



CH. Ketka's BluWater Kalypso Kid; CGC

Upper Airway Syndrome and Why I Got Involved

Kaly came into my life when she was 6 months old, we bonded immediately; maybe it was the fact that our birthdays were only one day apart, maybe it was just fate; but whatever it was, it is strong and true. Kaly would do just about anything for me and follows me wherever I go and whatever I'm doing, there she is. As I sit here at my computer writing this article, she is at my feet resting, she's ALWAYS nearby.

Kaly was an energetic pup when I got her, always on the move investigating. Outside ... always looking for that ever elusive squirrel. As active as she was, she made no unusual noises; didn't seem to tire easily; wasn't bothered by heat; and she wasn't what you would consider a 'barker' either. (Yes, she barked, but she *always had a good reason* and would pretty much cease when told to.) The only things Kaly did different from our other Norwich was: instead of whining, she grunted and she snored, not loudly but none the less she made little noises when asleep. We thought both these things endearing and something that it was individual to Kaly herself.

Kaly was made for the show ring; she just loved it and would just 'strut' her stuff very proudly, whenever she got the chance, in the ring or out. Did someone say 'free stack'? Yep, she was a 'ham' all right and a big show off too, no doubt. She loved the 'show environment, what would be considered stressful for other dogs, certainly was not for her.

It was October 2002; we traveled from Michigan to Pennsylvania for the Montgomery Circuit; Kaly and myself, along with two of my friends and their dogs. It was Thursday, the first day of showing at Hatboro, and everything seemed rather routine up to that point. Well, until we were on our way out of the show site to go back to the hotel, that is. All of a sudden I heard a strange noise coming from behind me; it was Kaly struggling to breathe! We had just pulled out of the parking lot and had to make an immediate U-turn to get back in. Once back in the lot we pulled directly up to the AKC tent. I was in a panic, Kaly was turning blue and there was nothing I could do to help her, but get her the veterinarian on site. The Vet immediately came and gave Kaly a shot. I was so upset at that point, I couldn't have told you what it was, but it seemed to help a bit and we were advised to get her to the Emergency Veterinary Hospital as quickly as we possibly could. We went back to the hotel and asked where the Emergency Veterinary Hospital was. Upon getting the directions (thank God it was really close), we set off to have Kaly evaluated and treated.

She seemed better upon arrival, breathing much easier, but she was still whisked off to the triage/trauma room for evaluation. Several minutes later (it seemed like hours), the Doctor came in and said she had a tracheal collapse and had some swelling and needed to be in an oxygen cage for at least 24 hours. They would administer some steroids and a sedative, which hopefully would settle her down, alleviate the swelling and ease her breathing. I was devastated to say the least, thinking that she would just get treated and released. So, with the support of my friends, I left her there with these strangers, but not before I made them promise to call me (on my cell phone) if there were ANY changes at all, even good ones.

Needless to say I couldn't sleep that night and morning took forever to come. First thing, I called to check on Kaly and I was informed that she was somewhat improved, but that she needed to remain in their care (in the O2 cage) for the rest of the day and *MAYBE* late that night she could come out. This time however; I talked to a different Doctor and was told that she still had some swelling, which was "adding insult to injury" because of her **ELONGATED SOFT PALLETTE**. Wait a minute, the other Doctor told me she had a **COLLAPSING TRACHEA!** Do I need to tell you how I felt? My baby was not only out of sight, but in the care of people I didn't even know and wasn't sure I trusted either. Here I am several hundred miles from home and these guys can't even agree on diagnosis for her!

Somehow I made it through the rest of the circuit, attending the shows (as a spectator), but always worrying about how Kaly was doing. Finally, after two days she was released. She was as ecstatic as was I!!! We stayed for the "big show" on Sunday and traveled back home that following Monday. By now Kaly was back to her old self and happy to be traveling (per usual). She seemed fine, like nothing had ever happened. No residual noises, no blueness, nothing to make one ever think she had ever had an episode of respiratory distress. Upon the advise of the Emergency Vet, I bought a harness for Kaly, one that wouldn't put any pressure on her neck for her walks to potty on the way home.

Once back home, I quickly made an appointment with her regular veterinarian for her to be seen and evaluated. Her Vet said that she could see anything out of the ordinary in respiratory system. Sounded fine on auscultation; no heavy breathing; no wet breathing; nothing. Another set of X-rays were taken (I brought the ones done in PA for comparison) and they did NOT enlighten us any as they too were normal!! Her trachea was of normal proportions and her soft palette was normal as well. Blood panels were done and they came back normal as well. The diagnosis from her veterinarian ... Possible allergic reaction from an unknown allergen, otherwise in good physical health. OK, now what? I trusted her Doctor, and felt the appropriate testing had been done, so we went back to life as usual.

Kaly was bred in November 2002 (a third try that *finally* took, they say the third time is a charm). One week before she was due to whelp, I had X-rays taken to determine number and size of the puppies. There were two healthy puppies waiting to be born, but I was advised that maybe I should think about a C-section for her, as the puppies would probably be too big for her to deliver if they went the full 63 days. She made 63 days and so when she went into labor, I called to alert the veterinarian and made my way to the office

for the C-section. Well, as luck would have it, she probably could have whelped those puppies on her own, but I was glad to have not taken any chances. Both puppies were delivered strong and healthy. Thinking back now, the only thing that I can remember being somewhat out of the ordinary, was when she was extubated (the intubation tube removed); there was some blood on it, telling me that perhaps the intubation tube should have been a size smaller (a clue here).

Several months later (in the spring) Kaly started some "reverse sneezing", when I inquired about it with several breeder friends, and her Vet; I was told that it was probably an allergic reaction, to the springtime environment and not to worry. It only happened a few times, so I **didn't** worry about it and when it happened again in the fall, I was sure it must be allergies.

In June of 2003 Kaly was bred again, this time she free whelped; but we lost the last puppy because it took so long for her to deliver it, that the placenta became separated. With this delivery; however, she seemed very stressed, in pain and had somewhat of a labored breathing. I attributed that to the fact she was in pain and having trouble pushing out the last puppy. Kaly doesn't tolerate pain very well (unlike most Norwich), so it seemed rather natural to be labored and stressed in breathing.

Fall came again and with it more of the reverse sneezing, as did the following spring along with the same; still thinking nothing but allergies. But in the summer Kaly started to exhibit some labored breathing, mostly with stress (any kind even happy stress) and she was starting to become very heat intolerant. Dummy me; I thought that was due to her being black and tan. Most black and tans don't do well in high temperatures or in the direct sunlight of summer.

2004: Over the next year her snoring got much louder and more frequent, as did her intolerance to heat and exercise. Having been told she was still fine, but that her trachea was slightly small. This was diagnosed by her vet during a teeth cleaning. She said she had a little trouble intubating her. *Another clue that I didn't pick up on!*

Kaly was bred a last time in March of 2005, as her pregnancy progressed, her breathing became very labored and caused me great concern. After some investigating and a referral from a Bull Dog breeder, we found Dr. William Schultz in Okemos, Michigan. Dr. Schultz is a general veterinarian who has special interests in two things: canine reproduction and the breathing problems of brachycephalic breeds such as Bulldogs, Pugs, etc. So I made an appointment for Kaly to go for her pregnancy X-ray and an evaluation of her breathing issues. It was he that told me that Kaly had not only FIVE puppies this time, but that she would definitely need a C-section as well. He said it was because her trachea was narrowed with a massive amount of scar tissue and she also had Everted Laryngeal Saccules!! The issue was getting enough oxygen to the puppies and whether or not he could intubate her first. If he could, then he would deliver the puppies pronto; if not; then he would have to remove the saccules and as much of the scar tissue as possible; then he would intubate her and do the C-section.

As it turned out Kaly went into labor two days before the scheduled C-section! I called Dr. Schultz office and told them we were on our way (one hour drive time). She was taken right in and evaluated as I watched. The news was bad Dr. Schultz couldn't intubate her, WAY TOO MUCH scar tissue and saccules, to allow it. So he removed the saccules and as much of the scar tissue as he could, then proceeded to intubating her for the C-section/spay. (Yes, we decided a spay was the right thing to do for her.) The puppies were way too tiny! If I hadn't known better I would have said they were a week or better pre-mature!! They were oxygen deprived and therefore underdeveloped, they didn't even have any fur yet.

Kaly was put in recovery, the puppies were put into an incubator (after working on them for over an hour) and I was sent off to have lunch (ya like I really wanted to eat). We went to a restaurant close by, but before I could even order, my phone rang! It was Kaly, she had crashed, but not to worry Doctor had re-intubated her and she was now stable and doing OK. Have lunch and then come on back. I got another call a few minutes later, asking if there was a veterinarian by me that had an oxygen cage. That I could transport her to them and she would be closer to me, while she recuperated for 24 hours or so in the O2 cage. Needless to say, I was a bit skeptical; I paid for my lunch and hurried back to the doctor's office. After talking to Dr. Schultz, we made the decision that I would transport Kaly to Michigan State Veterinary Hospital's Intensive Care Unit. It was only two miles away, but that was the longest two miles of my life. Transporting her with the intubation tube still in and hearing her labor to breath was very unsettling, to say the least.

Kaly was admitted to their Intensive Care Unit, evaluated and determined that to need a tracheotomy. This would allow her trachea to rest and hopefully the swelling would go down quickly. Poor Kaly she was cut from stern to stern on her belly, now they wanted to do the same to her throat. She was shaved from under her neck to her business end and both front legs were also shaved for the IVs. The 'trach' was put in and I was allowed to go see her. She looked so sad and pitiful, all I could do was stand by helplessly and cry. I drove home and of course couldn't sleep that night.

I traveled one hour each way to see her for two weeks. She wouldn't eat for the staff, so I had to go so she would stay nourished. Once she got the idea that I would be there everyday, she started to recover, but not as quickly as we would have liked. The swelling was slow to go down and there was a chance that she would have to have a permanent tracheotomy tube. I was advised that euthanasia was also an alternative. NOT FOR ME IT WASN'T!! Especially when they said that she wouldn't be in any pain, that it was just the matter of the amount of work needed to maintain the tracheotomy. Too much work, are they crazy? This is my Kaly we are talking about here; the one that was always there for me, the one that would do the impossible for me; NO way was that too much to do. If it was necessary, I would do it for as long as she needed it and told them so. Over the next five days we lost all five of the puppies. They were just to darned tiny and underdeveloped to make it.

Kaly slowly improved and two and a half weeks later she was released. She was to remain 'at rest' in a crate for the next two weeks and her tracheotomy 'stoma' (opening) was to be cleaned twice a day. We put her in a 2X3' puppy pen in our bedroom away from all the daily commotion. We called it the 'recovery room' or the 'Princess Pen'. She was more than content to be home, even if it meant she had to stay in the bedroom away from everybody and get all that 'special' attention. We return two weeks later for a recheck and we received the best news, no permanent tracheotomy!! She was healing nicely and her breathing was less and less labored.

Kaly has recovered with restrictions of course; she has to be walked using a harness, restrained from certain activities, even happy stress can cause her problems. Not because of the saccules; they are gone now, but because the excess scar tissue (what couldn't be removed) has narrowed her trachea somewhat.

She missed the show circuit so badly (it was her favorite thing to do, remember). Every time I would get things ready to go for a 'show weekend' she would get so excited and then depressed because she couldn't go. But we have found a cure for that problem.... We now camp at as many shows as possible; so Kaly can go. That way she thinks she's still doing her 'thing'. She still loves to 'lord' over her domain and mother everything in sight. She is 'happy as a lark' just surveying her yard. (Pictured below) and I'm happy to still have her and that her quality of life is good.

So why am I telling you all of this? Because I don't want anyone else experience what we did. Not the humans and most certainly not the dogs! If Kaly had been diagnosed correctly the **FIRST** time (with the Everted Laryngeal Saccules), had the saccules removed; then she wouldn't have built up such massive amounts of scar tissue (after being intubated) and she wouldn't have had to go through such a traumatic experience of almost losing her life.

You see, the dog *doesn't necessarily have to be a 'noisy breather' to have a problem*. Kaly certainly didn't (not until after she had been intubated for the first C-section.) and I certainly didn't think Kaly had a problem so serious that she would loose a whole litter of puppies due to lack of oxygen during gestation, not to mention HER OWN LIFE! Kaly **HAD the saccules all this time**; but by being misdiagnosed for close to four years, an excess amount of scar tissue had developed and worsened the problem to a **deadly degree**.

We need to become aware that these saccules **ARE a PRIMARY** condition in our breed and NOT always a secondary issue to another airway disorder/disease! If someone had educated me to the fact that a good percentage of our dogs HAVE these Everted Laryngeal Saccules, I would have made haste in having her screened for them. But life IS full of "should a", "would a", "could a's" and we can't change the past. **But we sure can change the future!!**

It is my educated opinion we need to make screening for Everted Laryngeal Saccules one of our routine screening test for our breed. A protocol is being developed by Dr. Schultz just for that purpose. There are two methods of exam: 1.) by "scoping" (discussed in my previous article) or 2.) by just using a tongue depressor, both require the dog be *SLIGHTLY*. 'under' for exam. Keep in mind that if done with a tongue depressor and your veterinarian does NOT have (or use) an endoscope; that the dog will have to be anesthetized again for surgical removal of the saccules using the endoscope for accurately.

People PLEASE consider testing not only those dogs that ARE noisy, but also those that are NOT! You never know you just might save a life!



"Just surveying my yard."

By Sue Lawrence, February 2007
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