

Hip Dysplasia Success Story

Discover how one owner learned to manage her dog's hip dysplasia.

Marcia King

It was an unexpected blow: while Houston, a 9-month-old chocolate Labrador Retriever, was under anesthesia for his neuter surgery, his veterinarian took X-rays to check for chronic hip dysplasia, a precaution he recommends for most puppies. Houston's owner, Ramsey Raybeck of Tennessee, was confident nothing was amiss. After all, Houston came from a reputable breeder who had screened Houston's parents for a variety of heritable diseases. But hip dysplasia is unpredictable, and X-rays showed that Houston's hip joints were badly dysplastic, or malformed. "He practically had no socket," Raybeck recalls. "I was angry, disappointed, and frustrated."

Houston didn't show clinical signs of hip dysplasia at the time of his neuter surgery, but by the time he was 18 months old, he couldn't play with his doggie pals as long as before. He was stiff traversing the stairs, slow to get up, and his walk had an odd swagger.

"We talked about hip dysplasia treatment options, including hip replacement surgery," Raybeck says. "But our veterinarian suggested we try management first. We kept an eye on Houston's weight and made sure he received regular exercise, including daily walks and swimming each weekend. To help with the pain, we gave him low doses of a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication, which worked really well. We did that for about two or three months, then our veterinarian called and asked if we'd be interested in doing a trial with a prescription joint formula diet for hip dysplasia treatment. It meant coming off his medicine."

Raybeck and Houston gave it a try. "The food has been spectacular," she says. "It made a big difference. His movement has really improved and he plays without tiring. Houston doesn't have that swagger anymore and is much stronger in the back."

That was more than a year ago. Today, at age 3, Houston is still going strong. "We did save up and were ready to do the hip surgery," Raybeck says, "but he's doing so good, we think we're going to wait because what we're doing now is working so well."

Marcia King is a DOG FANCY contributing editor who lives in Ohio.