

## MASON DIXON BMDC

### Mason Dixon BMDC Rescue Committee

On June 5, 2007, MDBMDC Rescue was contacted by a local governmental animal shelter in regard to a male neutered BMD that had been picked up the previous day as a stray. We were told that the dog had a microchip that was not registered, although the number listed it from a batch of chips that had been sold to a breeder in the upstate New England area. Animal control had contacted the breeder, who checked her records and found the name of person who had bought the dog as a puppy five years earlier. The breeder gave animal control the name, address, and telephone number of the owner, as well as the dog's birthdate and name, Luke. She also stated that although she would like to help the dog, she was unable to travel to collect him. (Subsequent calls to the breeder from our rescue group were not returned. All evidence indicates that she is a backyard breeder/puppy miller.)

The animal control officer, through various avenues, had contacted the person listed as the owner of record. That person denied owning a BMD for at least the last 10 years, although vet records show that Luke had been seen as late as 2005. It was at this point that Animal Control contacted rescue because the dog was then deemed a stray. We were told that the dog would be euthanized if we didn't take him. They classified him as unadoptable because of his health problems. In fact, they weren't even sure we would want him because his health was precarious at best.

A rescue member went to see Luke the same day we got the call. Luke was definitely in a serious health crisis: he was severely underweight (by as much as 25 pounds); had lost much of his hair; had open lesions on his ears, back, sides, and base of the tail; and had



scaly skin and a deformed ear flap (most likely related to scratching and hematomas). His demeanor was flat: he showed no signs of aggression, shyness, or even interest. He did give a very slight wave of his tail (strangely full and bushy compared with the rest of his coat!) when he was offered treats, which he took very gingerly. He would flinch

a bit when petted and then try to rub his head on the petter's leg, but otherwise did not try to interact with people or other dogs. He would just stand still or walk quietly on lead.

Our rescue decided to take Luke into our program and give him the best chance that we could. As soon as the shelter would release him, we took him directly to our vet, where he showed a bit of interest in his surroundings and the rescue members. He was anesthetized in order to comfortably clip and treat his lesions, given fluids, and placed on antibiotics, steroids, pain medication, and treatment for sarcoptic mange. In addition, a full blood panel was run to evaluate his overall status, and he received a medicated bath. Because of his health status, the vets did not recommend any additional vaccines at that time. Regulations had required a rabies vaccination before he left the shelter. Luckily, all blood values were within reasonable limits for his age and condition, and he was found to be heartworm negative.

Luke stayed at the hospital for one week for intensive therapy while rescue aggressively searched for a foster home. Because of the contagiousness of sarcoptic mange to other dogs and humans, we were hesitant to place him in any home with dogs. After several leads and offers of assistance, we were able to place him with a club member who could keep a close eye on him and keep him separated until he got the second treatment for the mange. When rescue picked him up from the hospital, we were amazed at his vast improvement. His skin was much better, and there was a light in his eyes. He actually pranced out to the car!

As the weeks went by, Luke improved dramatically, as much from TLC as from those wonderful Magic Meatballs! Although his temperament was always good, those stereotypical Berner traits made their way to the surface. He never met anyone that he didn't like, and the Berner bump would show up occasionally. It was discovered that he loved squeaky toys, and he took great joy in showing off. Because he was such a social butterfly, we received many offers to give him a permanent home even though physically he still looked a bit worse for wear.

After several weeks of foster care, it was deemed time to place Luke in his "forever home," especially since his foster parents were getting quite attached and so was Luke. The potential adopters met Luke, then introduced their Berner Jordan to him, and, as they say, it was a match made in heaven. Within hours, Luke made himself right at home, jumping on the bed with Jordan and standing guard at the window on the sofa.

Since July, Luke has continued his progress. His skin is now very soft, and his soft, downy hair is returning quickly. He has a gleam in his eye, and he showed off at a recent rescue event. Within weeks of being placed, he even went on vacation to the ocean! Just recently, it was determined that Luke has a bad tear of his cruciate ligament, and surgery is scheduled for the end of August, which should provide him with great relief.



It is a true testament to the breed that a dog so neglected and abused could make a remarkable recovery and still have that wonderful Berner temperament shining through. Our rescue thanks: the BMDCA for financial assistance with some of Luke's health costs; our remarkable vets, who helped us get Luke on the road to recovery; the participants in our events to aid rescue; the great foster home, Jane and Donna, for all the TLC and Magic Meatballs; and the wonderful family, Kurt, Missy, and Jordan, who saw the beauty and dignity beneath the scarred surface.

October 1, 2007 update: Luke is recovering well from his ligament repair surgery. He is spending time relaxing with his family at the beach, soon to start swimming therapy.

### BMDC OF NASHOBA VALLEY

**Anya Wittenborg**

This year has been busy for us in New England, as I expect it has been for all the regional rescues. Fortunately (for both me and the dogs), the Nashoba Valley club members are uniformly supportive of their rescue program. I feel lucky to be able to call on members throughout New England (and sometimes farther!) for their assistance in evaluating, fostering, or transporting dogs.

While we have placed a number of dogs this year who were reasonably sound, both physically and temperamentally, we have also had some sad issues to deal with. Perhaps the sorriest story of the year is Paxton's. Paxton was a stray whom a woman and her young daughter found by in central Massachusetts. (We named him for the town where he was found.) They could not keep him and called Animal Control to collect him. The ACO took him to the Worcester shelter (the same one where we found Michelle Keck's Sammy around the same time of year in 2006!). He told the shelter workers to put him down if no one claimed him within five days. There didn't seem to be any chance that anyone would claim this 7-year-old dog who had clearly been on his own for many months. He was covered in ticks (the shelter estimated 500 or so), was scrawny, and could barely walk.

What saved Paxton was a call to the shelter from the woman who found him. She learned he was to be put down, and she spent the next few days trying to locate a rescue that would take him. I went to meet him, along with Pauline Merrick and her husband, and a sorrier sight you wouldn't want to see. He was completely shaved and barely able