

An Oregon Cottage Podcast

Episode 62: Caring For Our Old Dog

- Brian: Welcome to episode 62 where we're going to talk about how we're helping our really old dog.
- Jami: Yes. We've been treating him with some special foods and supplements after visiting a holistic vet.
- Brian: Plus we're going to have our usual, this is really cool segment and we're going to share with you some kind of cool things we've discovered lately.
- Jami: And I should mentioned that our food segment is going to be about the food that I'm giving to our dog. Um, though there's not really anything in it we can't eat, they're just not really recipes that I'm making for us.
- Brian: Like today I walk in the kitchen, it's like, "Oh, that smells so good. What are we having?" We're not having anything. It's for the dog.
- Jami: Coconut oil, ground turkey, sweet potatoes, bone meal, flax seed oil. It was good.
- Brian: I think that some of that stuff could be in curry. I don't know, there's coconut something in there.
- Jami: That's right.
- Brian: Anyway, so if you don't know, we've kinda been talking about our dog all through the podcast. So starting in the very first episode, we talked about how he decided to ruin the rug. [laughing] And then we talked about in one of our camping episodes - was it episode five? [yes] We talked about feeding him too much human food and the disaster that almost happened there.
- Jami: Yes, you do have to be careful the type of human food you give them.
- Brian: Bless his heart. Go back and listen to that one. And then he got hurt, his hip was really bothering him.
- Jami: Yes, and we did an entire episode - episode 27 - on how turmeric just really helped our dog, like going from hobbling around on three legs to jumping and bouncing and running, for years with turmeric. So I'm a big believer in turmeric with animals for when they have inflammation and things that aren't really responding to other things. So if you have any kind of issues with your dog, go back and listen to episode 27.
- Brian: The turmeric episode. And, our dog, just to give you an idea, we say he's really old. He's coming up on 14 years old as far as we can tell in the next month or two.
- Jami: As far as we know. We rescued him.
- Brian: Yeah. He may only be 13 and a half, but he's in there.

Our Dog

- Jami: We rescued him in 2006 in the fall, actually right around Thanksgiving. Um, he had been dropped off at my dad's neighborhood out in central Oregon.
- Brian: In the forest. In the cold, deep snow.
- Jami: Yes. Yeah. And uh, nobody claimed him, had no chip. We, we took him and have loved him, but they did think he was about a year old. He was definitely puppy stage. He was chewing on everything and we went through all that with him. He could have been nine months, he could've been 14 months, but we November, we tend to think of that as his birthday. So we're, we're saying he's going to be 14. And we should say he's an 80 pound dog, he's a larger dog. 14 is really old.
- Brian: Right. It really struck home because they have these charts at the vet and you know, the, the heavier the dog, the bigger the dog, the shorter their lifespan. [Yeah.] So like a great Dane or a St. Bernard is like 6 or 8 years and little bitty dogs live a long time. But at 81 pounds the vet said it's like he's in his early nineties. [Right.] So that's quite elderly. So he kind of walks around like somebody in his nineties, he's a little bit, [laughing] it looks like he could use a walker, he's a little bit out of it, you know. [Yeah.] We have really enjoyed him over the years. He has just been such a great dog. His name is Samson. I don't know if we said that. Um, big, friendly, sweet dog and just some funny things have happened with him. We talked about the other two. The one that just sticks out with me is one Christmas, Jami was doing catering along with her brother, making a cake for one of his events, a very fancy chocolate cake for this corporate event. And we didn't have room in the fridge for the cake when it was done. So she had it all frosted. All done. And this is really smart. She said it in the cake box out on the front porch because it was like refrigerator temperatures, very cold out.
- Jami: Oh we didn't have room in our refrigerator.
- Brian: Yeah, exactly. So it's like why not? And then your brother would show up. He'd be able to pick up the cake from out there. Everything's great. Done on time.
- Jami: Right.
- Brian: Well what we completely forgot about was we fed the dog out in the back of the house, put him outside, put his food out, he ate and we kind of forgot. He sort of would patrol the property, um, after eating and this particular night,
- Jami: Our back yard was not completely fenced in...
- Brian: Yeah, it was not completely fenced in, but then it wasn't a problem because he would stay, he wouldn't go out into the street. So it just didn't ever occur - there are two different sides of the house and nobody thought, it didn't occur. Of course you, listener, know what's about to happen. He had a little dessert after dinner. He goes around and I don't know who saw it through the front windows or the porch lights on.
- Jami: I think our daughter did.
- Brian: There is the dog munching on the chocolate cake. Which first of all is not good for him, but possibly even worse at that moment was, not good for Jami [no!] because...

Jami: People had paid for that cake. I had spent hours on that cake.

Brian: So he had some help nosed open the cake box and it'd taken a really good bite.

Jami: It was on a bench. And he had kind of knocked it off.

Brian: Right at dog level. Yeah - had he knocked it down?

Jami: Yeah, it was on the half on the floor, or the porch floor, and then a corner of it, you know, just mowing down on it. I just remember the funniest thing to me is I was horrified and I was just like, "Oh my gosh, throw the whole thing away. This is terrible." And my daughter who had watched me make these cakes for the previous few years and we'd never had one of our own.

Brian: We don't get them, they're for other people. This incredible cake - we don't get them. [laugh]

Jami: She just started throwing herself, she was like, "Mom, we can save it! He only ate the corner! We can finally have some of the cake!" [laughing].

Brian: Right. I mean, not for the event, for us. That was kind of a wind fall for the rest of the family.

Jami: I did not want that cake - who knows where the dog had been on it. But she wanted it. So we did that.

Brian: Well, three quarters of it had clearly been untouched so we could cut off the chewed on parts. So that was, that was great actually. We had some really good cake. You fortunately had baked a spare.

Jami: Oh my goodness. Was I SO happy I had baked both the cake part at the same time without decorating them and put, there, was a lemon and a chocolate, put the lemon one in the refrigerator, made the chocolate, I mean in the freezer, made the chocolate one first. And then because this particular client that I made these for had two parties a week apart, or a few days apart, I can't remember now. And so I just pulled out the lemon one, quickly frosted it and sent it. And I was done by the time I think, I think my brother had to wait a little bit, but not much. And then I had to totally remake the chocolate one, obviously.

Brian: But it was a success, you know, it was a success. Disaster averted. Well, what's funny is the contrast because now that Samson is 14 years old, he doesn't really want to eat. I don't even know if he would eat a cake if we put it in front of him.

Jami: Yeah, maybe not. Yeah. So many things that he loved like peanut butter, and licking out the peanut butter jar, and licking out the yogurt container, and all these little treats that he used to like, he's not interested in any of it.

Brian: He would even eat beans. I'd be picking beans. Green beans from the garden. I'd give him a fresh green bean and he loved it.

Jami: Oh, he'd love it - he'd be out there and I could give him lots of things - blueberries, lots of things. And he would eat them in the garden when I was harvesting. But no, he doesn't want those either.

Brian: Um, one of the reasons I took him to the vet was his kind of lack of eating. I thought he was having a tooth issue and,

Jami: Well he was having a tooth issue. Um, the regular vet had found an abscess.

Brian: Yeah. And so they immediately recommend,

Jami: Or no, we had taken because he was drooling,

Brian: Well, he was drooling, he was doing some kind of a, a strange, um, drool. And so we took him in just to check. [laugh] I just got a message from our daughter in Australia. [laugh] I guess she's up, it's like we're never sure what time it is there. I think it's early in the morning. So yeah, we took him to the regular vet and of course the diagnosis was to do some tooth extractions based on this abscess that they saw. Thing with a dog though is like a person you can go in and they can just pull the tooth. But for a dog it's like major surgery because they put you completely under, which it's really expensive and then it's, it's tough on the animal and they often aren't the same. Either they don't come out of it or they really take a hit on their health, especially if they're older. Right. And so we were thinking, wow, we need to think about this. And um, so while we were thinking of what to do...

Jami: Well, I did read, um, because if you go online and you read about that, you will see over and over where that is not true, that dogs can go under and it's not that big of a deal for them. So I was kind of feeling a little better about it until we went to a different vet who, um, her experience is, it might not do anything right then, but it will shorten their life or it will, they will gradually decline. So I think it might be like those science things where, you know, "Oh yeah, they can, they come out of it, they're fine." But it's not good in the long run for them.

Brian: And your brother had just told me a scary story of the neighbor's dog. That's what I was thinking of, these little anecdotes that you're right, probably 99% of the time they come out. But remember the neighbor's dog just wasn't right, and they had to put it down. So anyway, plus the expense. We're like, wow, we didn't have this planned for, we don't know that he's gonna live another year even if everything goes well. So we got a second opinion at a holistic vet.

Holistic Veterinarian

Jami: Right. A friend of mine, and then both my sisters I found out also, go to this vet, but we took, we just wanted a second opinion and because it is confusing and he's older and you know, you don't want to put him in any misery either. She was amazing. Like you saw a difference right away, in how they treat?

Brian: Right. And I want to say right away, she was a, she was a real vet, a DMV or what? Is it a DMV or is that a dentist? Or the DMV is in Oregon where we register for license. [laugh] She's, like a real, a real vet. Only with kind of a more holistic bent. [Yes.] And I saw a huge difference in just when we went there, the other vet's fine, but it's very clinical. But when we were there, they're really,

Jami: They're attuned to dogs more.

Brian: Attuned to the dog and attuned to his comfort. And he's old and they put a towel on the floor, over a pad, and it was exactly what he wanted. And she examined him on the floor. She knelt down on the floor with her computer and spent a long time going over his whole body as she called out notes and had a person write all these things on him.

Jami: It was a really great, I mean, so many things she looked at.

Brian: And talked to us quite a bit. Yes. Yeah.

Jami: And, and she never made us feel like we'd done anything wrong, you know, she kept saying, even though, you know, we weren't feeding him like she would, we weren't doing some of the things that maybe she would, she's like, you guys have done a great job with this dog. He's, he's healthy. All the things that are wrong with him, I would expect to find in a dog this age. He's walking around, he's, you know, enjoying life still.

Brian: Right. So she said, most most dogs, this is really sad, I didn't know this, most dogs his size at age 10 to 12 die of cancer. So he's already done better. Yeah. So, it could be that our dog breeds aren't as resilient as they used to be, but.

Jami: Yeah, so we don't know his exact breed because we rescued him, but he, in all the research we've done, he seems to be a lab mixed with some sort of like Swiss mountain, Greater Swiss Mountain dog. [Yeah.] Um, we thought at first it was Bernese, but his hair's shorter, so greater Swiss mountain dog is like a Bernese Mountain Dog, but shorter hair and slightly bigger.

Brian: So yeah. Good. A good working dog. Well, so anyway she gave us, um, her main thing about kibble, she didn't make us feel super guilty for the kibble. She said the ingredients are good, but it is pretty highly processed and it's baked at a really high temperature. And that may actually take away some of the benefits of it because dogs have grown up not eating cooked food or heavily processed food. So what were some of the things she recommended?

Jami: Well, we should say we had been feeding him, and in one of our videos we show how we feed him with the turmeric that we'd put in for at least six or more years in his food. He was getting the turmeric in his food with water and the kibbles and we went to a pretty good quality kibble that had mostly meat in it. Um, it had I think some rice as well, but so it wasn't a terrible kibble. I mean it wasn't the high end, but you know, it was still, um, a kibble. And the reason that she started talking about food is because of the teeth issue, the abscess, the infection. And she felt like if this was all coming from his gut and the animals deal with infection in their mouths, um, normally on their own, they don't have doctors to go to, you know, in the wild and things like that. So they, their bodies are made to kind of flush out this if they're eating the right thing. So that was the kind of, the whole idea is to change his diet to help his inflammation for his back leg - that was still issue, and to help with his infection in the mouth as well as a few other supplements and things that we're doing. So that was kind of why she didn't just immediately say, Oh this is terrible and you're feeding him terrible. She let us choose and you know, we want to do what's best for him. Plus he wasn't eating the food anymore. He didn't like it. He didn't really like the turmeric anymore, even though I think it should be like comfort to him because he's been eating it so long. But he just really doesn't want to turmeric, even in the new food I make, I can't really put the turmeric in it anymore, which is sad to me. But, we do what we can.

Brian: The one thing he's consistent with is Trader Joe's dog treats [laugh].

Jami: Which we better not say because I do think they have grain in them!

Brian: Do they? Well, he doesn't get many of them, whatever's in there he likes.

Jami: We have to tear up a little piece of those to get them started, eat the other food. It's just terrible. He's so weird.

Brian: So yeah. Anyway, so it was quite a list. It was, it would almost be like if a person, if you're cooking and it's quite a bit of effort, and she wasn't sure because maybe many people wouldn't do this. Quite a bit of effort to cook. It'd be like cooking a special diet for a person.

Jami: Right. It's actually not that much effort. You know, I mean she did suggest a lot of things that I'm like, I don't even do that for us so I don't really think I'm going to go to the local farm and you know, make sure his, his chickens are all, you know, fresh. But we're getting him quality stuff and trying to find good things for him to eat that are meat and vegetables and then adding some supplements in there. But he is still this very old, weird dog and I will give him something one day and it's his favorite thing he's ever had, whether it be chicken or whatever. One time it was some canned pumpkin to help his digestion and he loved it. And the next day he'll look at me like, what are you giving me?

Brian: Is this even food?

What's Cooking

Jami: So we're dealing with that as well. So I'm constantly having to try to change it up. I thought I would, you know, for the food segment, I thought I would kind of just give some ideas of things that I've done to show it really isn't, it really hasn't been that time consuming. You know, I would say maybe it takes 10 minutes? And I can make, you know, four or five meals for him or three to four depending on what- I've even done a slow cooker one once, but now I'm afraid to do that large of an amount because then he didn't really eat it after awhile.

Brian: That's right.

Jami: Here are some of the ideas that she, that the vet gave us. So, uh, first of all, there is a balanced raw dog food that you can buy. It's pretty spendy. And she really says that dogs should eat it raw, but our dog won't eat anything raw. He's just too old and I guess he's had things cooked and he won't eat them raw. So that doesn't really work for us. We got some little patties of it, uh, to see if he would like it, made out of chicken and they're balanced. So they have all this stuff in to make sure that the dog gets everything that they need.

Which that's the biggest thing with feeding them people food, is that just feeding them stuff, they're not going to get all the things that they need, like the bone meal, you know, unless you're giving them some raw bones to chew on. You know, there's just a lot of things to think about. So the balanced, pre-made dog food would, um, cover all that. But Samson doesn't really like it. I did cook it and he'll eat it. If I tear up the little pieces and hide it in some other stuff, he'll eat it.

So we're doing more chicken, ground turkey, ground beef, cooked chicken and I just, whatever vegetables I have, well not onions of course, but carrots, green beans, zucchini, squash, sweet potatoes, anything that I have, uh, that I've got for us, I'm bringing in from the garden or I have in the refrigerator, I'll choose some of those to mix with it. I also always cook it in coconut oil. Then we do some food grade bone meal I got, cod liver oil pills, flaxseed oil, I'll mix in that. And bone broth, he should be having a lot of bone broth. Again, it's another thing he won't eat.

Brian: Isn't that funny?

Jami: He'll sometimes eat it and sometimes he won't. Drink it I guess you'd say. So I have to tend to put that in with the food as well. There's this great turmeric paste

you can make, a mixture of coconut oil, black pepper and turmeric, and that will really help with any animal's inflammation. And there are um, recipes online and I made up a jar of that and just put a spoonful in some of his first meals. Which he wouldn't eat. So, so we're not using that. And so our vet recommended a supplement called Boswellia and I'll link to that in the show notes because that helps with inflammation if your dog won't eat the turmeric. And over the years that we've had the turmeric information on the blog and our YouTube channel, we've heard from people who would say that their dog just wouldn't eat it because of the flavor or smell or whatever. So the Boswellia supplement may be an option for that.

This is Really Cool!

Brian: Well I'm watching our old dog walk around behind you (outside) as you're talking about his diet. He's checking the, I'm looking over the edge, he was checking some of our gopher traps, which I actually wanted to talk about, and this is really cool. This is going to be for a very limited group of people.

Jami: Not so limited, I think more people than we know have gophers.

Brian: I know - we have pocket gophers out here. If you've seen Caddy Shack, that movie which is really a bad movie but, the part that's really true to life is the, uh, Bill Murray's obsession with this gopher that he can't kill. It's ruining the golf course and that's kind of how you end up feeling with your lawn. And we've talked about how we've had so many gophers here before and I would go on Amazon and buy their top trap again and again and again with no effect. And I'm actually gonna make a video about all the things I've tried that haven't worked.

Jami: But just to give people a little idea, what we have is called a gopher city. I actually looked it up online and last year we did hire someone to get some the gophers thinking it would give us a - how many did they get?

Brian: Well I think 26 was their count.

Jami: 26 gophers. And within a few months we had as many mounds as we did before we had paid for all those 26 gophers. So when we say we have gophers, it's not just one or two making a mess of our yard. It's, it's a city.

Brian: Right. And you know, they may have knocked back a major part of the population, but it was hard to tell cause it's such a mess. Yeah. Gophers tend to make holes, they can make holes over a hundred foot long, um, area.

So what I want to talk about, get to it quickly here, the one trap that works, it's called, the DK One Death Clutch Trap. Yes. And I know that sounds kind of severe. It's kind of a metal sprung trap that's made out of thick wire with the spring and it has these two jaws that come clamping closed on the gopher. And I'm, yes, I'm sorry to say that the gopher is not, the gopher does not survive if the trap works. But honestly there's no, there's no gentle way to get rid of them. I think poisoning, which I also tried, is actually worse because they die slowly over, you know. It's legal in some states, you can only trap or poison and it just, poison seems inhumane. And if the gopher gets out, something, a coyote would be poisoned or a bird of prey. So anyway.

Jami: Or a dog - our dog doesn't care about them but there are dogs that dig them.

Brian: Yeah, the neighbor's dog loves digging them. So anyway, this is called the Death Clutch DK One. They're made by some guy out in the Midwest, in Iowa, I'll link to

them. It's really reasonable. There's like, you can get six of them for 37 bucks. I'm looking at the Amazon page right here. And you just kinda want to deploy them. It took me awhile to figure out where in the runs they go. That was the problem. But even then I'd done a lot of experiments with other traps - didn't work. This is the only one where I got a string over a 10 day period. I killed seven gophers.

Jami: That was awesome.

Brian: Which after no gophers for months and months? Seven in a stretch?

Jami: So, and did you mention you will be doing a video? [Yeah. Right, right.] And so you'll be showing your technique?

Brian: Right, I won't just show what doesn't work, then I'm going to show what does work and how you place it. And so anyway, I'm very hopeful.

Jami: Well, my really cool thing that I wanted to share is something new that we got for the manufactured home over the summer when we weren't putting out any new podcast episodes. So I wanted to, you know, track back and mention this. I did mention it on one of my Good Things List. So it was in there, but for any just podcast listeners, if you think you cannot get a nice kitchen sink faucet for under 200 bucks, I've got something for you. Because it's not only under 200 bucks, it's under a hundred dollars. In fact it was like 69 or \$70. I can't even remember now what the price was. But it was so cheap and it is exactly the kind of faucets that are high end faucets that are going for \$200 or more. Like it's, it's that style. It's the weight of it, the way that it works, how easy it was to go in. I mean, we had to get a kitchen faucet, the other one broke. But this isn't our forever home. We didn't want to spend a lot of money, but I also didn't want just a crappy faucet. Like, it's something you use every single day.

Brian: You use a lot. Probably the most used thing in the house.

Jami: Right. So we were balancing, you know, not wanting to spend a lot, but not wanting to get just crap. So on Amazon they have kind of, I guess knockoff, you know, designer things, the only caveat is, it's not any kind of name brand that you'd know. It's not, you know, Moen or Pfister or it's not any of them. Like it's some name I wouldn't even, I don't even remember.

Brian: Right. So it looks like a good faucet. It's not like, it's not like, pirated, like they're like calling it a Moen. But you know what I'm saying? It isn't like a real, like a knockoff, it's more like an imitation, they imitate the design of the good ones.

Jami: Yes, Imitate. Well isn't that what a knockoff is?

Brian: Well, I don't know.

Jami: A knockoff's just an imitation. Yeah. Anyway, so all that to say, you can get an inexpensive faucet. This is a is a big handle. You know, what is that called, an arching neck?

Brian: It's got a big arching neck, yeah.

Jami: With the pull down sprayer.

Brian: Spigot comes out with a little hose on it. Yeah.

Jami: And it goes right back up, it has this great weight that just takes it right back up. So it's, you know, it's really good.

Brian: It feels really solid. It was easy to put in.

Jami: You were worried about it being hard to put in. But it really did take you 45 minutes, maybe?

Brian: Oh, probably the actual putting that, it probably took longer to take the old one out. It took like 10 minutes once I had figured out what I was doing. [Wow.] It was really well designed.

Jami: So I'm going to put the picture and link in the show notes because not everybody needs a kitchen faucet but sometimes they break and you do need one and this one really is awesome. I would recommend it to anyone.

Brian: And I was just going to add that we had just stayed with some friends in an Airbnb house which had a similar faucet and kind of this big fancy house on the golf course. I like our faucet better. I thought it felt better. It felt less chintzy.

Jami: Yeah, ours feels more solid I think.

Brian: Yeah. So anyway, that's my endorsement.

Jami: And their's was a name brand, but I'm not going to say which one.

Brian: No, we're not going to say which one. Well that's it for this episode. We would love to hear from you if you have an old pet, could be a cat, dog, parakeet, kind of what you're doing to help them prolong their life, help them get over the, the at least live with the, some of the melodies of old age. Leave a comment on the podcast page on the site, call our voice mail number or reply to Jami's newsletter.