

Rory's Lesson on Drug Overdose

Although we came really close to losing her I am happy to say that my sweet girl is fine now (early Feb 15).

I want to share the lesson learned in the hopes others can prevent a similar incident.

Rory is 10 years old. She's been healthy generally but in January she developed a urinary tract infection and she was treated for 12 days after which a urine check still showed an infection. My Vet decided to change her prescription to sulfamethoxazole-trimethoprim, 480 mg every 12 hours (something I didn't even pay attention to the day I obtained the script but learned later on). However, it would have to be gotten at a pharmacy as my vet didn't have the medicine. When I went to the pharmacy (for humans) I told the druggist that the prescription was for a dog weighing close to 50 lbs. The pharmacy was out of that exact drug but had another one; the directions were to give 3 pills every 12 hours.

After six days, she was just not acting right; she was very skittish. So I called the pharmacist to see if Rory was having a reaction to this, was told that they usually deal with people and not dogs, was advised to call my vet which I did. I was told no that should not be, but to watch her (in hindsight, it was assumed that the dosage was correct). After a couple more days I knew things were not right with her, called my Vet again and was told to stop giving the pills and to bring in a urine sample.

For the second and third days off the pills, Rory seemed to get better and a urine recheck came back negative. Big relief, but the next day, she was not really moving, she was hanging her head, had one eye swollen shut and red. Then the second eye became swollen; she could barely open either eye. Of course this was on a Sunday! We rushed to the Animal Emergency, where they examined her, took blood and she had a temp of 103. Her behavior was atypical for a vet visit (usually she is fearful); now she just lay on the floor sprawled out.

She was hospitalized for 24 hours, put on IV fluids and given a medication (mannitol) to help with pressure around her brain. After discharge, we took her to an ophthalmologist at another vet ER – she was diagnosed with severe inflammation of the cornea and scleral involvement. Treatment for that was an eye cream, antibiotic, and steroids. Fortunately that problem also has resolved.

On further study with the pharmacy, the first ER learned that the dose being given was 3-6 times the recommended amount. The pill was white with H 49 stamped on it, something the ER learned later. (*Editor's Note: a google search finds that this pill is sulfamethoxazole-trimethoprim, 800 mg/160 mg*). Needless to say I was devastated to know that she had been overdosed. It has been almost two weeks now and she is doing fine, I can see her beautiful brown eyes.....

Please be aware if you need to fill a script at a pharmacy to make sure the mg is written on the bottle (Rory's was not) and compare that with the script your vet wrote. It took phone calls and digging into that in order to find out what the dosage had been. It has been very painful for me to write about this, but I never want any other dog or owner to go through this. Thank you Debby and Larry for your support and Cheryl Poliak for your encouragement.

Sue McCrate and my special Rory. (*Editor's Note: Sue and her husband have been involved with Bearded Collies since the days before the breed was recognized by AKC (1977)*).

Commentary from Linda Aronson, DVM. First I would like to say that for the majority of antibiotics, the Beardie dose would be no more than 1 pill 2 or 3 times a day. The one exception I can think of is doxycycline. Pharmacies must by law write the drug name, dosage, Trade name equivalent (if a substitution) and manufacturer on the label of all drugs whether for human or animal use. Failure to do so should be investigated by the FDA.

Whenever your dog (or you) receives a script though it is important to check that the drug is the one you were expecting and that the dose is appropriate, if you can't remember call your vet/doctor and ask. Rory's case hit home to me though because back in 1989 a very similar drug - Tribissen which is also a sulfa drug (sulfadiazine) and trimethoprim - triggered my then 10 month old puppy to become Addisonian. She too had a UTI and in 3 days she lost 9 lbs of weight, the first sign of a problem. I later found out these drugs were on a list of known triggers for autoimmune disease (including hypothyroidism and blood disorders), and they also can cause many other nasty side

effects including those that Rory experienced and even at the correct dose. In my first year of veterinary school I learned that UC Davis veterinary school had suspended use of this class of antibiotics due to the often fatal side effects, and I wrote a paper on the subject for my pharmacology class, which hit home with the professor who asked to keep it for his reference (this was before the days when we wrote papers on computers). My daughter and I are also allergic to this class of antibiotics. Thank you Sue for sharing Rory's story.