this is my nature. Dad called me an AWACS plane where it concerns mom. I think it's true. I sleep as close to her as possible at night, I laze next to her when she's working, and I follow her dutifully anywhere she goes. **My motto is "all mom, all the time."** When I get a signal that she might be getting up (for example, if I hear the laptop closing), I perk up, alert, ready to follow. Are we going out? Or upstairs for an animal cracker treat? Or just to do the laundry? Either way, I'm with ya, mom.

**Now not to knock dad, he is my rock.** We have boys' night a lot where we sit and cuddle and watch tv or work on the computer, and we go cruising sometimes, too. **I look good in a convertible!** I look good in dad's arms, with my head on his shoulder. Well heck, I do! It's not conceited if it's true, right? I'm proud of dad, he's really into me (and vice versa), but dad kind of knew the "fall in love" drill. Mom's was a pleasant surprise, for both of us.

I do have one "issue" I've been working on; if dad stays downstairs and mom goes upstairs, I'm kind of perplexed. I'm not really sure how to be in two places at one time. So my current strategy is to lay down on the landing on the middle floor, which happens to be in front of the front door to the house. This way I'm half-way between both of them, and I'm kind of poised to move at a moment's notice. **I know dad can't leave ('cause I'm blocking the front door), and mom has to come down some time, and this way I keep track of everyone's whereabouts.**

Anyway, back to mom. She's totally hooked on me now. When someone says how great it was of her to adopt a rescue dog, mom says **"he rescued us right back,"** and don't let on, but I can tell that there are tears in her eyes when she says it.

Isn't it funny how she's so crazy about me? Particularly when she was only agreeing to a dog for dad's sake... Sometimes dad will call her attention to me when I'm being especially cute (uh, always), and mom just smiles, sighs and kind of melts a little. Hee hee!



Toby



# WANTED

**WANTED: Fosters** This is our most pressing need. Every foster home we have DIRECTLY enables us to save a life. We cannot pull dogs from shelters or accept owner-relinquished FurKids without having foster homes ready to receive and love these little ones. Right now, the need is greater than ever! By becoming a foster, you can save the life of a bichon at no cost to you...and without ever setting foot in a shelter....and without a permanent obligation. If you can help us by fostering for two weeks (that's usually all it is!) we (and the furkids) would be so grateful! Please email [marti@bichonfurkids.org](mailto:marti@bichonfurkids.org) or call 760-525-5556. Please tell your family and friends, too. We appreciate the caring families in Southern California who have opened their homes - and hearts- to our fur kids.



**WANTED: Drivers** Want to make a difference for a FurKid but can't foster? We need your help! Every week FurKids need to be transported to groomers, vets and foster homes. We rely on our volunteer drivers to get them there, and we DO need more people who can transport our fluffs primarily throughout San Diego or Orange County (and not for great distances usually, either.) Sometimes we have days in which to plan; other times it is more immediate, like when we find a FurKid that needs to be moved 'right away' due to a medical situation or to be exited from a shelter. If you have time and a love for bichons, we NEED you. And if you love to organize transports, we need help with that too! Please email [marti@bichonfurkids.org](mailto:marti@bichonfurkids.org) and say "I'd like to drive a furkid" - and we'll be in touch.

**WANTED: Writers** Would you like to write an article for the BFK newsletter? Our readers enjoy reading the many different viewpoints and stories that our bichon-loving community offers up. Send your idea to [marti@bichonfurkids.org](mailto:marti@bichonfurkids.org) and we will consider it for future publication. No need to write the whole article up front. Just email us a detailed outline of the topic, the points you want to cover, and any photos you want to include to help illustrate your story.

