



HEALTH BITES

By Jane Laulis

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**HOLISTIC VALLEY FEVER SUPPORT STUDY:
PRELIMINARY RESULTS
Conducted by Randall Thomason**



Randall and Hobie

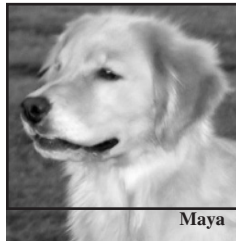
Several years ago Randall Thomason did a presentation in front of a large group of RAGofAZ members discussing the holistic approach to care of your Golden. As fellow members, we are still amazed and grateful at the number of people that thank him for that talk. Randall is a nutritional biochemist who has consulted on human and animal health for almost 30 years and had a national radio show.

He is an expert at drug and nutraceutical design. He was also the consulting biochemist for Pet Health Pharmacy for 5 years until he left to start his own company, Rogue Research, named after my mastiff. I am a former pet-advice columnist, budding television writer-director and author. Our paths crossed when I, from Vermont, was trying to save my beloved writing partner, Junior (photo at right), from advanced heart disease. My English mastiff had 3.9 paws in the grave and the meds were not working and, frankly, the experts at Tuft's University could not figure out why he was even still alive. I chose to go holistic or treat the "whole" dog and have never looked back. I used my credentials to interview key holistic veterinary experts and authors such as Oprah's vet, Marty Goldstein, and one of the founders of pet acupuncture, Allen Schoen. I begged Allen to see my dog, and it was he who referred me to Randall from Arizona. We ditched the heart meds and Junior lived almost 2 more years. After Junie died in 2001, I decided it was time to try a breed that typically had a longer life span and connected with a Golden Retriever pup, "Hobie." In 2005, a second wild Golden girl, "Maya," came into our lives. "Blue," a rescued Heeler mix, is the guardian for both.



In April 2007, both of our Golden Retrievers were diagnosed with coccidioidomycosis, or valley fever (VF). At this time, Randall was completing research for his patent pending biochemical analysis method, BBID. Suddenly there in front of us was this disease. We had not been back in the Valley from Flagstaff but 4 months, and the dogs were enjoying enormous romps in the desert and digging like fiends. Randall wisely decided to get the Comprehensive Coccidioides Panel for their annual check-up (something we now recommend to everyone). Our dogs presented in excellent robust health, so there was no reason to think there was a problem. Yet, the standard protocol with some vets is to treat any positive titer with fluconazole, itraconazole or ketoconazole, medications which stop the fungus from replicating but do nothing for the immune system. Based on this and on the fact that dogs can live on these drugs for months, years or a lifetime, the side effects, and the simple fact that the commonly-used fluconazole has only a 50% success rate, we decided to go down a different path.

We spoke to our local vet and told him that we would like to use a holistic approach but monitor the blood work closely with him. He understood and agreed to work with us. Hobie was at 1:4, stayed at that titer in 2007 and went negative in 2008; Maya, who was at 1:32, dropped to 1:8 after six months. Most interesting about Maya is although she seemed robust she was not. In retrospect, we realized she had intermittent diarrhea and occasional lameness when running hard around bushes after lizards; she had become panicked about riding in cars. These can be symptoms. The problem with her was that she had more energy than 10 dogs, so it was hard to think her in ill health. Hobie, who is a big mellow Golden, seemed a little lethargic. Just little things but they add up.



Maya

Randall's belief is that there is some crucial link in the immune system in all compromised dogs, and the goal was to provide an anti-fungal capacity while boosting the immune system; he designed a protocol for each dog to address these issues. Interestingly, during his time at Pet Health, VF was not even remotely as prevalent as it is now.

We researched valley fever extensively. Randall attended the scientific Cocci Study Group in San Diego and visited the Valley Fever Center for Excellence in Tucson (VFCE). He discussed the disease with different experts and found varying opinions. In the May 2008 issue of *Golden Tales*, Liz Tataseo did an excellent job of summarizing some of the existing information and issues with her column on "Why RAGofAZ Tests New Intakes for Valley Fever," referencing the University of Arizona Valley Fever Studies published by VFCE. For purposes of this article, we will not repeat this information, but a great deal is available at www.vfce.org

We learned a lot, but mostly we learned that there is still a lot of confusion about diagnosing VF, when and how to medicate, and options for people or animals that are symptomatic. Statistics report that 60-70% of the dogs that contract this disease get over it on their own, so medicating an asymptomatic dog with low titers can be a tricky business, particularly when the drugs have some pretty potent

side effects. Yet the disease is insidious beyond belief, and a low titer can still be present with an animal that is incredibly sick. Valley fever also seems to create low thyroid function in many dogs. The vets call this euthroid because it is not true hypothyroidism, but after months and years of this suppression the results can be the same, and as we know, Golden Retrievers are already susceptible to thyroid issues.

It was in December 2007 that Randall decided to conduct a pilot study in 2008 using the components he had worked with on his own dogs. The study was called: *A pharmacognosy approach to conventional drug therapy for reducing serologic titers in canine subjects diagnosed with the fungal disease, coccidioidomycosis.*

Randall wanted to work with different breeds in different circumstances and with different diets to really test the effectiveness of his formula. The year prior with our dogs he had used a combination of amino acids, green foods, enzymes, and assorted micronutrients. The problem was that they were in pill form and not combined synergistically or by the delicate ratios with which Randall is such an expert. Plus, it was time consuming and would take me half an hour to get everything out and dispensed. So, for the study he combined the 30-plus components into an easy-to-use and palatable powder where the dogs would get a teaspoon twice daily mixed in their food. The formula was designed to raise the metabolism, support the thyroid, complement commercial diets or any diet and provide the building blocks to the immune system for creating antibodies and defending against VF as well as a variety of diseases and conditions.

The goals were:

- 1) if the dog needed meds then use the formula to amplify their effect and get them quickly off the meds
- 2) provide support for the animal so that the cocci would not rebound
- 3) provide a formula that pets could use prior to traveling to endemic areas
- 4) provide a formula that could be used in lieu of drugs for low titers and asymptomatic dogs
- 5) provide something that impacts the endocrine system and prevents the drain that the cocci cause
- 6) help accelerate the rehabilitation for rescued animals
- 7) provide a reasonably-priced OTC item for people to purchase.



Skipper, a rescued Basset mix, had a VF titer of 1:8 for years. After several months in the study his titer dropped to 1:4 and has stayed there off of VF meds

The standards were strict, and dogs were required to get a full Comprehensive Coccidioides panel through Idexx or Desert Diseases Profile through Antech every 3 months and be examined by the vet (note Antech titers start at 1:4 vs. 1:2 for Idexx). This panel includes a CBC, Chem 27,

T4 and Cocci-immunodiffusion titer. Participants were enrolled for either 3 months or 6 months. Diets were left the same but other drugs,

heartworm, flea & tick and supplementation were stopped. The selection was for medium to large dogs that had the highest risk levels.



Aspen, a RAGofAZ rescue, had a titer of 1:8, which decreased to 1:2 and has stayed there off of VF meds

The original study was classed as Group 1 and began in February of 2008. Of ten dogs, 8 were rescued pets, several of these from RAGofAZ. Five of the 8 were newly rescued and with their respective organizations seemingly suffering from numerous issues coupled with the VF. One dog was terminated from the study for noncompliance. We went on to offer a Group 2 so that additional pets could be enrolled, and there are now almost 30 dogs that represent a broader spectrum because they contain intact/performance animals as well.



At the beginning of the study, Gretchen could hardly stand as her body was so atrophied

Although the titer is one measure of the disease, the metabolic and immune parameters are equally crucial. Randall critically assessed these each time a panel came in. Occasionally there were ups and downs, but in the end every dog had overall improvement, some much more dramatically than others. What Randall also discovered is that the formula also acts as a natural anti-parasitic, anti-viral and anti-tick and flea formula. No dog to date has had a recurrence of fleas or ticks. In every dog, appetite and energy improved. Several dogs were extremely atrophied, particularly a boxer girl named Gretchen, who gained 10 lbs in 3 months and was also cleared of Ehrlichia (tick fever) without the use of meds; she is regaining the use of a leg at somewhat remarkable speed.



After 3 months of Randall's formula, Gretchen was standing, walking and swimming; her VF titer decreased from 1:256 to 1:64, a very dramatic rehabilitation



Bailey, another RAGofAZ rescue, still has a VF titer of 1:32 off the meds, but his appetite and energy have increased dramatically since starting on Randall's formula

VF and the normal drugs typically create a loss of appetite and lethargy. Randall was able to use the formula to boost the animal so the drug was more effective. The pet with a robust appetite and desire to exercise flourishes. Animals need oxygen gained through exercise. They need nutrients and whole proteins to build the immune system, as the animal can become extremely depleted, robbing its bone marrow to deal with the constant antigen production of the organism. This is most likely what happens with asymptomatic dogs that collapse – something else occurs where the taxation to the immune system simply overloads the host.

For purposes of this article we are briefly summarizing the outcome of the study. The product should be available for sale by November 2008. We will also continue to work privately with pets that have VF. For more information please go to our website at www.roguerresearch.com and check for updates. Full details of the case studies will be posted as they conclude, as well as the full article that defines the study.

Here are the final results that we have to date:

- ◆ Golden Retriever (2 months) 1:4 to negative titer: never on drugs [intact]
- ◆ Golden Retriever (6 months) 1:8 to 1:2 titer: 3 months on 3 months off drugs [former rescue/pet]
- ◆ Golden Retriever (6 months) 1:32 to 1:32 titer: 3 months on 3 months off drugs [former rescue/pet]
- ◆ Weimaraner (3 months) 1:8 to 1:2 on drugs [new rescue]
- ◆ Weimaraner (3 months) cancer did not return [new rescue]
- ◆ Boxer (3 months) 1:256 to 1:64 on drugs, Ehrlichia 1:25 to negative no drugs [new rescue]
- ◆ Boxer (2 months) terminated [former rescue]
- ◆ Basset Mix (5 months) 1:8 to 1:4: 3 months on drugs and 2 months off (several years at 1:8) [former rescue/pet]
- ◆ Collie (4 months) 1:256 to 1:16: on drugs [show/breed/intact]

We are absolutely incredibly grateful to the dedication of all the people that worked with us during the study and for their tremendous support in helping us conduct this research. Our product will be called Desert Defense™ for dogs and should be available in November. We hope to keep it under \$45. Please check our website constantly for how to order or for pet stores that will carry the product. Our web address is www.roguerresearch.com

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