

Our 3 month old West Highland White Terrier is named Maggie, which means "A Pearl" in Scottish. She was a gift to our 10 year old daughter, Hilary, who has waited for a puppy since she was four years old. In the six weeks since we've brought her home, Maggie has become a shining spot in all of our hearts. She learns quickly and adores Hilary. Her barking at the vacuum cleaner, chasing the cat and curling up for a nap in her basket, are all little habits that have further endeared her to not only Hilary, but the whole family.

Buying a full-blooded puppy is an expensive proposition and one that we didn't take lightly. We did our research once we decided to buy a Westie and although they are not easy to find, we were lucky enough to find Maggie. In the beginning, we looked at her as an investment, but she quickly became one of the family. As with a child, you want what's best for your family. While at the local pet store, we saw the new display for Greenies, "the original smart treat". The product boasted to help clean teeth, improve digestion, and decreases buildup of dental plaque. After reading the package and being assured that they were safe for her, we bought a package of the petite size bones to try. We gave Maggie her first one last Wednesday and she thoroughly enjoyed it. My oldest son's graduation open house was on Saturday, so not wanting her to eat too many of them, waited until the guest began to arrive for the party to give her another Greenies. Our intent was to keep her busy as long as possible, but unfortunately our plan backfired.

Ten minutes after Maggie began to chew on the bone, she began to choke on it. After giving her ten minutes of gagging and vomiting, we called our vet at home. He advised us to try and get her to drink water and assured us that she would gag it up. The party guests forgotten, we all took turns sitting with her and watching her suffer as she tried tirelessly to dislodge the part of the bone that was stuck.

I was up with her all night. She couldn't sleep and was in obvious distress. I could do nothing but hold her and talk quietly. I waited until 6:00 AM and called our vet again and insisted that he see her. An hour later, an x-ray revealed that a chunk of the bone was lodged in her lower esophagus. Having no assistant available at 8:00 on a Sunday morning, my husband assisted Dr. Kahn as he anesthetized the weak Maggie attempted to extract the Greenie from her throat, while I held a hysterical Hilary in the waiting room. Later yesterday afternoon, the vet tried once more to dislodge the bone, but again, he could only extract small pieces. We brought Maggie home at about 3:00 in the afternoon on our vets recommendation. He hoped that he'd broken up the bone enough that she would be able to either cough it up or have it move into her stomach. We watched her go into spasms of pain and actually pass out in the grass for an hour before we knew that we were going to lose her.

We arrived at the Emergency Medical Animal Hospital in Ft. Wayne, Indiana at 5:00. I'll never forget that trip as long as I live. Maggie was too uncomfortable to lay down, so she sat on my lap. Too weak to hold her head up, I supported it in the palm of my hand. And prayed hard.

Due to her weakened condition, they didn't perform the surgery until 10:00 PM last evening. The surgeon didn't paint a rosy picture for us. In fact, he was very grave. She was very weak, had undergone anesthesia twice already that day and hadn't eaten in over 24 hours. He told us the dangers of the surgery, the esophagus rupturing, the stomach filling with fluid, not waking up from the anesthesia, and on and on. We told Maggie good-bye and went home to tell Hilary and the other children that she probably wouldn't make it through the operation.

By some miracle, she did. As of this morning, she was still hanging on. Several dangers still exist and she certainly isn't out of the woods, but by the grace of God alone, she may make it. I spoke with the surgeon this morning about the operation. It is simple. Maggie swallowed too large a piece of the Greenie and it lodged in her esophagus. Normally, this

is something that the dog can take care of as the material breaks down, but due to the nature of the Greenies bone, it swelled from the moisture in the esophagus and became impossibly rubbery and enlarged. This prevented the first veterinarian from pulling the bone out in one piece. It prevented the natural process to allow Maggie to either cough it up or to swallow it. The second surgeon had never seen anything like it and has been practicing for over 25 years.

In the wee hours of the morning, being unable to sleep, I looked at the packaging again. Did I miss something? Was Maggie too little for the bone? Did I give her the wrong size? Was there a disclaimer that mentioned this possibility. There was nothing. Coming from a Marketing background in the medical device field, I know how imperative package labeling is. The label didn't state that once consumed, this product becomes rubbery and clay-like. They don't warn that some dogs may be too small for the product, even though the smallest bone is marketed as "petite".

So far, this has cost us over \$1200 with more to come, if Maggie lives. If she doesn't, our loss will be much, much greater and cannot be tallied. I have contacted our pet store about removing your display from their store so that no one else spends their week-end like we have just spent ours, so that one other family pet has to suffer like our little, Maggie. I am asking for your help also. Please e-mail this letter to everyone who loves their dog to spread the word. Also, send a copy of this letter to the makers of Greenies at joe@kissablepets.com and urge them to make the necessary changes to their packaging.

Consumer awareness is very important in order to make informed choices on anything we purchase. This doesn't only apply to human beings.

It's almost silly how attached we've become to this little creature in six weeks time. It's not a matter of logic or rationalization though. It's a matter of the heart. Anyone who loves their dog should understand that. Please send this on for Maggie.

Sincerely,

Lesla Hershberger