



## McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

### INDIES JOURNEY

This is my 26th year in this amazing profession and I have to admit sadly I have never experienced "Breeding" first hand. My son Isaac nags us all the time to breed Abyssinians as we are so in love with our two, Spartacus and Piper. All of us wanted to breed from Lola (I had loads of clients and staff wanting a pup of hers!) but after we realized she had the dreaded "Split Pad Disease", we felt this was a cruel trait to pass down to unsuspecting new owners. AND then she developed kidney cancer, so we made the right decision to desex her which has made absolutely no difference to her personality or the awesome family member she has become.

Very good friends of mine (Mala and Kev) have for a while expressed an interest in breeding from their impressive, young White Swiss Shepherd dog (WSSD) "Indie". All Mala's life she has loved and owned German Shepherds and had her fair share of heartaches with illness and hereditary disease, which sadly goes with the breed. Mala and Kev's last treasured pet "Hunter" among other things, ended up having spinal surgery for lumbosacral disease in her later years. Then she succumbed to degenerative myelopathy and ended up living out her days happily in a doggie wheelchair. So for my dear friends, their pets are an extension of themselves, to be loved and cherished and they will go to any lengths to ensure they have the best life possible.

As Mala says, "After Hunter and her spinal injury and likely degenerative myelopathy, we wanted to get another dog that had as many safeguards against the diseases that were common to German Shepherds and other large breeds. Lucky for us we stumbled across Pandora Kennels and their White Swiss Shepherds. It was here that we found a breeder who does health testing, hip and elbow scoring and breeding of good personality matches with the aim of ultimately improving the WSSD. When we got Indie we never thought breeding from her would be an option but we quickly developed a friendship with Tanya and her family which has allowed us to embark on this journey. Tanya had watched Indie grow and became to realize she was a fine example of the breed. This means a good balance of desired temperament, conformation and breed requirements.

Firstly Indie went for hip and elbow radiographs at McMaster & Heap to make sure her scores were good and she wasn't going to pass down undesirable traits. DNA tests were also performed to check for common diseases in this breed. The main diseases tested for in this breed are Degenerative Myelopathy Von Willebrands and MDR1 (Multi drug resistance). A cheek swab is all that is needed. Indie passed all the tests with flying colours. Obviously Mala has her fully vaccinated and up to date with parasite control. As you can see from the photos, she's a picture of glamour, confidence and health.

The next step in the long process to "puppies" was finding a mate for Indie, changing the

pedigree papers to allow breeding and organizing the right time as Mala would need time off work to supervise Indie and her babies. WSSD's can have large litters so many hands on deck were likely especially in the early weeks. The breeder Tanya looked carefully at males available and their bloodlines to make sure there wasn't any inbreeding at play. Floyd from Levin was the lucky stud dog chosen.

Indie came into season at the beginning of April, which started with bloodspots and lasted for about 10-14 days before she'd allow Floyd to mate her. When she ovulates this means she will stand for the male dog and allow mating. She may be

mated several times over 2-4 days around this period. After ovulation and mating, there is another week where the bitch 'cools down' before she is totally safe to be walked on the streets again.

So the waiting game now begins. How exciting for us all to follow Indie, her pregnancy and hopefully new babies in June/July. Firstly Mala and Kev will notice a change in behavior, maybe she will gain a bit of weight and her nipples will pink up. Catherine will be able to ultrasound at around 28 days to see if there are "multiple" fetal heart beats. A blood test at around day 22-28 can determine a pregnancy based on high relaxin levels. I will definitely keep you all posted – follow us on Facebook to learn more about Indie and her journey to new life!

#### Now a little about the WSSDs from the Breeder....

White Swiss Shepherd dogs are relatively rare and new in New Zealand. The breed originates from German Shepherds, which included white sheepherding dogs when the breed was formed back in the 1800's. The white colour became undesirable after WW2, so whites were only bred in secret. Luckily Switzerland approved a new breed in 1991 called White Swiss Shepherds and now this breed is recognized in most countries over the world.

The White Swiss Shepherds still have similarities to their cousins the German Shepherds but everyone owning a white will notice the difference in looks and temperament. White Swiss Shepherds are family dogs who love children and visitors and are non-aggressive towards other dogs. They need regular exercise and excel in dog sports. Of course socialization and proper training is the key to a well mannered dog.

#### What Mala and Kev say about their breed.....

The things that impress us most about the breed are their personalities and physical stature. They are bred to be strong, particularly in the hips, an area where other breeds lack consistency and health. Their personality is 10/10- they are friendly, calm, loyal and protective when needed....they truly are mans best friend! The breed is one that, in our mind, represents a strength of character and presence that is unsurpassed. They simply are a fantastic breed!

**Dr Michele McMaster**



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