

Health

by Lynda Hruby



“Shaman and Hunter both have PRA. You can see the green tint to Hunter's eyes. That is what the eyes look like when PRA is more advanced.”

Life with Hunter: Adapting to PRA. Hunter is my 6-1/2 year old male Entle and he has PRA. He and Jane Torma's Bamse, were among the first NEMDA dogs to be diagnosed with this terrible affliction and thus were made the “Poster Boys” on our website. Jane and I decided we wanted to make a difference and we wrote the PRA segment of our NEMDA Website and introduced everyone who visited it to Dr. Petersen Jones who, along with Dr. Spiess in Europe, is working on finding the gene that causes this affliction. We started the PRA Committee so we could share information with the NEMDA Board and its Membership. We began small but now have a hard working committee that is supported throughout the entire club.

I heartily recommend that everyone who has an Entlebucher have the dog's eyes checked by a registered ophthalmologist at least once in their lifetime, usually between 2 and 4 years of age. It is better to know what is happening with your pet so you can make some changes along the way to make your pet's life more enjoyable and safe.

Hunter was diagnosed early, 19 months and then confirmed at two years of age, so his sight now is probably 75 per cent gone. But if those at the Washington Entleday will remember, he can still strut his stuff with the girls. At one point he was

showing off in front of two young ladies but turned the wrong way and walked right into a tree – not too cool!!!! But the girls still followed him around. The following are a few things that I have done with Hunter to help us both have more fun together.

- When training use sound like bells or a clicker as this will help him know where you are when the sight diminishes
- Play with light colored toys – glow balls are good and make sure that you hit the ground with the toy so the dog can hear it. (Hunter chews a hole in his ball so he can hear the wind whistle as it goes by him.)
- While he still has good vision work with hand and voice commands that will teach directions for the dog. It will come in handy later on when your pet cannot find a toy etc.
- Watch you dog with unknown dogs as an unsighted dog can get hurt easily. Hunter walked into two unaltered males at Entleday and luckily they did not think he was a threat but it could have been nasty.
- Put nightlights around the house to help guide in the dark
- Do not move furniture too much or leave low cupboard doors open
- Auto-sensory lights for outside are a help
- Do not leave your PRA dog unattended outside in the dark - this will only stress the dog if it cannot find its way back to the house.
- Block off steep stairs. Going up is fine but coming down can be hazardous.
- If you have a pool or water on your property keep a watchful eye on your dog. They can fall in and not be able to find a way out.
- When walking with your dog always let him know where you are.

Entles probably adapt better than their Human counterparts. Nevertheless, if you can help them in anyway you will receive the awards of an appreciative dog that just wants to have fun with you. If you need any more information on the PRA Program or the PRA Committee please do not hesitate to contact Jane Torma at jptorma@pcii.net or Kathy Marshall at katlin@entlebuchers.net or myself at Lynda_Hruby@telus.net.