

Just a brief history of my heart dog. Tessa is a seven year old black lab with an outstanding desire and willingness to please. Our relationship began in the Fall of 2005 at that time I was a volunteer advanced level trainer for the Paws with Purpose program located in Louisville Kentucky. Tessa entered the advanced program at seventeen months. She was carefully groomed by her puppy trainers to be an assistant dog to help the disabled. I took a special interest in this girl. Tessa's energy level was much too high for an assistant dog. I loved her so much and wanted help her find a job that suited her energy level. I was involved in training search dogs and was a member of a local search dog team. I was ready and looking for another dog to train for myself. I ask the director if she would release Tessa to me if she tested out in the search field

Tessa became a dream of a search dog. She was released to me in October of 2005.

When Tessa was released she was being treated for demodectic mange. The mange was not clearing up so I located a dermatologist that came to a local clinic in Louisville once a month. We did allergy testing and found Tessa to be allergic to every insect known to man. She was started on shots to get the skin issue under control. We also switched her food to a one protein/ carbohydrate diet. We were able to get the skin problems cleared up and her job as a search dog was off and soaring. She was amazing to watch her as she grew in skill levels. Then in early Spring of 2010 she lost her ability to locate scent (human remains). I knew immediately that there was something wrong. We began a long list of testing, my vet felt it was her thyroid due to symptoms that she was having at the time. Sure enough the TSH panel came back and it was a thyroid problem. We started her on thyroid medication. Three months went by and she was still having olfactory issues in the search field. I again took her back for more testing. This time she started drinking large amounts of water. Blood-work and urine samples showed early kidney disease. My vet wanted Tessa to be on a low protein diet, but due to kidney diets having grains I knew that the prescription diets were not an option due to Tessa's allergies.

I located Dr. Susan Lauten a pet nutritionist on the internet. She listened as I poured my heart out about Tessa, it wasn't so much as I had lost her in the search field which was a huge loss, but it was the love I had to keep her with me for as long as I could.

Dr. Lauten created a salmon/fish diet for Tessa that has helped bring her kidney problem in check. This was in May of 2010 when I started her on the homemade diet. We are over year later and Tessa is doing great! Along with all this Dr. Lauten added some extra nutritional vitamins to help her olfactory. She is now using her nose and enjoying a great dog life! Tessa is retired from the search field due to the added stress on her body and health. But we plan on pursuing a tracking dog title through AKC requirements soon.

Thanks to Dr. Susan we keep in touch by sending lab results quarterly. Between my vet and Susan I believe I will have Tessa for a very long time.

Thanks for allowing me to share Tessa and my experience..... nutrition ROCKS!

Terry McGauley & Tessa

