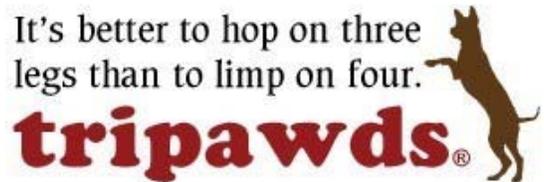


Bud's Long Road to Recover after MRSA

by Tripawd Mom Angel

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I would be happy to share more about our journey with you in hopes of being a resource for someone else in this predicament! Our journey was heart wrenching, financially draining and a roller coaster of a recovery ride. I should start by saying 98% of total hip replacements are successful. However, we did not stop to think that we would be 2 “percenters” in a not such a great way!

We have a very special and sweet golden retriever male dog named Bud. Bud is the only puppy that I have not rescued but picked out of a litter. Actually he was the one who picked us as we remember it!

He came home with us at seven weeks old. He filled the emptiness in our home after we had lost a young golden to cancer. I often refer to him as “saint” Bud because he really is just the best. He is deeply loved by myself, husband and young children. He is an integral part of our family in every way.



Bud had just turned 7 years of age when we took him to the veterinarian due some sensitivity in his hip and a slight limp in his left hind leg. After looking at the X-rays it was discovered that he had hip dysplasia. The hip was almost out of the joint and it had chipped his pelvis. We live in a rural state so our local vet referred us to an orthopedic specialist surgeon in another state and larger city. Phone calls were made. X-rays and information were exchanged. A total hip replacement surgery was discussed.

Almost a month later, Bud travelled 5 hours for his first clinical visit and possible surgery. Upon examination and digital X-rays, the orthopedic specialist surgeon felt that Bud would benefit from and be a good candidate for the total hip replacement. The surgery happened the next day and went wonderfully! A full recovery was expected.

However, two days later when Bud was to be released from ICU, his femur shattered! He was rushed into emergency surgery. The new hip was removed and the femur wired back together. Bud spent four more days in ICU with 24 hour care. We were given pain, antibiotic and anti inflammatory medicines. We travelled the long drive home.



The second week, Bud was to have his staples removed and a quick orthopedic exam here with our local vet. That week, he stopped using the hind leg. X-rays were taken and it showed that the femur had not shifted and everything was intact. We were given more pain medicine and asked to encourage Bud to use the leg more.

The fifth week, Bud travelled to the surgeon again. He examined Bud and was happy with his progress and recovery. We were told to continue on the same path of pain medicine and short leash walks. The eleventh week, Bud travelled again. Upon examination, the surgeon was immediately concerned that Bud was not further along in his recovery and mobility. X-rays were taken and it was determined that Bud had another femur fracture further in the bone. It was decided that the bone could not be repaired and the hind left limb should be amputated.



Bud became a tripawd the next day. The amputation took hours longer than expected. We were informed by the surgeon that the leg was full of scar tissue and infection. The infection had caused the second fracture in the femur. The surgeon took a culture sample of the infection. Bud spent another two days in ICU and we returned home with our tripawd. It was difficult travel and then care for Bud in those first few days. I had to isolate him to limit activity, lift him, walk him with a sling and give his medicines every eight hours. Bud seemed to be happier and in less pain, well at least at first he did! The culture was grown for five days. We were notified by the orthopedic specialist surgeon that it had tested positive for drug resilient MRSA. The antibiotic most effective for treatment Baytril 136 was prescribed. Apparently , there were only four antibiotics that showed some resistance to the MRSA. We were given a three week dose and reassured that because the source of the infection, the femur was gone, this would be an effective treatment.

I knew that MRSA can be fatal so I started looking for resources to refer too. I ended up contacting the Bella Moss foundation at <http://www.bellamossfoundation.com>

The site has a Q&A page with many topics including what MRSA is, how it is transmitted, how it is treated and etc. Bella was a beautiful “white ball of fluff” that died a very tragic death due to MRSA and the lack of information regarding the infection. The foundation does all kinds of wonderful work

such as financing research and educating pet owners and medical professionals.

I went to the support center and filled out a questionnaire. Jill Moss, the founder, personally contacted me right away. She sent articles she thought would be helpful, contact info for other people with MRSA dogs and forwarded my questions to a vet friend who specializes in MRSA. However sadly, I did find out that there is very little literature about MRSA bone infection in animals.

Only a couple of days after beginning the treatment, Bud was shaky, lethargic and had a cough. It was a holiday weekend and we went to the on call emergency vet. Bud had bronchitis.....more antibiotics. Finally Bud seemed to improve. He began to have more strength, stamina and mobility. We could see his personality shining and his “Budness” returning. He was playful. He wanted to roll in and muzzle the snow and go for car rides. Bud finished the Baytril.



Less than two weeks later, Bud developed a nasty skin infection on his hip area. It was a red round sore with pus almost two inches in width and 3 inches in length. It was spreading. Because of the MRSA, our local vet placed him on two more weeks of Baytril. The infection continued to spread within the first week. Bud lost a lot of hair. There was a blackening and browning of the skin, scabs and pus. The area went from the original spot next to hip, all of the way up to his spine and down to his tail.

Luckily, Bud never did have a fever or show other signs of being ill. The Baytril lost its effectiveness and the infection was resistant to it. Our vet was really concerned, he thought he might have to hospitalize Bud and give him IV antibiotics. He prescribed Doxycycline. Bud's skin began to improve. Bud was prescribed eight weeks of the oral antibiotic. There were weekly and then biweekly follow-up appointments for Bud.

Months into Bud's recovery, he fell and injured his remaining knee. I was afraid he had a tear in his ACL. After the initial exam, the vet thought so too. He explained to me that because of the MRSA, Bud would not be a candidate for surgery. He did not want to introduce hardware and bacteria into Bud. He was fearful that there may be a free floating MRSA cell that would attach itself to the hardware as before and this time the hardware could not be removed. Bud would have to live in a knee brace and on pain medicines.

In my heart, I knew this was not an option for us. No more pain for Bud! Euthanasia was a possible solution for us. I cried and waited. We were blessed that day! Upon further examination and X-rays it was determined that there was only some stretching and swelling.

Sadly, I have come to the conclusion that MRSA will always be a concern in Bud's recovery and treatment. It is not just the three week ordeal that the place he acquired it from, said it would be. I decided to continue to fight bravely, finding comfort and joy in spending each day while hoping for each tomorrow!

It is now 10 months since this journey began. Bud has returned to doing most all of the things he enjoys. He plays with his kids, chases balls, swims in the lake and enjoys being a dog. He is a bit more spoiled and somewhat pampered. The surgery and amputation sites have healed. The skin has healed. His fur has returned even though it is somewhat patchy. Presently there are no signs of infection, anywhere.

Should I have not assumed we would be part of that successful 98 percent? Yes! Is there guilt? Yes! Are there things I would do differently if I could? Yes! Do I wish I would have been more knowledgeable and a better advocate for my pet? Yes! Was this experience hard and hurtful to all of us involved? Yes! However Bud is still on the journey! Now he hops down the path on three legs instead of limping on four.