



A Beautiful Life—and Homeopathy Extends It

Beloved “centenarian” dog gets extra time with family

by MARTHA DeMARCO, CCH(cand)

I’VE BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE A GENTLEMAN FRIEND FOR MANY YEARS. He is completely devoted to me, loves me unconditionally, follows me everywhere, and asks for nothing in return. My Shetland sheepdog is 15½ years old. Biscuit is my devoted companion.



KATHLEEN CALLAHAN

Using the standard human-life-to-dog-life age ratio, my friend is a centenarian. I know I won’t have the pleasure of his company much longer. As his caretaker and his homeopath, I’m always paying attention to the quality of his life. Is he happy? (It may seem crazy, but he actually smiles.) Is he eating well? Sleeping? Is he still able to be productive in his life? Shelties are a working breed, and he really enjoys herding the birds and squirrels in our yard.

A willing guinea pig

Several years ago, after enrolling in homeopathy school, I honed and practiced my new skills on my sweet dog. Biscuit taught me a lot about homeopathic prescribing. You might say my dog has been my “guinea pig.” Biscuit has generally been healthy, happy, and active, but from time to time I have treated him homeopathically for minor upsets such as vomiting and diarrhea, bee stings, eye infections, and kennel cough.

One incident that made me especially grateful for homeopathy was when Biscuit was hit by a car and required hip surgery. Immediately after the accident and then again after surgery, I treated him with *Arnica*, the premier homeopathic trauma remedy. He recovered more quickly than expected and was soon back to running and herding small animals in our yard.

Some years later, however, that previously injured hip became arthritic, causing him to limp with discomfort. When the vet’s pain prescription made Biscuit sick, I discovered that a single dose of the homeopathic remedy *Phosphorus* 30c took away Biscuit’s pain for about a month at a time—without any side effects. After a few monthly doses, Biscuit was so much better

that I discontinued the remedy—he no longer seemed to need it. I don’t think of *Phosphorus* as a typical “arthritis remedy.” Rather, I’ve come to consider *Phosphorus* to be Biscuit’s constitutional remedy (i.e., a remedy that matches the individual so well that it addresses many different ailments for that individual). Biscuit has many of the general traits that we see in humans who respond to *Phosphorus*: he tends to be fearful (especially of thunderstorms), he is very thirsty, he loves attention and company, and he has always been on the thin side.

No kisses this morning...

Normally Biscuit is a “morning person,” waking me enthusiastically for his breakfast. But one morning not too long ago he didn’t wake me—it turned out that he couldn’t get up from his bed. I carried him to his food dish. He was able to stand, but he didn’t want the food. Whoa—that had never happened before! He’s always had a voracious appetite, even when sick. I opened the door, and he couldn’t move to go outside. Now I was worried. I carried him outside. He stood in one place and didn’t move. He seemed confused and disoriented, as if he didn’t recognize his whereabouts.

I carried him inside and put him on his bed. He just lay there, staring at the wall, breathing but not moving. When it was Biscuit’s time to pass, I wanted him to be at home and comfortable. I wondered if it was his time. With great sadness, I sensed he was giving up. He didn’t even look my way. I called my husband and suggested he come home from work.

I reached for a couple of books on homeopathy for animals. In *A Healer in Every Home, Dog & Cat Edition* by Lenni-

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han, Roman, and Moore, I opened to the passage on “Calming a Dying Animal.” I didn't know if Biscuit was truly dying, but I was interested in keeping him comfortable. It read, “*Arsenicum* will relax the animal, reduce its anxiety and make the passage easier. Even better, alternate it with *Rescue Remedy*®.” I dissolved a few pellets of *Arsenicum* 30c in water and gave Biscuit a dose with an eyedropper; a few minutes later, I gave him a dose of *Rescue Remedy*®. I alternated the two remedies very quickly, as indicated in extreme situations. After about 10 minutes and 3 or 4 doses each of *Arsenicum* and *Rescue Remedy*®, I noticed that Biscuit started to focus on me instead of the wall. I felt as though he had come around mentally: he knew where he was.

Time to say goodbye?

I turned to the section on “Euthanasia” in *Homeopathic Care for Cats and Dogs*, in which author Don Hamilton, DVM, weighs choosing euthanasia against allowing the dog to pass in his own time. Of course, the animal's degree of suffering is paramount in making this decision. I wasn't ready to consider euthanasia at this point, but I was interested to read what Hamilton had to say. Biscuit was still not walking, but he seemed peaceful.

Hamilton writes, “It is also important



Martha's husband, Jeff DeMarco, giving a remedy to Biscuit.



to verbally give the animal permission to let go, as they often hold on to the connection with the guardian. It is equally important that you truly let go when you give permission to your companion.” I put my forehead to my buddy's forehead and let him know I would understand if his time had come. In retrospect, I may not have truly meant it, but I tried to be as sincere as I could.

Hamilton also discusses using remedies that will help ease the transition to death if the animal is afraid to let go. Of course, these remedies don't cause death; they ease the fear and anxiety that may be experienced during the process. In addition to suggesting *Arsenicum* for the fearful, restless animal or *Tarentula cubensis* for the animal that is in great pain and struggling, he reminds the reader that an animal can find peace of mind from any remedy, if it is a remedy that suits him (i.e., the constitutional remedy). The light bulb went on over my head. I had not tried *Phosphorus*, Biscuit's go-to remedy! I tucked a *Phosphorus* 30c pellet inside Biscuit's upper lip so it would dissolve on his gum. Almost instantly, he stood up, went to his food dish, and started eating. I was astonished! I repeated the remedy a few

times that day, whenever I saw him begin to stumble with his footing. By the end of the day, he was taking himself down steps and out to the driveway to bark at the cars. He had recovered 100%!

Roller coaster week

A couple of nights later, Biscuit awakened at 1 a.m. with vomiting and diarrhea. I remembered I had given him sardines the day before. He enjoys them but hadn't had them in about five years, and his stomach is very sensitive. *Arsenicum* is a great remedy for vomiting and diarrhea, especially if they occur at night, between 12 midnight and 2 a.m. It's good for food poisoning or simply to mitigate the effects of eating something disagreeable. *Arsenicum* is such a specific choice for these symptoms that I decided to try it instead of his constitutional remedy, *Phosphorus*. Although it was the middle of the night, I cleaned up the mess, got my kit of remedies, and tucked a pellet of *Arsenicum* 30c inside Biscuit's lip. That one little pellet did the trick—the vomiting and diarrhea abruptly ended, and we both went back to sleep.

Biscuit had a few good days, and then I noticed he was shuffling instead of walking. His back legs started collapsing again. He couldn't stand. He could bear weight on the rear left leg, but the right was completely lame. This time I knew what to do. I gave him another dose of *Phosphorus*!

Unfortunately, the remedy did not help this time. His leg was still lame.

Since his usual go-to remedy wasn't effective, I went back to the books to see if I could find a new remedy. I picked Biscuit up, put him on my lap, and opened the homeopathic software program on my computer. Working in a hurry, I selected a few rubrics that described his current symptoms: "Generalities, paralysis, right;" "Extremities, legs, right;" and "Extremities, arthritic, lower limbs."

Causticum and *Rhus tox* both came up very strong in this analysis. I took a quick look at Roger Morrison's *Desktop Guide to Keynotes and Confirmatory Symptoms* and picked *Causticum*. It described *Causticum* as addressing a "history of slowly progressive debility, stiffness, and—if the pathology is strong—paralysis." This description seemed to fit Biscuit's current situation: he was suffering from the long-term consequences of that old hip injury. I tucked a pellet of *Causticum* 30c inside his lip, took him off my lap, and gingerly set him on the floor. He trotted down the hall,

completely oblivious to the fact that he couldn't stand minutes ago.

Gratitude

That was one roller coaster ride of a week. There were times when I thought I would lose him for good. If Biscuit couldn't stand or eat, I wonder how much longer it would have been before I did consider euthanasia? I am so thankful that I didn't have to wrestle with that issue just yet. I gave Biscuit a weekly dose of *Causticum* 30c for the next month, and then repeated it monthly after that. It kept him on his feet! Because of some very simple homeopathic treatment, Biscuit's ailments literally seemed to disappear—as if they were never there. And he has gone on to enjoy a good quality of life.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring. I know I'll eventually have to say good-bye for good. Having the extra time to get used to the idea has been really helpful, probably for both of us. In the meantime, I continue to be amazed at how well homeopathic remedies work. There is

no placebo effect with an animal. It either works or it doesn't. And thankfully, it works for Biscuit! We are so fortunate to have at our disposal a system of medicine that is effective, free of side effects, non-toxic, and safe for everyone—including our precious pets!

Postscript: Biscuit lived for another year after this article was written and passed peacefully last spring. Martha is currently enjoying her new Sheltie puppy, Sasha.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martha DeMarco graduated with honors from the "Professional Homeopathic Healer Program" at Teleosis Homeopathic Collaborative in Newton, MA in 2012. She holds the credential CCH (cand), and is in the final stages of completing her national certification for the CHC. She is a member of the NCH and NASH. She earned a bachelor's degree from Skidmore College. Martha has a homeopathic practice in Norwell, MA and can be reached through her website at www.DeMarcoHomeopathy.com.

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