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Joy's Story—a journey with EPI

Joy is a female German Shepherd that I bred.

She was diagnosed with **EPI (Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency)** last year. Joy's owners contacted me to let me know that they were at their wits end how to deal with this. They had contacted several Vets, but other than putting her on Creon and grain free kibble, the vets did not know what to do next, short of euthanising her.

They wanted that to be a last resort. The final straw was that someone reported them to the RSPCA for neglect.

Their case was far from that. They had all the invoices from all the Vets they had consulted, to prove that they were doing everything possible. I suggested that they bring her back to me, and let me try and bring her back to health. She was 19.5kg. Just skin and bone. I signed onto a website specifically for EPI dogs. I cannot speak more highly of the people that gave me advice.

Firstly they suggested that EPI dogs usually are deficient in Vitamin B12. After consultation with my Vet, I took that advice and started giving her B12 twice a week. My Vet put her on a 3 week course of Metronizole to make sure that any infections were cleared up. I elected to bypass all the so called "specific foods" and put her on VIP Grain Free Kibble, available from Woolworths (another recommendation from someone else who had used this kibble successfully). At this stage she was still on the Creon tablets twice daily. Very quickly there was a difference.

After speaking with the EPI Website again, I decided to try and source Pig Pancreas for Joy. This was done with great difficulty. They are very hard to find. But I managed to find some and minced the fresh pancreas, froze it, and then cut it into 60gm measured pieces. I then cut the Creon out. The Creon is a replacement enzyme. She was given Pig Pancreas twice a day initially. Her motions almost immediately became firmer. I then increased the dose to three times daily. Her motions were completely normal. Yay, no more scrubbing the kennel twice a day! We kept up with the Vitamin B12 injections. And her weight started to creep up. Bit by bit we watched her improve. After a while we were able to go back to twice a day. She was still

gaining weight. On the odd day, we would have a bit of a relapse, but these episodes lessened as time went on.

When she weighed 29kg I decided that she could go back to her owners. They had been anxiously watching her progress, the full way. They would come and visit her regularly. Joy will continue on the B12 for the rest of her life. The grain free kibble will also remain. The Pig Pancreas is impossible to get. We have tried Australia wide to source it. We are now moving across to Beef Pancreas, as we have exhausted our supply of Pig Pancreas.

My friends on the EPI website suggested the Beef as an alternative. Her coat is remaining good. And best of all she is a well loved member of their family. I am so glad that they contacted me about Joy. I have learnt so much, and we now have a dog that will live her life in pretty good condition.

I found a lack of knowledge about this problem, was across most Vets. I am glad I have had the opportunity to research it, and am more than happy to share my knowledge. And once again so thankful to the people I met through www.epi4dogs.com

Lee Baker
Amberg German Shepherds





Joy's original coat condition A happier and much more healthy Joy!

Editor's Note— The pancreas is the organ in the body responsible for producing insulin (which regulates the body's blood sugar levels) and digestive enzymes (which aid in the digestion of starches, fats, and proteins in an animal's diet). If the pancreas fails to produce enough of these digestive enzymes, exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, or EPI, develops.

EPI may affect a dog's gastrointestinal system, as well as general nutrition, and can cause problems such as weight loss, muscle atrophy, poor coat and chronic diarrhea. The condition is thought to be hereditary in German Shepherds but can also appear due to other causes such as cancer and infection.

A dog with EPI left untreated, will starve to death no matter how much he eats. Prior to that he will suffer from malnutrition. There are a number of tests used to diagnose EPI.

If you have any concerns about your dog due to him displaying the above symptoms, please see your vet without delay. With appropriate assistance and management, dogs with EPI can live a normal life with a normal life span.