

THE WOBBLY

World of Allagash



STRENGTH DOES
NOT COME FROM
PHYSICAL CAPACITY.
IT COMES FROM AN
INDOMITABLE WILL.
-MAHATMA GHANDI

What's New With Allagash?

I started writing this post in late January with the intention of updating everyone on Allagash's anniversary of being saved by Brookline Lab Rescue – here is what's been happening.. starting with the new year. It started off with a bang!

Well, hope everyone had an enjoyable new year and the holidays were filled with health and happy memories - and maybe a new addition or two of furry four -legged friends! Allagash got to take a two-month hiatus from his intensive rehabilitation due to various medical ailments, moving houses, and just his owner trying to finish up various work related projects. While he still had exercises we completed at home, there was definitely an off-season Crown/Final Four!

Let's start first by saying that Allagash is still the lovable, exasperating ball of silky black fur he was when I met him as a puppy. He is just a young adult now (think pre-teens for those who have birthed 2 legged children). He talks back (low pitched barks), let's me know when he disagrees with his bedtime or wake-up time (full on barks), and also when he has reached his max on exercise for the day (drops his head swings side to side like MJ in 'Thriller').





He's a foreign body waiting to happen...

(Heather when speaking to anyone about Little Monster)

January

As I type this very sentence, there is 68 lbs. of silky black fur lying upside down in my lap as I try to balance my MacBook on him. This is usually the preferred relaxation pose that Allagash takes in the evening once he winds down. Though tonight, he is sedated heavily and recovering from emergency surgery.

GI Foreign Body – common words spoken in my line of work. Though I never thought that I would be that dog owner that

had to wonder what was stuck in my dog's small intestine. That all changed on January 17, 2015. Please remember as you read this that I work in the veterinary field – and it didn't make one bit of difference.

It was a typical day that started, Allagash waking me up at 5:30am to eat, play, and whatever. I run my errands, clean, chores, type some conference lectures, de-poop the backyard.

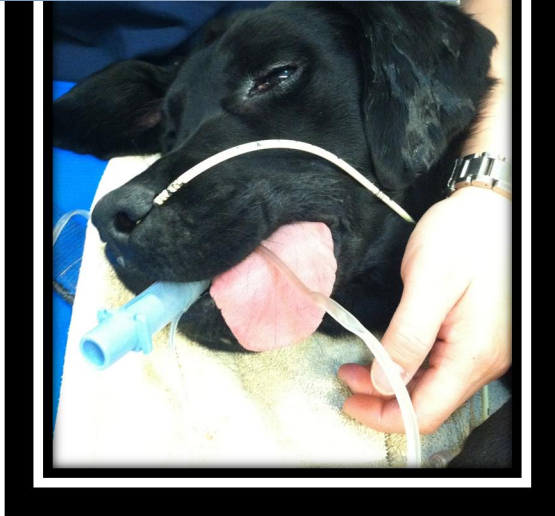
I wasn't overtly concerned when I found vomit midday – two smallish piles in his crate. I started to wonder in the evening after he vomited up his nightly medications wrapped in a Velveeta cheese slice (white not yellow). Tail still wagging; I decided to let him sleep it off for the night.

Saturday morning – 8am and I wake up to sunlight streaming in my room. Gut says 'this is bad'. Why you ask? Because my dog doesn't wait till the sun rises to let me know he wants to start the day. He's waiting for me quietly in his crate, watching me, head tracking me. No tail thump... Well F-me.

I lead him outside and he is not his normal wiggle-butt self, no bucking bronco, no falling over. I palpate his belly and his is tense, painful. Double F-me.

Off we go to work, I, watching him intently in the rear view mirror, the wails of Bob Marley playing on the radio. This is what, I assume, (should I ever have a two-legged child) happens when you know they aren't fake acting illness to get out of school.





Allagash waking up from his emergency surgery procedure. The yellow tube coming from his nose is a nasogastric (NG) tube that would allow me to feed him or also remove any excessive gastric secretions. The blue tube from his mouth is his breathing tube from his surgery.

I carry him into work and to the back, where I am greeted with astonished faces since Allagash normally prances himself back to the innards of the hospital like the little prince/mascot we have come to know. He is so dull that everyone doesn't recognize him at first, then springs into action. I want to add, this action is the same that would occur if it were your pet, unknown to every employee of Northstar, but known to be a beloved member of your family.

Dr. Respass, the criticalist, is on point and I give the brief run down on his assessment. "Do whatever" I say, but I know the playbook of this run by heart. Vitals taken, x-ray of his abdomen, IV catheter placed in his front leg, blood work run, and the inevitable words of "obstructed pattern of the small bowel (he ate something that is not passing)". Game time – we are going to surgery – like in the next couple of hours once he is stable.

People ask how I stay calm. I detach myself and observe. This may sound cold, but I descend into an analytical mode and operate as I

have been taught to. Emotions have a place, though not when being proactive outweighs being reactive.

Dr. Weinstein opens him up and we run the GI tract and isolate his obstruction. A bulky item sits at the far end of his small intestine, stopping up what should be exiting, back flowing secretions into his stomach, distending it to the point you wonder how it doesn't pop like an overfilled balloon. A stomach tube is passed to decompress and evacuate his stomach. Yellow bile pours into a bucket under the surgery table. Me1, the technician and I, are taking bets as to what the obstruction is (humor – it alleviates the stress of this job). I put \$5 on it being a sock – though I have been careful to match what socks I do have. The intestines are angry and purple where the blockage is, blood flow has been halted, and a decision is made to remove the intestine that is questionable to ever heal again. A resection & anastomosis is performed and 3 feet of intestine (along with the foreign body) is removed. He is recovered and tube is inserted in his nose that

snakes to his stomach in case we need to decompress it again, or if he needs it, we can feed him directly to his stomach. We are concerned for the recovery period that his newly joined intestines hold, that he doesn't have ill effects from anesthesia in regards to his cerebellar hypoplasia, and that his wiggly self doesn't cause the incisions to open up when he falls.

Two days later, after being in the hospital recovering, I am confident he is well enough to come home to complete his recovery. Allagash, being the little brat he is, needed to wear two e-collars since he tried to eat his catheter from his leg out the first night. I make fun of his new look. Imagine a child in the spring school play as a petunia – that is what Ally looks like with his lampshades on. Note: he walks much, much better with these on because he has to concentrate. I may just keep these on permanently. Please also note my chardonnay consumption has increased during this time- I may do this permanently.

In other news, Allagash became a

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ago (before surgery). He laid nicely on his back while we collected a unit of blood and he did so without needing to be sedated. His blood components will be used to help save other dogs. We also had some hygromas form on Allagash's elbows, which has required some cold laser therapy. Hygromas are essentially fluid filled sacs that can occur due to constant rubbing or laying on hard surfaces. Rubbing on surface when Allagash tries to find footing – check. Hard surfaces – check. The hope is that the laser therapy will help decrease the swelling on his elbows and after 5 sessions there has been a 50% reduction in the swelling. Yay! We use laser therapy for many other therapeutic purposes such as arthritis, wound healing, etc.

Monday nights are not just for football in my world. Nope – that 8 o'clock spot is now reserved for class.

What class you ask? Not an advanced science class, not a tennis class, not even an introductory class to learning how to roll your own sushi. No – it's a canine rally class.

Rally class is my attempt to get Allagash on the straight and narrow again - as in paying attention to my commands and working on his ability to control his movements. I thought about getting him into a nose work class though figured I should see if we fail (note I said WE, since I need to be taught how to properly lead my pet through course work, etc). this class first.

What else has been going on? I am

preparing for a conference or two, getting ready to figure out if I should run a race or two, tennis, oh and selling my left kidney due to the three feet of intestinal blockage that was removed from my dog. (Joke.... Just kidding). But I cannot wait for the warm weather to roll around, mostly because I hate wearing layers and closed toed shoes - and to get Allagash back out on the water and SUP with him.

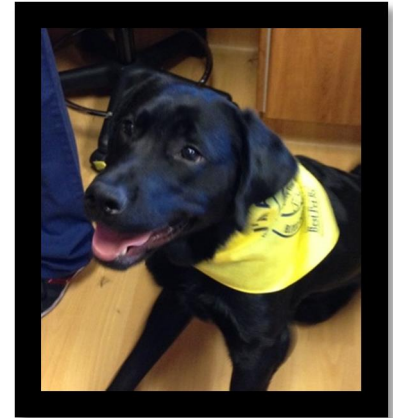
What's next for Allagash? Well padlocks. Yes, padlocks. 'Cause he figured out how to escape from a crate that has a double latch system.

Recently I was house sitting for a friend that has a Great Dane (who weighs about what I do). I go out to dinner after putting Allagash in his cage and come home three hours later to the tap-tap of his feet in Dandy Walker style meeting me at the door. After my heart resumed it's normal beat, I saw that he was just chillin and doing his own thing with the Dane watching over him (this is weird since she hates him).

I automatically think I forgot to lock the crate and admonish myself 'dumb blonde move'. I bed down the dogs and wake up to a surprise the next morning after I come downstairs. Guess who is out of his crate again? Oh yes, Ally. Out and about and I know deep inside he is thumbing his nose and saying 'yea – thought I was slow and uncoordinated – who's the fool

now?' Oakley (the Great Dane) is looking at me and saying 'I had

the night watch and nothing is destroyed – you're welcome'.

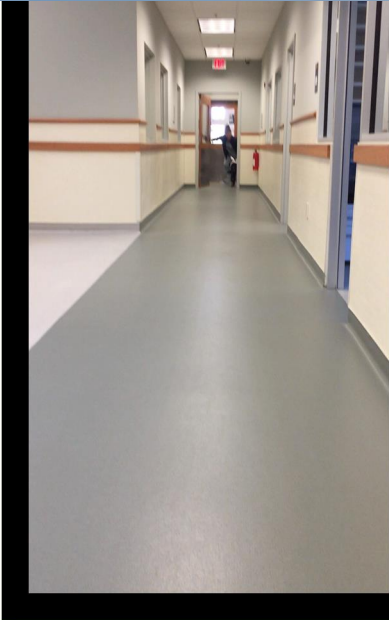


“Just got done
donating blood -
I'm a HERO”



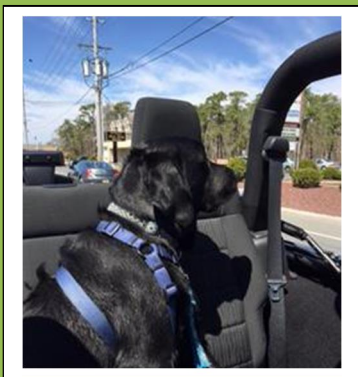
Allagash getting some laser therapy
– Safety first. Don't look into the
laser light!

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Happy Easter...

https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=em-upload_owner&v=EKrWmls4W4



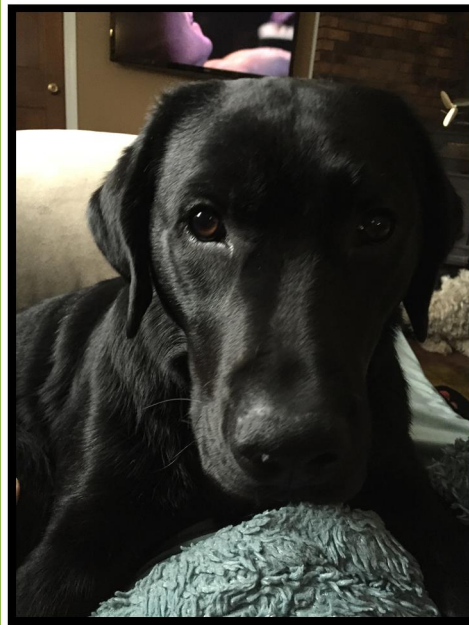
First Hike!

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=aRdW4nfhLho&feature=em-upload_owner

... OOHHHHHH - I will never move to areas of the world that have a lot of barometric pressure changes. That's a left field comment isn't it? Let me explain.

So we got some storms over this this cold weather season and I started to notice that when such weather occurred that Allagash would have really, really, really horrible days where he could barely stand. I freaked out and thought he was deteriorating. A day later he would be better and so a pattern emerged. Snow occurred, bad day.... Rain occurred – bad day.

While I cannot find hard data to support this I do know that my dog is a better weather predictor than Doppler and Channel 6. On days where there is a storm, Allagash tends to spend more time in his crate for his own safety.



So that is what's happening in Allagash's life. I would like to thank all of those out there who have expressed interest in how we are faring. And honestly, it's good. I never expected this journey to occur without low points and the high points have greatly outweighed those less than stellar times (i.e. emergency surgery).

Allagash has been a blessing. Why? He is always happy. He's different but doesn't care, he's uncoordinated but doesn't care, other dogs may react negatively to him – he doesn't care. He still wags his tail, stays happy, and lives his life as he was intended to – minus some brain and all. He epitomizes the saying 'Carpe Diem'. I am blessed to have him in my life to cheer me up, exasperate me, make me question my sanity, and push the limits and astonish those who have seen the progress made from a puppy who could barely walk to one who could break outta crates.

We could all learn a lot from Allagash – to be happy for the time you have, embrace the challenges and overcome what you can, and adapt to those you cannot. I can be having the most depressing day at work and will come home and he does something that will alleviate the stress. Granted he gives me heartburn when he eats things he isn't suppose to, but all in all, he's pretty good.

I hope if you read this – you are already a sucker for a furry face and those who need a rewrite on their life. Take a chance, adopt. Don't say "I can't imagine" –because the best journeys of life are those we can't...