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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It looks like training is in full swing with the retrievers, pointers and spaniels. The retrievers train at the Horse Pasture on Tuesday PM (this is a change from Wednesday evenings), pointers on Thursday PM and the spaniels on Saturday. There have been a number of training evaluations held by the Pointer and Spaniel groups along with an AKC Hunt Test for Spaniels in June. Summaries of these events can be found in the newsletter in Reports of Committee

In looking through past newsletters, I came across an article on grass seeds and how lethal they can be to our hunting dogs when they penetrate the skin, ingested or inhaled. At this time of year, grassy weeds such as green and yellow foxtail, cheatgrass (downy brome), foxtail barley, needle-and-thread are prevalent in many parts of Montana and occur in places we like to run and train dogs. Foxtail barley was very prevalent last year at the training grounds. It's relatively easy to identify after it heads out with its long, light-colored, beard-like awns. This spring Randy Setzer treated an area on the training grounds that lies south of the creek with a herbicide that is specific for foxtail grasses. The results so far are encouraging, and we'll be monitoring the area through the summer.

Among other items at our June Board Meeting, we discussed recognizing individuals in the club who have made significant contributions to the objectives and goals of the MHGDC by making them honorary members. The details outlining the procedure and privileges can be found in a separate article in this newsletter. A call for nominations will be forthcoming. Good training!

MHGDC BOARD MEETING June 21, 2011

Members Present: Jack Weiss, Peter Bakun, Greg Johnson, Steve Fink, Cheryl Johnson, Al Gadoury, Sam Robinson, David French and Jeff Squire. Mike Heard was out of town.

Minutes from the April 19, 2011 meeting read and approved.

Treasurer's Report: Steve presented income statements for recent club events. Spaniel Field Trial netted \$1281. The NASTRA event netted \$664. The HRC upland test netted \$80. Overall for the first five months of the year the club has had a net income of \$3533; this includes member dues paid.

Retriever Report: HRC retriever test 7/23-24 held at Trotten's in Twin Bridges. David French will be having training on Tuesday evenings for the rest of the summer. Contact David for details.

Pointer Report: Trainings on Thurs evenings will continue. The quail have been excellent. The June TED had 14 braces of dogs entered. The TED made a small profit. Snake Break will be held on May 11. Contact Peter or Sam for details.

Spaniel Report: The Hunt Test will be held on June 25-26. Entries will be around 10 dogs per day. The May and June TED went well and made a small profit for the club. Sam questioned, Jack, how anyone could miss a big slow flying white pigeon at the June TED. Jack took pity on the poor bird; yeah.

Unfinished Business: 1: Greg put together a list of deceased member to be placed on the club Memorial Page. He will add a couple of descriptive sentences for each passed member. **2:** Greg put together criteria for an Honorary Membership. After discussion there were few minor changes in the verbiage. A copy of the final draft will be added to the newsletter and the minutes. **3:** Randy completed spraying at the horse pasture. Until the weather warms up we cannot tell on how effective it will be for foxtail. We are hoping for the best.

New Business: 1. Motion made by Peter Bakun to have a compensation plan for Randy and Tracey. This would be for their allowing us use of their property for bird storage and equipment storage. The club would give them \$600 per year; payable \$300 January 1 and \$300 July 1. Motion passed unanimously. The board felt this was the very least the club could do for all they do for our club. **3.** Al Gadoury was approached by Mike Vance to ask if The Pheasants Forever Youth program could use the training grounds on July 23. Greg will call Mike and get the final plan. **4.** Al Gadoury made a motion to permanently have the club banquet on the second Saturday in February. After discussion the motion was represented to use that date as a target each year. Jeff Squire will check on conflicts and the date will be then set for next year. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned and next meeting will be August 16, 2011.

MHGDC BOARD MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 19, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Peter Bakun, Steve Fink, David French, Mike Heard, Cheryl Johnson, Greg Johnson, Sam Robinson, Jeff Squire and Lilly Squire.

Members Absent: Al Gadoury and Jack Weiss

Minutes from the February 15, 2011 meeting were handed out by President Johnson. A correction needed to be made to the minutes pertaining to the May 14-15, 2011 NSTRA Regional Elimination Trial. They will be using the Zuelke property only. Member French moved to approve the minutes with the amendment. Member Heard seconded the motion. Motion and minutes unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report: Member Fink indicated nothing out of the ordinary to report. The Spaniel Field Trial netted ~\$1300 and the Pointer Training Evaluation event netted ~\$644.

It was proposed that members who have not responded to the request to pay their dues be dropped from the membership list. All agreed and Member Fink will delete those persons.

Retriever Report: Member Heard indicated that they are getting ready for the HRC Upland Test scheduled for April 30 and May 1 to be held at the Horse Pasture Training Grounds.

Pointer Report: Member Bakun reported on the Pointer training. There were two training sessions scheduled. The first was weathered out and the second session had trainers doing their own thing. The April Training Evaluation event had 30 dogs and 15 braces. He gave accolades to Tana Kradolfer for the use of her horse to plant birds. With her taking on that task, the event ran expediently and smoothly. Good food and a good time were had by all to participated in and attended the event.

Spaniel Report: Member Squire reported on the upcoming AKC Spaniel Hunt Test to be held in June. The application has been approved by the AKC and premiums will be sent to perspective participants within the next week or two. Members Squire and the Johnsons gave a brief summary of the Spaniel Field Trial held April 2 and 3. President Johnson commented on the conditions of the birds. Entries were 32 dogs for each day. No puppy stake was held this year. President Johnson spoke about the Training Evaluation Day (TED) that was held on April 9. There were a lot of participants, a mixture of spaniels and retrievers, who are getting ready for the HRC event. The TED netted \$81 for that day. Keri Payne will chair the next TED in May.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Club Insurance: Treasurer Fink paid the insurance premium.

Bird Insurance: Member Robinson indicated that this is probably not an insurable commodity.

Bird Pen Fix-it Day: Member Squire checked on the pens that house the chukars and pheasants. He repaired what he saw that needed fixing. Member Bakun repaired the pens that house the quail. He indicated a few expenses related to the job (zip ties, etc.).

Honorary Membership was discussed as a way to acknowledge members who have made significant contributions to the club in the way of helping others with their training and disciplinary tactics, event strategies, and the betterment of the sport of hunting. Criteria will be developed and discussed at the next board meeting.

Shotgun Raffle: Members reported that nothing has been done to date. Some suggestions were to have something other than a gun and have the price of a ticket for a lesser amount. It was decided to table this topic until the fall. Member Robinson stated that he has penny raffle tickets left over from the banquet that can be used for this endeavor.

NEW BUSINESS

Price for Training Birds: In an e-mail Randy Setzer reported that 225 chukars were left over from the Spaniel Field Trial. Some of these birds will be used for the Hunt Test in June. We paid \$8/chukar and the delivery fee amounted to 13¢/bird. He figures it costs 75¢/month to feed a bird and projected that \$562 in bird feed would be used. Randy calculated a charge of \$10.50/bird to cover costs feed, mortality, pen repair, etc. Member Heard submitted a motion by Al Gadoury to charge \$8/chukar. Discussion followed. Member Bakun spoke about the cost of the quail and how they are handling those costs. He indicated he charges members \$7.50/bird to cover the costs of food, medicines, delivery, bird bags, zip ties for pen repair, etc. After discussion Member Fink motioned to sell chukars for \$10 each and quail for \$7.50 each. Member French seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Weed Spraying at the Horse Pasture: President Johnson stated that Randy Setzer mentioned a new chemical is available for foxtail control. The cost is \$370 for herbicide and \$75 for surfactant to treat 25 acres at the Horse Pasture. A motion was made and seconded to purchase the herbicide and have Randy apply it.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held on June 21.

Retriever Report

I am compiling a CD of Club Members photos for 2011. This will be displayed at club meetings Christmas party and the Sportsman show. This includes all groups. If you have any new hunting, field trial, training or just good photo's of your dog please e-mail me a j-peg at al@6xoutfitters.com.

The regular HRC Hunt Test is July 23-24 At Bill Trotten's Ranch, Twin Bridges. Retrievers are training. If you would like to be on the e-mail-training list please let me know. Any retrieving breed at any level and any age is welcome to train with us. Pigeons are available. Check your e-mail for time and place. Please bring a duck call, dark and a light jacket and any training equipment that you have. To train with live gamebirds or participate in the flushing dog Training Evaluation Days you must have a new game bird permit from FWP. Copies are available on the club website www.mhgdc.org.

The clubs retrievers had a strong showing at the HRC Hunt Test in Missoula, May 7 and 8. David French's Yellow Lab Dewey earned a Hunting Retriever Title and a AKC SH title in Butte. Margo Ellis's Yellow Lab Meg passed Finished both days and little Sweet Pea excelled as the set-up dog. Randy Pierson's English Springer Dakota had one seasoned pass. Mike Heard's Black Lab Dusty passed both Finished flights to earn his Hunting Retriever title. Anne Olson's Black Lab Fly had one Finished pass. My Yellow Lab Bella pawed her way through Seasoned both days to earn her Hunting Retriever title.

Al Gadoury

Spaniel Report

The Missouri Headwaters Gun Dog Club held a Spaniel Hunt Test on June 25th and 26th, 2011. On the 25th, we had eleven dogs entered of which seven received a qualifying score. On the 26th, we had ten dogs entered of which four qualified and two scratched. It was a very nice event, enjoyed by all. On Saturday, we were very fortunate to have the expert judging of Bryan Dunn and Scott Benowitz and Sunday Greg Johnson and Mike Bullock. I appreciate the help of my wife, Lilly, who coordinated all of the food, Kyle Barner for putting together a crack gun team and all of the others who participated and helped.

The Spaniel/Flushing dog group will continue to train throughout the summer, generally on Saturday mornings. Training birds have been available this summer. Contact Randy Setzer for availability (setzers5@aol.com). If you are not on the Flushing Dog training email list and wish to be, let Jeff Squire know at eyedocsquire@gmail.com.

Thanks
Jeff Squire

Pointing Dog Report April 2011

We have had the opportunity for two training sessions. The first session was weathered out. The second session was attended by a quite a few members. We had 11 members and their dogs involved in various training activities. Each member decides what their dog needs to work on in our training sessions. Some members had young dogs that were just being started. Other members had dogs working on retrieving, honoring, or overall staunchness.

April 16th was our first Pointing Dog Evaluation. We had 30 dogs entered which meant we ran 15 braces. We started at 7:55 a.m. with the last brace finishing up at about 5:00 p.m. The event ran very smoothly because every member involved pitched in either setting up, tearing down or any task required in between. We also had Tana Kradolfer planting birds on horseback which really keeps us on schedule.

The dog work was spectacular. We planted 76 birds and 67 were found. The number of new members involved was very nice to see. Our Pointing Dog Evaluations are an excellent opportunity to figure out what you need to work on during our training sessions.

Steve Leatherman and Maggie 25pts
Tom Eversman and Midge 26pts
Shannon Taylor and Bart 20pts
Bill Shields and Heidi 25 pts
Jim Wiitila and Otis 29 pts
Travis Miller and Mazy 18 pts
JoAnn Kish and Adie 23 pts
Sam Robinson and Feather 20 pts
Jim Wiitila and Polly 40 pts 1st place
Wil Avril and Annie 15 pts
Jim Wiitila and Coach 30 pts 3rd place
Priscilla Robinson and Cayenne 10 pts
Conrad Kradolfer and Bo 5 pts
JoAnn Kish and Maggie 20 pts
Jim Cleary and River 23 pts

Bill Shields and Missy 25 Pts
Glen Johnson and Trutz 33 pts **2nd place**
Tom Robinson and Terra
Peter Bakun and Gallatin 28 pts
Sarah Davies and Chace 30pts **3rd place**
Tom Curtis and Chica 30 pts **3rd place**
Tom Eversman and Chloe 20 pts
Glen Johnson and Asta 13 pts
Tom Curtis and Birdie 26 pts
Diane Bakun and Jeffe 8 pts
Tana Kradolfer and Gabe 10 pts
JoAnn Kish and Emma 15 pts
Joe Sofianek and Dixie 5pts
Peter Bakun and Madi
JoAnn Kish and Lucy 40 pts **1st place**

Pointer News July

The Pointers have been training every Thursday weather permitting. Members have made a strong showing at each session. The Quail have been very good this year which allows for handlers to accomplish a great deal with their dogs. Each session we have puppies to finished dogs working on everything from yard work to retrieving. A lot of handlers have been working on honoring which is very essential in the field. We have been trying to start each session between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m.

Our Pointing Dog Evaluations are the third Saturday of each month from April to August. We have had an incredible turnout this year. We had 15 braces in April, 13 braces in May, and 14 braces in June which is 84 dogs involved with two more PDE's to go.

We will be holding our annual Snake Break Clinic on August 11th at the training grounds. Members and Non-members may bring dogs to this clinic.

Pointing Dog Evaluation Results May 21, 2011

We had our second PDE last Saturday. The weather looked very marginal. However, the training grounds stayed dry all day. We had 13 braces scheduled and we were able to get them all in by 4:30. The main reason we are able to have such an event is the incredible help we get from everyone involved. Shannon came early to help me collect birds and move our equipment out to my truck. Diane, Ann, Larry, Wil, Bill, Shannon, and I set up the training grounds. Wil planted the first and second groups of birds. Then Tana and Conrad arrived to plant birds by horseback which really helps to keep us on schedule. We also had a number of people filling bird bags and shooting for the dog handler so that the handler could focus on training. Diane and Shannon helped set up lunch. At the end of the day Sara, Priscilla, Darlene, Mary Ellen, Sam, Mark, George, and Diane loaded all the gear into the pickup truck ready for delivery back to Randy's. Sam, Priscilla, Mark and Shannon moved our equipment back to the appropriate area at Randy's which because of the wet grounds must be moved by hand so that we don't mess up Randy's yard. As the old saying goes "Many hands make light work". Thank you all very much.

The dog work again was outstanding. We had 53 finds out of 66 planted birds. We had some very nice retrieving. We also had a lot of dogs honoring the points of their brace mate. 3rd place with four finds, four retrieves, and an honor for a score of 43 went to Mark Donovan and Rusty. 2nd place with five finds and five retrieves for a score of 50 went to Peter Bakun and Gallatin. 1st place with six finds, six retrieves, and an honor for a score of 63 went to Mark Donovan and Louie.

All day long there were many exceptional examples of the hard work our handlers and dogs have been putting in at the training sessions. It was a lot of fun watching all of the dogs work. A classic example of hard work in training occurred during the second brace. Larry Michnevich's setter Quest made a beautiful point. Quest held tight as the bird was flushed and shot. The bird landed on the other side of the creek. Quest made a wonderful blind retrieve to hand. It is really great to see the training come together. Of course this is one example, but thinking back on our PDE we can all remember some great dog work.

Pointing Dog Evaluation Results May 21, 2011 (Cont.)

Results:

Shannon Taylor and Bart	10	Diane Bakun and Jeffe	15
Larry Michnevich and Quest	10	Bill Shields and Missy	10
Peter Bakun and Gallatin	50	Tom Eversman and Chloe	18
Tom Robinson and Terra	20	Priscilla Robinson and Cayenne	20
Wil Avril and Annie	40	Larry Michnevich and Rusty	19
Bill Shields and Heidi	20	Mark Donovan and Rusty	43
Priscilla Robinson and Feather	8	Tom Eversman and Midge	8
Peter Bakun and Madi	10	Tom Curtis and Lulu	
Tana Kradolfer and Juno	29	Mark Donovan and Louie	63
Sara Davies and Chace	30	Tom Curtis and Birdie	
Conrad Kradolfer and Gabe	15	George Stewart and Reno	15
Tana Kradolfer and Dixie	23	Mark Donovan and Tyke	33
Tom Curtis and Chica	30	Peter Bakun and Gallatin	3

Pointing Dog Evaluation (June 18, 2011)

On Saturday we held our third PDE of the training season. We had 14 braces which all ran very smoothly. We had an incredible amount of help, but a special thank you goes to Shannon Taylor for being in charge.

The dogs had some spectacular runs. In fact by the end of the day there were very few birds left in the field. We had 25 honors by dogs in the PDE which was outstanding. We will be having our July PDE on the 16th. We hope to see you there.

George Stewart and Reno	20	Glen Johnston and Asta	28
Sam Robinson and Feather	10	Wil Avril and Annie	23
Larry Michnevich and Rusty	26	Priscilla Robinson and Cayenne	30
Jim Lovell and Ruby	45	Sarah Davies and Chace	23
Glen Johnston and Trutz	35	Peter Bakun and Gallatin	29
Tom Eversman and Chloe	10	Larry Michnevich and Quest	10
Tom Eversman and Midge	0	Jim Wiitala and Otis	56
Jack Bell and Macey	33	Peter Bakun and Madi	16
Mark Donovan and Tyke	26	Jack Bell and Jenny	50
Tom Robinson and Terra	21	Tom Curtis and Lulu	30
Jim Wiitala and Polly	60	Mark Donovan and Louie	33
Diane Bakun and Jeffe	20	Tom Curtis and Birdie	10
Shannon Taylor and Bart	20	Mark Donovan and Rusty	52
Jack Bell and L.E.	20	Tom Curtis and Chica	59

1st Place – Jim Wiitala and Poly

2nd Place – Tom Curtis and Chica

3rd Place – Jim Wiitala and Otis



AFC Dust Devil's Black Blizzard MH

AT STUD

**CHIC #: 21957 Hips Good, Elbows Normal, Eyes Clear,
CNM Clear LR-CNM11-138-M-PIV**

Excellent house dog, very friendly with other dogs and people

**Excellent marker, natural line running, Fantastic line manners
Great work ethic and loves to retrieve**

AKC Hunt Test Titles: JH, SH, MH

AKC Field Trial Titles: Amateur Field Champion (AFC)

23.5 AA Points, Open win, AM win, numerous placements

Qualified for 2009 National Amateur Championship

HRC Title: Hunting Retriever Champion (HRCH)

Youtube vidoes Search: DUST DEVIL'S BLACK BLIZZARD

Contact: Mike Heard for more information 406-490-6298

email: wxmheard@hotmail.com



Snake Break Clinic

August 11, 2011

MHGDC will be holding a snake break clinic at the training grounds near Three Forks. Members and Non-Members are encouraged to bring their dogs.

Please contact Peter Bakun for more details.



GRASS AWN INFECTION



A presentation to the Purina Pointing Dog Awards weekend

June 11, 2011

Cathy Lewis
seeddemon@meanseeds.com
Phone: 262.215.1910

Dr. Pat McInteer
Phone: 402.245.3882

Mean Seeds: Grass Kills



Two things you must know - first, **grass can kill your dog**. Hard to believe, isn't it? But the barbed (awned) seeds from some species of grass, likely inhaled, travel through your dog's

body and create infection from bacteria they bring in with them, or pick up from places like the oral cavity as they enter.

Second, **you are your dog's best defense against this danger**. Learn to recognize threats and avoid them, and carefully observe and know your dog. Recognizing subtle changes early may make a huge difference in successful treatment should your dog fall prey to a grass awn infection.

The most common grass threats to our dogs:

- Foxtail barley - if you live, train and/or compete in the western United States or Alaska, especially, but foxtail is spreading throughout the U.S.
- Cheatgrass - a known threat in the Rocky Mountain states. Residents know that this becomes a problem when the grass begins to dry and drop its seeds, sometime around July, through the first freeze or snow.
- Canada wild rye - unlike the above, this grass is actively cultivated as an effective cover crop for other, slower to establish grasses. It features a particularly aggressive awn. Popular with state and federal conservation authorities, and bird and habitat preservation organizations due to its low cost, it has become widespread through the Midwest and Mideastern states over the past ten years.

Find a full list of known problem grass species at <http://www.meanseeds.com>

Grass awn infections can manifest in multiple symptom patterns (or combinations thereof): pyothorax (an infection in the chest cavity), pneumonia, and/or body wall or internal abscesses. Based on my experience and the case histories I am

gathering, many infections show up as an acute illness. The dog seemed fine two hours ago/yesterday, but now s/he has an elevated temperature, is lethargic, and has no interest in food. The flowchart on the reverse side of this page provides an analysis of the diagnosis and treatment process.

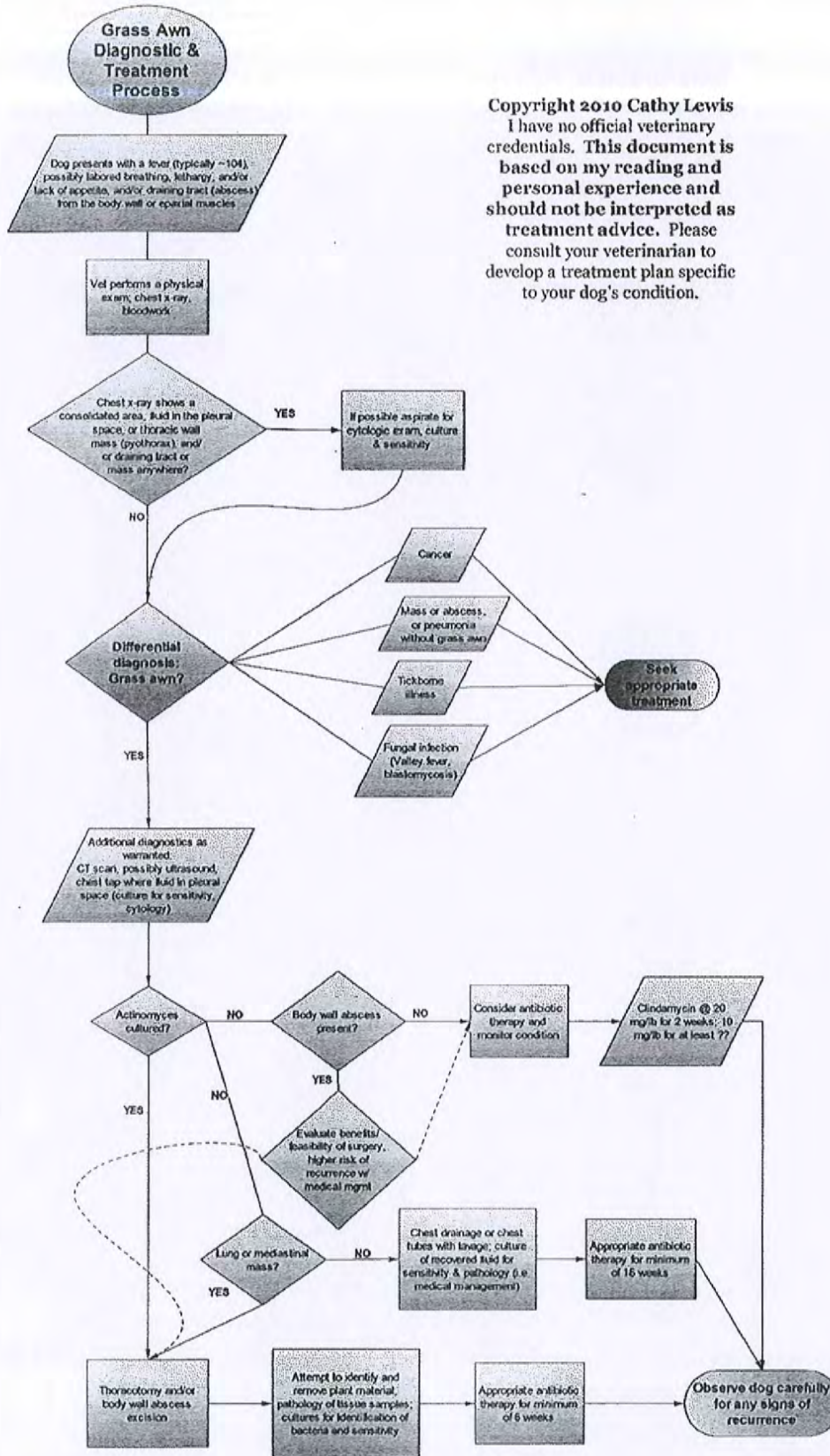
Note from the flowchart that the symptoms of a grass awn infection overlap those of other fairly common threats, such as tickborne disease. Your powers of observation may be key in making an accurate diagnosis quickly. If you have reason to suspect that your dog has been exposed to a problem grass, make your veterinarian aware of that fact and the likely manifestations. Veterinarians that do not see many working dogs in their practice may not consider the grass awn possibility in their early workup.

Treatment in most cases is costly. Even "medical management" of a pyothorax is most times not a matter of simply giving some pills. With my own dogs, treatment costs have ranged from approximately \$1,000 to \$12,000. In this tough economy, many of us may be forced to make a choice as to whether we can afford to attempt treatment. That's a heartbreaking state of affairs when the life of our best friend and hunting companion hangs in the balance. If you believe your dog is at risk, pet insurance may be a wise investment.

In most cases that I am aware of where treatment has successfully resolved the infection, the dog's health has been restored to the point of returning to the field, though for competition dogs the consequences of surgery, e.g. removal of a lung lobe, ribs, and/or muscle tissue may affect performance to the point where retirement becomes advisable.

Sadly, the threat of grass awn infection appears to be rising. **You** are your dog's best defense.

Please help the project by filing a case history report for any affected dog that you own! Submit online or download a report form at <http://www.meanseeds.com>.



Copyright 2010 Cathy Lewis
 I have no official veterinary credentials. This document is based on my reading and personal experience and should not be interpreted as treatment advice. Please consult your veterinarian to develop a treatment plan specific to your dog's condition.

Many thanks to Dr. Matthew Rooney of Aspen Meadow Veterinary Specialists (www.AspenMeadowVet.com) for his patience in answering my many questions in preparing this diagram.

If you have had a dog with a grass awn infection, *please* submit a case history report online at <http://www.meanseeds.com> or download a report form to submit via mail. Your dog's experience will help others!

Nocardia Infections in Bird Dogs

By Dr. Pat McInteer and Dr. Jim Mills & others

Nocardia, Actinomycosis and speargrass infections are a complex set of diseases in sporting dogs that present varied and confusing symptoms. This article is designed to bring a better understanding of this disease complex to dog owners so that they might understand and recognize it at an earlier stage. Also, it is hoped that veterinarians unfamiliar with this condition might develop an understanding that will enable them to recognize and treat it successfully. The authors wish to emphasize that in this article, the complex disease syndrome has been somewhat simplified and categorized for the sake of clarity, and that actual cases may be more complicated than the examples presented.

The year old setter spent the summer in training on the prairies of North Dakota. During the fall, this promising pup ate well and seemed to feel well but his performance and stamina were not up to his usual standards. A routine check-up at the vet's office revealed no recognizable causes. Two months showed no improvement. Suddenly he stopped eating, became severely depressed, and died within two days. A severe chest infection with fluid in his chest cavity was found after his death.

The pointer derby placed in the quail futurity in November after training on the prairies of Oklahoma. In early spring, he had lost some zip and three weeks later developed severe pain in the lower back region and a large lump appeared on his side in front of the hip and behind the ribs. This abscess ruptured and drained, then healed, and the process was repeated.

The two and a half-year-old foxhound developed a lump on his side beneath the skin. Over the next month, this swelling spread, ruptured, and drained in several places.

These three cases represent three forms of a disease complex commonly referred to as nocardia infections. "Nocardia," a term that brings dread to dog owners and handlers, is actually caused by two related bacteria - Actinomyces species and Nocardia species. Nocardia is commonly found in soil and may enter the dog's system through inhalation or ingestion, but often enters through an injury site. Actinomyces commonly resides in the oral cavity of animals and requires an injury or foreign body to produce disease. These foreign bodies carry the bacteria found in the mouth into the body of the host. Foreign bodies, including dust, pollen, plant particles and seeds, definitely play a role in the development of the disease. Most notable among these foreign bodies are grass awns which migrate through the body, such as speargrass (needlegrass), foxtail, and cheatgrass. When these migrating grass awns are involved, the disease is usually more complicated because the seed migration carries the infection from the mouth to various locations in the body. Lesions are similar in both infections and dogs show abscesses, draining tracts, granulomas (masses of inflamed tissue) with fibrosis and respiratory involvement.

There are three common forms or locations that the disease presents:

The *subcutaneous* (under the skin) *form* occurs most commonly on the dog's side. These subcutaneous nocardia infections yield the best treatment results and least death loss because this form is easily diagnosed and does not affect critical organs. Because death from this form only occurs when the infection is advanced to a very late stage, treatment is usually successful. This is because the dog's vital organ systems are not affected, thus allowing time for treatment results to occur. The subcutaneous form usually results

from entry of the bacteria through a cut or foreign body wound. A mass or lump develops which then migrates in fistulous tracts in several directions. Drainage may occur from several sites, heal, and then develop again. Surgery and/or medication have been used to treat these lesions with success. Advanced cases may require months of therapy to completely resolve. The prognosis is usually good.

The *abdominal form* of the disease results in a tender abdomen and back. Extreme and intense pain often occurs. This results from a deep abscess located high on the dog's side behind the rib cage and in front of the hipbone. This abscess will eventually break open and drain, then seal over, and the process will be repeated. This syndrome is usually caused by a migrating foreign body which resides below the spinal column under the lumbar vertebra in the abdominal cavity. These foreign bodies (usually migrating grass awns) probably are swallowed and penetrate the intestinal wall and carry the bacteria to establish in this location. Because these infections tend to develop a tract and drain to the outside of the body and not affect the organ systems, the prognosis is fairly good. Flushing the draining tract and long term medication have yielded excellent results for the authors.

The *thoracic* (chest cavity) *form* of the disease is more difficult to diagnose and treat. This form carries a high death rate unless detected early, and early detection is often difficult because early symptoms are vague and not severe. The most common early symptom for this form of "nocardia" is poor performance and stamina below what is usual for the canine athlete for an extended period over weeks and months.

To best understand how the authors believe this disease develops, dog owners should look at the very back of the dog's throat when the dog has been worked in late summer or early fall. This is best done with the dog facing you and the sun behind your back before the dog has had any water.

The panting dog will readily open its mouth for a quick examination of its throat. What you will observe is a throat coated with dust, pollen, and plant material. Behind this is the opening to the windpipe which goes directly to the lungs. This will be wide open as the panting, hot dog breathes heavily. It will be obvious that some of the dust, pollen, and plant material quite likely entered this opening, thus gaining access to the lower respiratory tract. Every dog is exposed to this. For most dogs, the natural protective mechanisms of the respiratory tract bring these minute particles back to the throat in a mucous coating where the mucous is either gagged out or swallowed (to be passed harmlessly in the bowel). Other particles may be lodged in the lower lungs, where they are walled off and consumed by the body's protective system. Larger particles may be walled off and surrounded by scar tissue to remain in the lung tissue. Bacteria and fungi are consumed by the body's defenses.

In cases where disease develops, pneumonia may develop acutely from the infusion of particles into the lung, or these particles may be walled off but not destroyed by the body. In this case, the bacterium (*Nocardia* or *Actinomyces*) develops into a small pocket of infection. The bacteria will spread, creating an area of lung infection. Because this infection is isolated in the lungs, symptoms of systemic disease will not develop. At this stage, the dog's temperature, white blood count, attitude, and appetite will be normal. Only its stamina and performance will decline. This is the point in the disease when diagnosis will be difficult. The owner may think the dog's performance is due to hard training. If the veterinarian is not familiar with strong, canine athletes and this disease complex, these subtle symptoms may be dismissed in the clinic. The dog will be bright, alert, try to breed the poodle in the waiting room and pee on every chair.

One look and the practitioner will assume the owner is mistaken about a problem with this dog. A physical exam may only reveal mild bronchial harshness in

the lungs and lab work may be normal, or near normal, because the infection is still isolated in the lungs and has not become systemic. Chest radiographs will only show some bronchial congestion with perhaps a few small spots in the lung tissue.

It is at this point that the authors would suspect an early nocardia infection based on the history of poor performance, training in the late summer and early fall, the vague symptoms seen on exam and radiographs, and lack of other causes (obviously there are other clinical causes of poor performance). At this point, the diagnosis is impossible to confirm. However, if the veterinarian's suspicion is correct, aggressive therapy will save much heartache and likely save the dog's life. If the diagnosis is wrong, only the owner's wallet will be affected unless some other ailment is missed.

If undetected, this early stage (which may show up several months after exposure) will progress slowly. Eventually the lung lesions will spread, and when a small lung abscess bursts on the surface of the lung, the infection will spread into the chest cavity. At this stage, the disease becomes systemic and the infection progresses rapidly. Thick, tomato juice-like fluid often will fill the thoracic cavity. This will put pressure on the lungs and the dog will become extremely ill. Breathing will be very labored and the dog will become weak. This severe worsening of symptoms can occur in a very short period (one to five days). At this point, draining the fluid from the chest cavity becomes an immediate necessity. It is during this stage of the disease that the death loss is high. This final stage of the disease may develop as long as three to six months after the initial exposure.

Historically, treatment of "nocardia" infections has included radical surgery. Recently Dr. Jim Mills developed long term massive antibiotic therapy that has proven successful in many cases. Using his

regimen and refining it, the authors have had improved success with both early and final stage cases utilizing limited or no surgery. Draining chests filled with fluid has remained an absolute necessity in severe cases. Based on cases of the subcutaneous form where treatment progress can be readily seen and palpated, the authors have determined that two to three months' therapy is an absolute minimum and treatment schedules of four to six months may be required.

The authors are currently using clindamycin in massive doses along with Trimethaprin Sulfa in normal doses. Follow up chest radiographs and blood work monitoring are essential to good results. This is a complex disease; diagnosis and treatment should not be attempted by dog owners without thorough radiographic exams, work ups, and lab work by a veterinarian.

These infections have often been associated with training on the prairies from Canada to Texas. Other regions have also produced problems. Interestingly, the majority of cases have occurred in young dogs one to three years of age. Occasionally, dogs past this age group are affected. The fact that older dogs seem more resistant to this infection raises the possibility of an effective vaccine development.

For many years, trainers have referred to the fact that breaking dogs often causes a reduction in range and independence during the first year of adult competition. Could this actually relate to a low-grade lung infection that was eventually conquered by the body's defense mechanisms? The radiologist at Kansas State University Vet School related that almost all adult hunting dogs in the Midwest have rather extensive scarring in their lungs and bronchial systems. This is no doubt caused by inhalation of material while afield.

Nocardia Treatment

- Nocardia is very difficult to detect in its early stages.
- By the time the blood work shows an infection, it may be too late to successfully treat the dog.
- Check for tonsil infection, throat infection, and upper respiratory infection.
- Check stool for parasites, protozoa, etc.
- Check liver and kidney function, and thyroid.
- Listen to chest and consider chest x-rays.
- Start treatment when other illnesses or causes have been eliminated.
- It is common for a dog to have two or more illnesses at the same time.

Two options:

1. Wait and see, often will be too late.
2. Assume the dog has nocardia and treat for it.

The authors have never seen any negative result from this treatment.

Week One (dosages for a 50 pound dog):

- 3 x 150 mg clindamycin in the morning.
- 4 x 150 mg clindamycin in the evening.

Total of 7 x 150 mg capsules per day (300 mg capsules are available to reduce the number of pills to give, though both dosages will be necessary)

Next two months:

- 2 x 150 mg clindamycin in the morning.
- 2 x 150 mg clindamycin in the evening.

Total of 4 x 150 mg per day.

Third month:

2 x 150 mg clindamycin per day.

Also during the first month, sulfa drugs - use either TMPS or Tribissen, NOT both.

TMPS - 480 mg tablets.

1 ¼ tablets two times per day for three weeks (dosage 1 tablet per 40 pounds), or

Tribissen - 480 mg tablets.

Give one tablet per day for a 48 pound dog.

Exercise:

Quit working the dog for 3 to 4 weeks. You should be able to start working the dog again at that point, taking time to rebuild his/her endurance.

7 Day Nocardia Preventative Treatment

Treat all dogs two to three times per year, especially after a dry period or when the plant material has been falling off. Usually treat the dog at the end of the summer or beginning of fall, and again around November or December with the following regimen (dosages for a 50 pound dog):

3 x 150 mg clindamycin in the morning

4 x 150 mg clindamycin at night.

Total of 7 x 150 mg per day.

PLUS one sulfa tablet per day, either TMPS or tribrissen.

Dr. McInteer treats his dogs after summer training (early September) and again in November, and after winter training in Texas. Jock Herriage treats his dogs monthly when he trains in West Texas.

Speargrass

Dr. Pat McInteer

When I graduated from vet school at Kansas State University in 1968, I had never heard of speargrass or its effect on dogs. Even a few years after I graduated, I talked to a professor of surgery at KSU and he had never heard of it.

Professional dog trainers Roy Jines and Lloyd Budd first introduced me to speargrass and its perils while visiting their summer camps near Emmett, Nebraska. Since that time, I have come to know quite a bit about this grass seed and its potentially fatal effect on both hunting and field trial dogs.

Speargrass (or needlegrass) is of the genus *Stipa* with four species in the continental United States. Porcupine grass and "needle and thread" are found in Canada and south into the central plains, including Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio, and south into the plains of Oklahoma, Texas, and throughout the western states. Blackseed needlegrass occurs on the eastern seaboard into the southeast United States, including the major field trial areas. Green needlegrass occurs in the northern plains and southwest to the edge of the Rocky Mountains.

These grasses are native to the prairies of the Midwest and are not found in cultivated pastures, therefore this grass is only common in areas that have never been plowed. I sent spears (seeds) from speargrass that I found in native pastures in southeast Nebraska and northeast Kansas to John Rex Gates and Bud Daugherty. John Rex told me they were exactly the same as the speargrass he found in Canada. Bud told me they were different. Since there are three different needlegrasses in Canada and the Midwest, there can be variation on different grounds.



Porcupine grass - Figure 1

In Nebraska and Kansas, *Stipa* is an early maturing grass that flourishes during wet, cool springs. The grass is a tall whitish-yellow plant that stands out amidst the green of the later developing native grasses. The spears usually fall off during the first two weeks in July in Nebraska, but may fall later. Depending on spring weather patterns, the spears might fall as early as the first of July or as late as the end of July.

Some trainers have been known to advertise that there is no speargrass in the Nebraska sandhills. A few years ago, when I asked one of the newer trainers about speargrass he stated that there was none on his grounds. Then he asked me what it looked like. A few years later, he told me that he had to postpone training due to the spears. Some trainers are very aware of this noxious grass. Roy Jines, who trained in Canada with his uncle, Tom Lundsford, regards the speargrass as highly dangerous to his dogs, as do the Canadian trainers.



Blackseed needlegrass -
Figure 2

In the chapter entitled "Poisoning and Injury by Plants" in *Kirk's Current Veterinary Therapy*, it is stated that

"perhaps the most frequent injuries are those produced from penetration of mucous membranes by grass awns and other floral parts. Members of the genus *Stipa* are most notable among this group owing to the extensive migration of its floral parts in animal tissues following penetration. The awn (seed) and anterior floret of some species possess retrose (posteriorly directed) barbs which prevent backward

movement and easy removal from the tissues. These foreign bodies have been removed from abscesses of the mouth, nasum, orbit, post orbitum, mediastinum, pericardium, spinal canal, bursae of joints, and elsewhere.”

Since symptoms may not develop for several months after exposure, it is possible that many dog owners may not be aware of the source of their dog's problem. Every owner and trainer must decide for himself or herself if this is serious enough to consider during training periods.

Gerald DeGroff, founder of the DeGroff ranch in Brewster, Nebraska, told me that if hay is cut while the spears are still on the needlegrass that cows will develop sore mouths. The vets of the Sandhills do not report abscess problems in cows. This is probably because the cows do not readily consume the grass except when baled with other grasses. Haying is usually started after the spears have dropped because the other native grasses mature later in the summer.

It is evident that the needlegrass species grow in nearly all regions of field trial activity in the United States. It should be remembered that this is a native species of grass, thus it does not occur in cultivated fields and pastures that have been converted to tame grasses such as fescue, brome, and bermuda. Dangers of exposure are therefore highest in the range land of the northern, Midwestern, and southwestern prairies.

It should be noted that many other plants have barbed seeds and can produce similar lesions. Foxtail and cheatgrass are two that commonly cause problems in our area of the Midwest. When any of these awns enter through the oral cavity or skin of dogs, often an Actinomyces or nocardia infection is introduced. Also, other bacterial or fungal infections may be introduced via these foreign bodies. When an infection, either bacterial or fungal is introduced via these or other foreign bodies (dust, pollen, other plant material), the disease is far more serious.



Green needlegrass - Figure 3

Figure 1: Porcupine grass image courtesy of USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An Illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 1: 177.

Figure 2: Blackseed speargrass image courtesy of USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Hitchcock, A.S. (rev. A. Chase). 1950. *Manual of the grasses of the United States*. USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 200. Washington, DC.

Figure 3: Green needlegrass image courtesy of USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An Illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 1: 176.



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