

Sunday Column – Lucy Deserves Better For publication 2.26.17

Companion animals are amazing in their resilience. Even those who come out of situations ranging from benign neglect to outright cruelty nearly always come through it; ready to open their hearts to the next individual or family willing to take them in.

Lucy, is my current foster dog. She is a 7 year old English Mastiff/Great Pyrenees mix who is definitely not a lap dog, but also not a dog that requires a lot of maintenance. Despite her size she is an easy keeper. She is something of a couch potato who loves everyone, regardless of species.

Lucy was surrendered to PAWS Humane by her human in June of 2016. I always wonder why someone would relinquish an older dog who they raised from puppyhood. In this case, it was because life happened. Lucy's owner was a young, single adult when she brought this dog into her life. Kid number three was the breaking point. She felt overwhelmed and no longer able to provide the attention and basic care that any dog needs. It is easy to react negatively to a story like this but I applaud Lucy's owner for making this difficult decision because Lucy deserves better.

Dogs like Lucy tend to be adopted quickly. She is striking in both her size and coloring and she is docile as a lamb. In early July, three weeks after her PAWS intake, she went home with a nice couple who lived in the country. A short time later we received a picture of her riding around on a tractor with her new dad. Our regular follow up calls revealed only that everything was going well.

Last week Lucy was returned to PAWS due to an illness in the family. Once again the care of Lucy was side-lined due to extenuating circumstances. In the interim this 125 pound dog lost 30 pounds. Though you can't see her ribs she has developed what I would call food insecurity. Last week she ate 3 bananas, skin included, right off our breakfast table. This was not a rational choice on her part as she is now getting plenty of high-quality food.

These are the scenarios that give adoption counselors nightmares. They do their best to screen potential adopters but you can't always anticipate the future for these individuals and the pets we entrust to them.

Many of us consider our canines and felines to be full-fledged family members. I can't conceive of giving up a pet but I also understand that everyone is different and that the most important thing is not the reason a pet is surrendered. Our priority is the animal and we do our very best to achieve a good outcome for each one.

Although she has missed a few meals, Lucy is still one of the sweetest dogs you will ever want to meet. She wants nothing more than to be by your side. She is happy for any attention but not demanding of it. She loves a walk in the park and an opportunity to visit with others of her kind. She deserves a wonderful home where she can be secure in the love and care of her family members. I simply cannot believe this is too much to ask.

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.