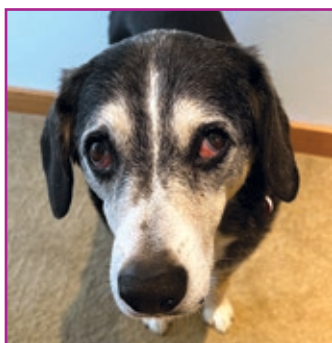


Inga's Eye Scare and How She Became a Glaucoma Study Control Dog

by Kari Gilje

In late May, my daughter and I noticed Inga was squinting her left eye a lot and it was a little red. My immediate thought and fear: glaucoma. I know so many Entlebuchers who have recently developed glaucoma, some of them literally overnight. I knew I couldn't take a 'wait and see' attitude, especially since I recently moved to a rural area, 4-5 hours away from any canine eye clinics.



Left eye before treatment.



Left eye after 10 days of treatment.

It was a Sunday evening, but I called my new vet clinic's number and the on-call vet called me back (there are two vets, which is great – and they are both wonderful). I explained the recent issues with Entles and glaucoma.

The next morning, the vet checked her out for ulcers or any foreign bodies in the eye and saw nothing. They had me start Inga on antibiotic eye ointment and anti-inflammatories just in case. But this vet clinic doesn't have the tool (called a tonometer) to check eye pressures, so they made me an appointment for their preferred eye specialist, Dr. Matthew Landry, and the next day we made the 4-hour drive to the other side of the state to see him. Fortunately, he did not see any signs of glaucoma or a tumor (the other possible really bad thing). He did an ultrasound and saw some possible inflammation/fluid behind her eye and said that is often a sign of a dental problem. So in addition to the ointment and anti-inflammatories, he put her on oral antibiotics. I'm pleased to report that by the time we finished the medications two weeks later, her eye looked fine.

I was aware of the Entlebucher Glaucoma Study being done at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by Dr. Gillian McLellan and her team, funded by the American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Health Foundation (CHF). I knew they were looking for control dogs for DNA comparison – Entles over 10 years of age without glaucoma. Control dogs also needed to have a recent gonioscopy (a test assessing the internal drainage angle of the eye) exam, and I had been intending to get one for Inga and submit it to the research team.

I told Dr. Landry about the glaucoma study, and once he determined Inga did not have glaucoma, I asked him to do a gonioscopy. A funny side note – I didn't realize it until we got to the clinic and Dr. Landry came into the room, but he did Inga's one and only other gonioscopy in 2014. He was at a different clinic then. He looked at her and commented, "Well, you are a little grayer than when I last saw you!" (Aren't we all!)

After Dr. Laney sent me the completed ACVO/OFA Gonioscopy Exam Form, I contacted Dr. McLellan to see if Inga could be a control dog for the study. She said "yes" after seeing the report, commenting that "for an old girl these are pretty good numbers."

A couple of weeks later Inga had her under-anesthesia dental x-rays and cleaning. There were no signs of tooth problems, and the vet said her eyes and the area behind them looked normal. That was a huge relief. However, this good news was tempered by some bad news. While Inga was under, the vet also removed several skin masses around her neck and face. Most were benign, but a small black mass on her upper lip among her whiskers turned out to be a malignant melanoma (skin cancer).

Inga had some additional testing and it appears that the cancer has not spread very far. I took her to see a canine oncologist in early August and after discussing the options, I started her on the canine melanoma vaccine, which is a form of immunotherapy. She will get three more doses, every two weeks. She will also get two sessions of electrochemotherapy right at the site where the growth was removed, just to be sure any remaining cancer cells don't start growing again there.



Inga and Blue – back to normal in early June.

After that, we will see how she reacts – if there is no spread, and no new growths, she will just get a booster vaccine every six months. If there are signs of re-growth or spread, then she may need surgery to get more area around where the initial growth was and possibly have her first set of lymph nodes removed. I'm hoping for the best – she is my "heart dog."

As my mother used to say, "Getting old isn't for sissies." I guess that applies to dogs, too.