



# THE KODIAK TAILS

**KODIAKCARE.ORG**  
SAVING LIVES, ONE DOG AT A TIME

APRIL 2021



The UofIL staff made a special KodiakCare bandage for Balta.

## **A Pacemaker Turns Back the Clock for Balta**

Ever since people first began receiving pacemakers in the 1950s, veterinarians have understood that dogs with heart problems could benefit from these amazing devices as well. But too often the cost has stood in the way. Fortunately for Balta, an adult cocker spaniel from central Illinois, KodiakCare was on hand to make the procedure affordable and give this beloved pet more time with her family.

Placing pacemakers in dogs “is absolutely saving their lives,” said Dr. Lindsey Humphries, a cardiology resident at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, who treated Balta. Without a pacemaker in place, “the biggest risk is sudden death.” With a pacemaker, the prognosis is so good that dogs can be expected to lead normal lives and in the end, “usually succumb to something else,” she said.

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It isn't always obvious when a dog is suffering from heart failure, as Balta was. "Dogs are often stoic and hide how sick they are," Dr. Humphries noted. Common symptoms include lethargy, coughing, and, as the disease advances, fainting. Balta's owners knew something was wrong when she started having extreme coughing fits. Dr. Humphries recommended an echocardiogram, also known as an echo or cardiac ultrasound, which revealed that Balta had sick sinus syndrome, a cardiac condition of unknown origin that affects the heart rate. With sick sinus syndrome, the heart fails to function and maintain a normal heart rate.

Balta's owner, Billie Theide, an art teacher, said, "My husband and I were prepared to put her down. We had bawled our eyes out. The pacemaker was not within our means." Theide has had Balta since puppyhood and had seen the dog's therapeutic effect on family members with health issues. Theide sends Balta to bed each night with her special needs son and considers her a support animal. Thankfully, KodiakCare stepped in and was able to provide funds for the pacemaker needed to save Balta.

Once Balta got her pacemaker, she got back her pep as well. The new lease on life is like "a miracle," said Theide. Balta is back home, happily tearing up Kleenex boxes and in most other ways acting like her old self again. When her family's financial circumstances improve, Theide said, she plans to give back so other pet owners won't have to choose between euthanasia and unaffordable bills: "I'm so grateful to you guys."



### **2021 Mutt Madness a Huge Success!**

Meet our Mutt Madness Champion: Josie! Josie was the top vote-getter in the 2021 KodiakCare Mutt Madness Tournament, raising more than \$2,000 herself for fellow pups in need.

Josie's owner, Dr. Colleen McCarthy, a small-animal veterinarian outside of Boston has devoted herself to helping animals in need, and Josie is no exception. The 3-year-old "super mutt mix" was found curled up by the side of the road in Alabama and brought to the emergency room by a good Samaritan. The veterinarians who first treated her presumed she had been hit by a car due to the extreme swelling and damage to her face, which ultimately caused Josie to lose her eyesight. McCarthy says Josie "would have been a euthanasia case" if not for funding from a local family foundation, which helped pay for her treatment.

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Josie made her way to McCarthy through Brown Dog Coalition & Rescue Ltd., a Massachusetts-based animal rescue organization that helps homeless dogs and cats. When McCarthy discovered a BB-gun projectile lodged in Josie's face, she realized the pup had not suffered a car accident but instead had been subjected to cruelty. When McCarthy tells Josie's story, she says, "People's reaction is sadness. But Josie has no idea that this cruelty happened to her. She is so happy."

According to McCarthy, Josie is "the happiest dog in the world." She has a long list of favorite things, among them: rummaging through her toy box to pull out all her toys, chomping on dental chews and playing with her best friend, Tini, one of McCarthy's rescued cats.

McCarthy was drawn to the Mutt Madness tournament because of KodiakCare's work funding life-saving care for dogs in need. In her veterinary practice, she tries to work with owners facing financial hardship, volunteering her time and reducing costs where possible. But she recognizes that in emergencies, "you have to make that decision in that second. It's important to have the funds."

Before her current practice, McCarthy worked at Angell Animal Medical Center, a partner of KodiakCare, and stays in touch with the Angell community. She hears of KodiakCare's good work and says it's "wonderful to see dogs that are really sick get better and get to go home."

The dogs and donors of Mutt Madness came together and raised funds that far surpassed our initial goal. In total, the 2021 KodiakCare Mutt Madness Tournament raised over \$18,000 for critical veterinary care for dogs in need! This incredibly successful event will result in second chances and brighter futures for many dogs and their families. From the entire KodiakCare team, our sincerest thanks to our supporters, including our presenting sponsor, Embrace Pet Insurance. Thank you!



**Thank You!**

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