

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

This past Christmas, my family was together in Chicago where both our son and my sister live. Chris, our son, had Christmas Eve at his house and my sister was to have Christmas Day at her home.

Unfortunately, my sister had a back injury which has caused her a tremendous amount of pain. I took over the preparation and housework. All she could do was stay in bed and take the medications that were prescribed for her to reduce swelling and manage pain. They felt it was a herniated disc.

Her primary physician was working with her, but she was not able to schedule an appointment with a back specialist until the end of January. I suggested we go to the ER, but that was strongly discouraged by her physician given the level of Covid in Chicago and the wait times. Hearing and seeing her in pain was heart wrenching.

Last week, our dog Chip began to cry out in pain. Sometimes when I picked him up or when he jumped up or moved the wrong way. Chip is an 11 pound terrier mix who is full of happiness and energy. But he was quiet, his body posture was hunched over and he looked so sad. My thought was that he had bruised his ribs as he fell on our icy steps and when he leaped into the car he again slammed to the ground because of the ice on the running board.

Sunday night he began crying out as my sister had. I felt then that he was in crisis and we were dealing with much more than bruised ribs or muscles. I was aware of an emergency animal clinic in Duluth called BluePearl. I called there and they said they would be waiting for us when we got there. My husband, Mike, was in Colorado. It was 10 p.m. on Sunday evening, minus 21 degrees outside and I am terrified of crossing the bridge from Superior to Duluth.

I called my very good friends Donna and Nancy. My first question was 'have you been drinking wine?' The answer was 'no' and the second question was 'will you drive Chip and I to Duluth?' and their immediate answer, without a pause, was 'yes, we will be right there'.

We arrived at BluePearl about 12:30 a.m. BluePearl is still in Covid protocol where the vet tech comes to the car and takes your pet, then calls and takes additional information on the phone. That was a little unnerving as I do not know these people but I have heard of others who have had good experiences there. The clinic only does emergency care. Eventually, I had a call from Dr. Hart. He was very thorough and made it seem like he has known Chip a long time. At the end of the visit I was called into the clinic, given instructions about further care, paid the bill, got Chip and returned to the car.

The drive home was uneventful, the roads were clear, no traffic and the car kept running even though it was now minus 25 degrees. Donna and Nancy dropped me off at 4:30 a.m. and they were home by 5:00 a.m.

Chip's diagnosis was exactly the same as my sister's. The medication prescribed was the same as my sister's prescribed medication – one for inflammation and the other for pain management. The directions for day to day activity were the same – being quiet and laying on down – no activity.

I was told to make a follow-up appointment with Chip's veterinarian, which I did. Dr. Helen Szalajka of Care Animal Clinic confirmed the diagnosis, continued the treatment, and added laser treatment sessions for the coming week.

I had started this this article several weeks ago, before Chip's issue, about where to go for emergency after-hours care. After some research this is what I found out. BluePearl is always available after hours and on weekends. They are located at 2314 W Michigan St, in Duluth – 218-302-8000. Ashland Area Vet Clinic welcomes out of the area emergency calls. Care Animal Clinic has emergency care all of Tuesday evenings and Wednesday until 10 p.m. Several area vets suggest calling BluePearl Clinic. One suggested you leave a message or go to BluePearl. When I checked with vet clinics near the Rice Lake area, several recommended that emergencies be referred to Allied Emergency Vet Service at 2135 N Clairemont in Eau Claire, WI – 715-529-5900.

Each of us should check with our vets and ask them for their suggestions. Some vets may make arrangements for their personal clients or they may have some evenings with extended care.

Chip is still in pain and that and the meds slow him down. We are able to confine him, carry him up and down stairs and he takes his meds well. Lola also gets confined when he is and she is not so sure why.