

# Duckie—A Story of Courage



In February of 2009, Illinois Birddog Rescue (IBR) was contacted about a little black and white American Field bred English Setter that needed a rescue from Missouri. She entered foster care a three-legged dog with several health and behavioral issues. IBR chose to name her Tammy Duckworth, aka Duckie [www.ibrtammy.blogspot.com](http://www.ibrtammy.blogspot.com) . While Duckie may seem like a strange name for a dog, it is the perfect fit for her. Tammy Duckworth, her namesake, is a soldier who returned from the Iraq war with some extremely challenging injuries but went on to do incredible work for veteran's issues. The word "duck" is also a term of endearment in Britain. These two explanations capture Duckie perfectly – she is a tough cookie who wiggles into your heart before you know it.

Unfortunately, our Duckie had the deck stacked against her when she arrived into our rescue. Vetting records from her first home described a back leg that was badly injured and the most effective way to make her comfortable was to remove it. Entering foster care, we also found out that she had many more complicating health issues including Heartworm disease complicated by Lyme disease, Ehrlichia, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (tick-borne illnesses) causing anemia and aggression. Duckie also had one ear that was either docked or mangled, badly worn teeth, and numerous mammary tumors ranging in size from a pea to a walnut. It was apparent from her physical condition that she had at least a couple of litters of puppies and had not been spayed.



Over the past year while Duckie has been with IBR, we have slowly and diligently tackled each of her health issues. Given our research and treatment protocols regarding tick borne illness co infections with heartworm disease, we knew it was going to be a long battle. While on continuous doxycycline treatment for the tick borne illnesses, 10 months post heartworm treatment, Duckie is finally heartworm negative. Further blood work

shows she is over Lyme disease, but sadly she most likely has chronic Ehrlichiosis <http://www.workingdogs.com/doc0045.htm> complicated by her Rocky Mountain spotted fever infection. Sadly, during her spay in January of 2010, exploratory surgery showed a golf ball sized tumor on her spleen. As a result, she had her spleen removed. The cancer diagnosis called hemangiosarcoma <http://caninecancerawareness.org/html/CanineCancerHemangiosarcoma.html> was very devastating to the rescue—but especially to Duckie’s foster mom.

Despite all of these challenges, Duckie’s foster mom reports she is still a spunky, sassy girl who refuses to let anything stop her. She loves rawhides, burying her food in her blankets, and most especially belly rubs. As she learned to swim this past summer, we are hopeful she will outlive her 10 month life expectancy and have a dip in the water when spring comes around. IBR is committed to keeping her comfortable, and happy, and giving her the best possible care for as long as she is with us.

We can never thank Sarah Kate Johnson, Duckie’s foster mom, for her compassion and dedication to her care the past year.

