

Duke

A Feisty Black Mini Teaches His Owner About DDT+E

Meet Duke

Miniature gelding - Foal date unknown

Donna writes...

Duke joined our family in the fall of 1997. A mutual friend knew I was looking a “babysitter” for my two big boys and the day he lowered the trailer ramp, there, staring out at me, was the cutest little black mini I’d ever seen. Little did I know what a journey we were beginning.

I was told Duke was 11 years old, but no one could confirm. By tooth indications years later, it appears he was actually 21 when he arrived. We celebrated his 40th birthday in 2016 with a celery and flax cake!

Aside from being a total terror at first, Duke took his job seriously. Both horses adored him — as did everyone else. His small size was a disguise for a comic and highly opinionated personality (PWA: Pony With Attitude). One of his finest moments was as ring bearer at my daughter’s wedding. Two little boys led Duke down the aisle, mane woven with flowers and a little lacy ring pillow on his back. The bride followed on our gray thoroughbred, and when Duke realized all eyes were there, he took off to the barn. Guests stood and cheered!

The first signs of trouble came in November 2004: First lab tests showed very high insulin. No ACTH was run. My vet put him on compounded pergolide paste. I remember the discussion of Cushing’s vs “metabolic syndrome.” Lameness was slight and we treated him with banamine and isoxsuprine. I added Vitex, herbs, commercial vitamin mix, senior feed, grass hay (untested, unsoaked) — who knew?

Duke had more lameness in subsequent years. We discovered Soft Ride boots — with orange reflective tape so I could find them in the dark, after work. We started liquid pergolide.

December of 2009 brought horrific laminitis and rotation. Duke spent most of his time lying down flat out, eyes dull, propped on the steeply banked shavings. Each of the many times I checked him, I was sure I wouldn’t see him breathing. He wasn’t eating well. It was a truly bleak time.

And the miracle happened: I found the ECIR Group and they talked me through my panic. The first thing was testing my hay; the sugar/starch came in at 3.5%. Minerals were balanced and I added vitamin E, flax, and salt. Triple Crown Lite was the carrier.

Duke’s feet were trimmed to digital x-rays. Chiropractic visits and homemade mini leg wraps helped him to be more comfortable. I could tell he appreciated all our care and was determined to make it. And after several months of slow improvement, Duke pulled through once again.

In 2010, we tested him again, finally using Cornell. November’s ACTH was 34.7 (range 9-35), with an insulin of 189.43. We upped his pergolide to 1.0 mg. His ACTH came down to 27.4, and insulin to 153.88. No exercise and age were probable causes. NO LAMINITIS that winter!!!!



Happy face. 2013



Breakfast in bed. 2011



Holidays with Duke, Obi and IR brother, Robin. 2012



Run away Ring Bearer. 1999



Happy Birthday Duke! 2016



Mom! Let me OUT! 2012

In fall 2011, Duke had laminitis, but not as severe as in 2009. I knew it was the trim. He was lying down more, but this time still eating well. I posted pics on ECHoof. Mark-ups were done and, when the farrier didn't follow them, I bought a rasp, got super brave and backed up his toes myself. Once again, ECIR came to the rescue with help from a moderator who's also a trimmer. Duke was so much more comfortable after her first trim. She showed me how to rasp correctly in between visits.

In April 2012, I put him on Prascend .5 mg. ACTH was 13.1 (YES!), insulin, 87.67, and leptin, 7.16 (range 1-4). My vet, impressed with the changes recommended by ECIR, started saying I knew more about PPID/IR than he did. Spring 2012 I looked out the window to see Duke careening across the "field," bucking and tossing his wonderful thick mane.

September 2012 his ACTH was 39.6 on .75 mg. Prascend, so we upped it to 1.0 mg. In 2013 and 2014, we raised the Prascend to 1.5 mg. in late Summer and brought it down to 1.0 mg. in the Spring and had no problem keeping his ACTH under control. I thought we might be home free.

In the spring of 2015, his ACTH was higher than usual, though still in the normal range (29.1). I was worried, so we increased his dose to 1.5 mg. In early October, I was shocked to see his ACTH go up to 68.2. He was definitely tender on his left front. We went to 2.0 mg. In November, it was a scary 113, and I had my first really serious fight with my vet of 30 years who insisted that Prascend was only recommended to be dosed up to 2.0 mg., and he wouldn't recommend anything more. I answered (thanking ECIR for its data base and my backup information) that in England, Boehringer-Ingelheim approved dosing up to 5.0 mg. I didn't back down. He relented. I upped the dose to 2.5, then 3.0 and our best Christmas present was Duke's December ACTH: 23.3. I have kept it at that dose ever since, and his ACTH has remained low.

Duke's insulin has always been high, but in the spring, summer and fall of 2016, it topped 200. With ACTH under control (and glucose usually high normal), it was yet another scary thing. We've now tried cyproheptadine, large doses of Thyro-L (despite the fact that his weight is perfect) and Metformin—all suggested by a top internist and vet at Cornell. As I expected (again, thanks to ECIR), nothing has worked. Luckily, no one has shown Duke these frightening numbers, and while he may not be bucking his way across the field (arthritis makes that tough), he still does little whirligigs when excited, tips the wheelbarrow over and steals all hay that doesn't have his name on it.

Despite his impressive age, Duke is totally bright and alert, much like the mini who stood at the top of that trailer ramp 19+ years ago. He makes me smile every day. I can't believe how lucky we all are, thanks to the ECIR Group.