

Dog Survives Pellet to the Brain

Labrador Retriever makes quick recovery after duck hunting accident.

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Tess hunting duck The owner of a black Labrador Retriever named Tess considers his young dog's comeback from a pellet to the brain a miracle recovery.

Steve Horn of Madison, Miss., was duck hunting with 18-month-old Tess when the dog was accidentally hit in the head with a shotgun blast. The dog started to swim in her owner's direction, and Horn scooped her out of the water and put her in a boat.

Tess went into shock and Horn performed CPR on her. He noted the dog's rapid breathing but strong heartbeat.

As the dog's body temperature dropped, Horn warmed her with his hunting coat. He then rushed Tess to emergency care at the Greenwood Animal Hospital in Greenwood, Miss., where the staff put the dog on steroids and antibiotics and stabilized her with intravenous drips.

Tess was then transported in an emergency vehicle to Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, where Christine Bryan, DVM, was the primary veterinarian on the case. Upon arrival, the dog was stretched out, weak in the limbs and breathing rapidly.

Tess received pain medication and was X-rayed. Skull radiographs revealed nearly 30 small pellets scattered from her nose to the back of her head, including one in the center of the brain.

"Originally, I was not expecting her to survive," Bryan said. At the time of assessment, she told the owner that if the dog survived, she would never be able to hunt again, but she could possibly be a house pet.

The pellet that penetrated the dog's skull was not causing any problems, Bryan said, and removing it might have caused more extensive damage. "[Surgery] could have caused more trauma to the brain itself," she said.

Instead of undergoing surgery, Tess was treated with medication to prevent seizures, to reduce brain swelling, and to keep her sedated. She was treated for a week and then released to her owner.

Since the accident in December 2008, Tess is back to being a normal dog, Bryan said. She's able to run, swim, and go duck hunting again.