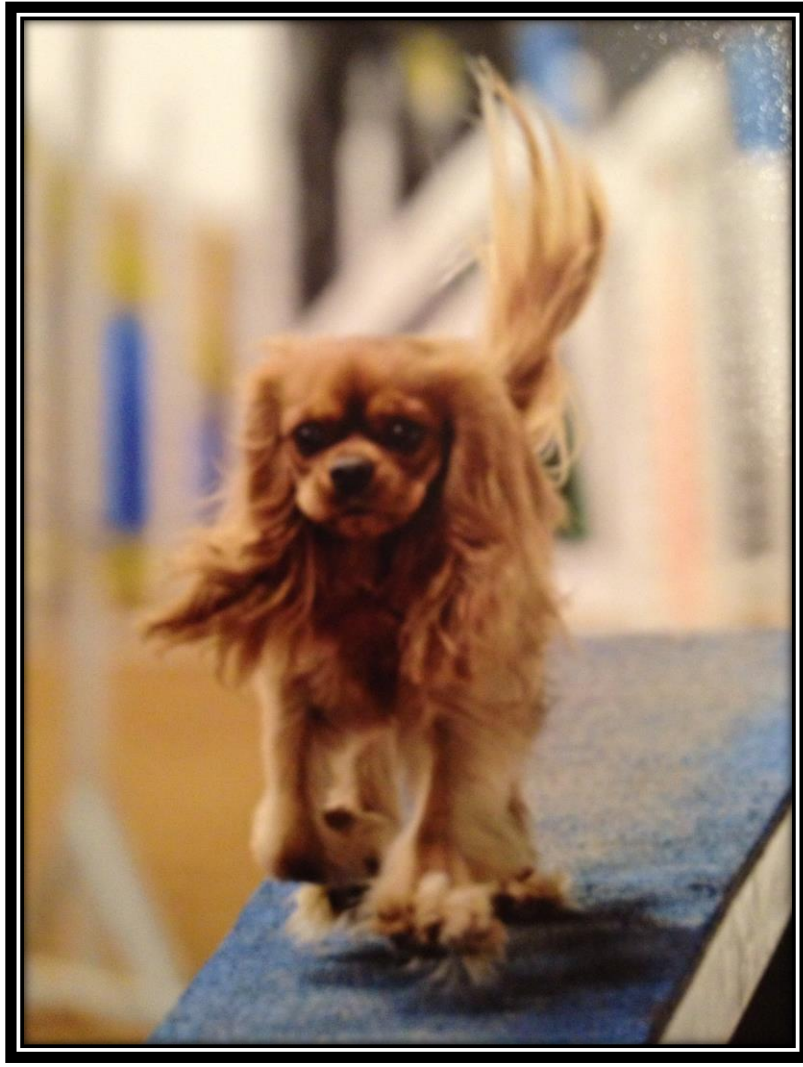




Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club of Greater Houston, Inc.

RAHNEE'S STORY: Water Intoxication is A Killer



MEADOWLAKE RENDEZVOUS BN RN OA AXJ, better known as Rahnee, was a 3-year old, 15 pound, Ruby Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. She was a happy, healthy, water-loving, exuberant, rising agility competitor. But more than that, she was my heart dog. June 23rd, 2013, my sweet little Rahnee succumbed to “Water Intoxication”, a somewhat uncommon but frequently fatal condition that results from the body taking in too much water.

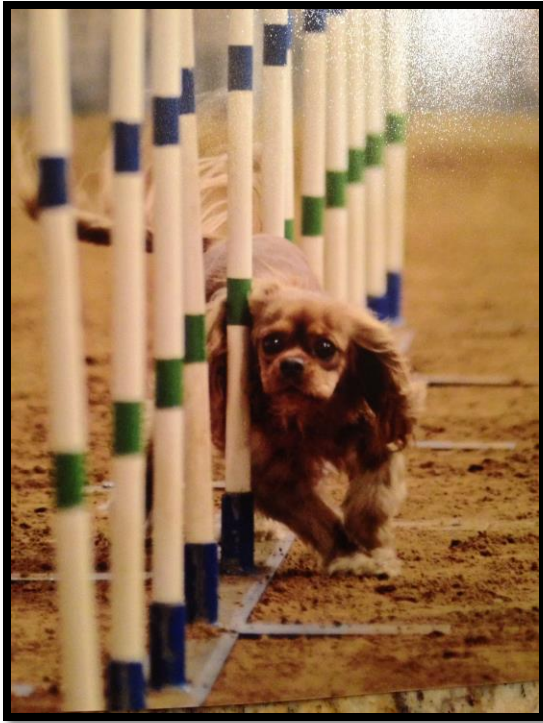
Rahnee loved the water and she loved to swim. One of her favorite past times was fetching balls from my sister's pool. She had mastered the plunge and delighted in retrieving the miniature toy ball. I thought this was the perfect solution for building muscle strength on days too hot for agility training. I was always mindful not to over exert her and insisted that she take periodic breaks. So after our normal 15-20 minutes, I called it quits, against her wishes. But today would be different. Shortly thereafter, she wrapped herself around my ankles as if to say "I don't feel good". I picked her up and noticed her eyes were dilated and she was panting profusely, far more than normal. I lifted her lip and knew immediately we were in serious trouble; her gums were gray. Within seconds, as we bolted to the car, her then limp little body transferred into the involuntary death stretch. In total disbelief, I continued CPR all the way to the vet's office. But upon arrival, as I laid her motionless body on the cold steel table praying for any sign of hope, I heard those dreaded words "There's nothing." It was too late. From start to finish, from happy, playful and energetic to lifeless was all of 20 minutes.



The initial diagnosis was heart attack, not only because of the suddenness with which it occurred, but also because the breed is recognized as one with heart issues. Rahnee had been closely monitored for any and all heart problems and was always clear. I should also mention that her breeder has been diligent in keeping her bloodlines tested by cardiologists. Although I was never convinced, I had no other option but to accept that her death was more than likely a massive blood clot from who knows where. Emotionally, at that time, I could not fathom the thought of an autopsy.

Nine months later I would come to find out that my story was not any different from countless others who had already lost their loved ones to this deadly condition – Water Intoxication. *(Thank you John Parsons for sharing your knowledge on this deadly condition. Thank you Cheri Rippee for your compassion in choosing the right time to disclose this fragile information to me.)*

I had never heard of "Water Intoxication". It is also referred to as "Water Toxicity" or more formally "Hyponatremia". In a nutshell it is described as follows: "When water enters the body quicker than it can be removed, bodily fluids dilute and a dangerous shift in the electrolyte balance occurs, causing swelling of the brain and other organs." In an article written for THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL as a Consumer Alert it states that "Water intoxication can affect any dog who drinks too much too fast, but small dogs, dogs with little body fat, and high-drive athletes are at a higher risk." Rahnee was small, lean, fit and driven; and I have no doubt she ingested much water in her relentless attempts to grab the little ball I would throw for her.



If you have a water-loving dog or simply enjoy playing with your dog in any water, please research this matter. It is my hope that by sharing Rahnee's story, perhaps others can be spared this heartbreaking loss. And as Mari Bailey so perfectly put it, we can all learn from the tragic loss of our much loved Rahnee, and thus she did not die in vain. *(Thank you Mari Bailey for giving me the courage to write this article.)*

Please take note of the symptoms listed below. Many vets are either reluctant to accept or are unaware of this reality, so please speak up for your dog. You owe it to your dog and yourself to become familiar with this danger and take the steps necessary to prevent it. Once the imbalance has happened, a heartbreaking death is almost inevitable and it's very, very quick.

SYMPTOMS:

Ataxia (staggering, falling over)
Vomiting
Weakness, lethargy
Pale gums
Bloating

Excessive Salivation
Dilated pupils, glazed eyed
Seizures, convulsions
Difficulty breathing
Loss of consciousness

Thank you Dorothy Swanson (Meadowlake Cavaliers) for your patience and guidance this past year; and thank you for Meadowlake "Ricki" Rouge, my new BFF and next up and coming agility partner. She is amazing!

*Luci Seaux
Kerrville, TX*