

GRREAT *Foster Homes*

Winter 2013/2014 Edition

GRREAT Beginnings

www.GRREAT.org/fosters

Polo 13-123: The GRREAT Egyptian Foster Dog

By Mary Collings, Intake/Foster Home Coordinator

On November 23, 2013, I was contacted by Laila, a woman in Cairo, Egypt, who was looking for help for Polo, an 11 month old Golden. Polo had been living with a family in Egypt and his days were filled with running and playing with the kids in the family. He was a typical Golden who loved life until the family's gardener decided it would be great fun to hit Polo repeatedly on his back, causing him to become paralyzed in his hind end. Laila told us that the only way Polo could possibly be helped would be for him to get to the U.S. She offered to pay all of the expenses to get Polo here and 3 weeks later, on December 14th, Polo was welcomed to the U.S. by his foster home, Scott and Kelly Daniels! Scott and Kelly drove up to JFK in New York and waited for hours for his arrival, as the flight was delayed due to snow.



Polo has been fitted with a special wheelchair that has enabled him to move around freely and even play with Scott and Kelly's other dogs outside. When he arrived, he had sores on his back legs from dragging them as he pulled himself along. The sores have been cleaned up and should heal with proper care and treatment, as well as no longer having to drag himself, thanks to his new wheelchair.

Our plan is to get Polo seen by a specialist, to see if there is anything we can do to help him walk again. Scott said that Polo does have some sensation in his back paws, as when they are tickled, he twitches and turns around to see who's tickling him.

Please consider making a donation to help us with Polo's care. You can look for updates about Polo on GRREAT's website, as well as the Facebook page that's been set up for him.



**GRREAT
MEMBERSHIP
RENEWAL
2014**

DON'T MISS A THING!

We are dependent upon membership dues, donations, and fundraising to operate. Your \$40 membership dues keeps the GRREAT News coming every quarter and will help save more Golden Retrievers in 2014. If you elect to "opt-out" of receiving the newsletter by mail, the \$40 is fully tax deductible. If you choose to receive the printed newsletter, \$30 is tax deductible (\$10 is the value of goods and services received). Membership also confers one vote in GRREAT elections.

The Golden Plumpkin

By Lucinda Twining, Medical Coordinator

Amazingly as many as 50% of dogs in the United States are overweight, so there is a good chance that your dog(s) or foster dog are “plumpkins” or have a dog pal who is! How do you know if your Golden or your Golden foster dog is a plumpkin? Well, with apologies to Jeff Foxworthy... —



✱ If you cannot gently run your fingers along your dog’s rib cage and easily feel his/her ribs; you might have a plumpkin!

✱ If you cannot stand over the dog and look at his/her back and see a waist just behind his/her rib cage but instead you see a “straight line” from head to tail, or worse yet, a broad rounded look to the back; you might have a plumpkin!

✱ When looking at your dog from the side, you cannot see a “tuck up” behind the rib cage and before the back legs but instead you see a “straight line” or a saggy belly; you might have a plumpkin!

Alright, your pup or foster pup is a chunky little monkey; what’s the harm in that? Very similar to their human companions, being overweight can cause a number of problems including place too much stress on their joints or on their heart, cause diabetes, and even shorten their lives by as much as a year or two.

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TIPS AND TRICKS

✱ Cleaning up pet stains can be a challenge, but here's a tip. Clean the mess, blot up as much moisture as possible, and use a carpet cleaner made specifically for pet stains. If there is still evidence of a stain, use a steam cleaner (a small hand-held cleaner costs about \$40 and chances are, you'll get your money's worth, as most of us have had to deal with carpet stains more than a few times). You can also use white vinegar to dissolve any discoloration in the carpet, but do a small "sample test" on the corner of your rug to make sure!

✱ Giving pills can be a challenge but putting a pill in a small blob of peanut butter or plain yogurt works well with most dogs. Not all dogs should be given peanut butter, but usually even a sick dog can have a very small amount of plain yogurt.

✱ Trouble getting cleaning solution into your dog's ears? Soak a cotton ball in the solution and insert in the ear canal. Rub your dog's ear and get it nice and wet inside. Remove the cotton ball and allow your dog to shake his head.

✱ At the first sign of a hot spot, clip the hair away from the irritated area and sprinkle Gold Bond Powder (sold at any drug store) on it and pat the powder on and around the area, re-applying as often as necessary. If you start treating the area quickly enough, the area should dry up and just might save a trip to the vet.

✱ Many dogs won't hold still when you're working on removing/untangling/cutting out a mat. If you have someone who can help you, have the person put a small treat inside a closed hand sitting in front of the dog, and this will distract the dog from what you're doing. While your dog is busy licking your helper's hand and trying to get the treat, you'll be able to better deal with the mat. Then give your dog the treat for being so good!

✱ Need to catch a urine sample from your shy 4-legged girl? Put her on a leash. Tape a handle to a ladle and slide it under to catch the stream, then transfer the liquid to a container. The low profile of the ladle won't startle your dog and cause her to lose focus.

Golden Plumpkin

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So, what can you do to slim down your Golden?

- 1. Go to your vet's office and get an accurate weight on your dog (most vets will allow you to come in and weigh your dog for free and without an appointment. Make a note of the date and the weight so that you can track the weight loss.
- 2. Ask your vet what your Plumpkin's ideal weight would be. Then you can use this calculator (<http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/dog-feeding-tips/dog-food-calculator/>) to determine how many calories your dog should be getting each day.
- 3. If you aren't already doing so, feed your dog a good quality food; preferably grain-free. You can go to the Dog Food Advisor website (<http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/>) to find good quality foods or to see where your food ranks.
- 4. The key is to go for slow, steady weight loss, so do not drastically cut back on your dog's food intake. Check his/her weight every week or two to ensure that the changes you are making are resulting in weight loss. You should aim for a loss of 3-5% of your dog's body weight per month; for example a 50 pound dog should lose ½ a pound per week or 2 pounds per month.
- 5. If you decide to continue to feed your dog the food you are currently feeding, do not follow the feeding instructions on the food bag unless your vet directs you to do so. For the most part, the instructions direct you to feed your dog quite a bit more than he or she actually needs. Instead try reducing the amount by 5% (ex. 1/8 cup for 2 cups of food). Weigh your dog in 1-2 weeks and if there is no weight loss, reduce the food by another 5%.
- 6. Consider dividing the food up so that you are feeding him/her 2-4 small meals each day. Just be sure you actually dividing the appropriate amount of food between the meals and not increasing the amount of food.
- 7. Be careful about feeding prescription weight loss, reduced-calorie, *lite*, or senior dog foods; often times these foods replace protein with carbohydrates. Dogs need protein to build muscle and protein actually helps a dog feel more satisfied after a meal. So, unless your dog has a condition where the vet has asked you to decrease his/her protein intake, look for a food that provides more protein and reduces the carbohydrates. You also want foods that have lower fat and fewer calories.
- 8. Replacing some of the dog's food with fiber, like green beans, can help a dog feel fuller if he/she needs to eat a reduced protein diet. But if there is no restriction on protein, try adding protein rather than fiber.
- 9. Don't forget to factor in treats when you are determining how many calories your dog is receiving! None of us wants to cut out treats completely, but be sure to consider the calories and reduce the amount of food appropriately. Avoid treats that are high in fat and calories, such as cheese, hot dogs, and peanut butter. Opt for healthier, lower calorie choices like baby carrots, broccoli, zucchini, apples, bananas, freeze-dried meat or boiled chicken breast. Please remember that grapes and raisins can be dangerous for your dog's health. If you must give a biscuit, try to find a higher protein, lower carb and lower fat biscuit. Also consider giving him only ½ a biscuit.
- 10. Even some chews, such as pig ears, can be high in fat. Instead, substitute Himalayan dog chews which are made from yak and cow milk and have less than 1 percent fat. Deer antlers are another low-fat, long-lasting option.
- 11. Increase the dog's activity; but if he/she has been mainly sedentary for quite a while start out slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of the activity. If he/she has a condition like severe arthritis, consider locating a place where the dog can swim or use an underwater treadmill.

Once your Golden or foster Golden has finally gotten down to his or her ideal weight it is important to continue to monitor his or her weight to ensure it doesn't begin creeping up again. Age, illness, reduced activity, and even some medications can lead to weight gain. So, for your dog's sake please keep an eye on the scale and be ready to make adjustments so that a small weight gain doesn't become a big problem.

HELP'EM UP HARNESS

By Jessie Pickard, Adoption Coordinator

My family and I had the amazing privilege of being the Long Term Foster Home for Bailey 04-092 for many years. Bailey had cerebellar ataxia (similar to cerebral palsy in people) and although he always managed to get around just fine, it was in his own unique way.

As Bailey aged, he began to have more and more trouble getting up from a laying down position, and staying up while walking. Many older dogs experience weakening in parts of their body as they age, particularly in their hind-quarters, and Bailey was no exception. Unfortunately for him, with the general unsteadiness of the rest of his body, he was having more trouble than most.

My husband and I tried various ways to help him to a standing position. We tried using a sling, and we tried just using our arms under his hips or shoulders, but nothing seemed to work well. We were off balance and Bailey would freeze and look so uncomfortable and uneasy with what was happening. We knew we couldn't keep doing what we were doing; one of us was going to get hurt. The first time Bailey's back legs gave out and he fell going down the ramp to the backyard, we knew we were out of time.

That's when we heard about the Help'Em Up harness. This harness offers full body stability with a minimum of body-hugging material. It is made of lightweight neoprene with convenient handles over the back and rump, and it supports the full body under both the shoulders and the hips. The harness is comfortable and can be worn by most dogs throughout the day.

Many veterinarians and orthopedic specialists use the Help'Em Up harnesses on dogs recovering from injuries or surgery. Since the material is buoyant, dogs undergoing aqua therapy can easily be led in and out of the water while secured. The unique design also helps stabilize a dog throughout the day, giving him support at the exact time he needs it, rather than wrestling with a sling and a leash.



From the very first day we fit Bailey into his harness, we could see an amazing change. The handles were perfectly situated to allow us to easily lift him, without putting ourselves, or Bailey, off-balance. And even better, once he was up, we could walk along beside him with our hand on the rear handle and keep him from falling.

Even when we were not near him, you could see that Bailey's confidence had returned; the harness gave him a sense of stability and he was back to his funny, brave self, even with a body that was in decline.

Since then, GRREAT has ordered several of the harnesses in various sizes, to make available to our foster homes with mobility-challenged dogs. Some dogs are recovering from surgery and will only need them temporarily, and others are aging or have permanent disabilities and will need them long-term. Either way, the dogs that have used them are easily able to get in and out of cars, up and down stairs, and up from laying down with a little help from their people.

<http://helpemup.com>