

“Dodging the Bullet”

Karen Gerlach, MRR member since 1999

This is what one of the vets said when I spoke to him about my 15 year old Paso, Laredo...”he really dodged the bullet”. “Yikes”, I thought. This has been my friend and confident, my willing trail-blazing horse for almost 10 years now.

Having gone away with friends for my birthday weekend at Tillis Hills with Laredo and christening my new horse trailer, I received a frantic call from my husband saying our other horse, Skip, was colicking and didn't know what to do. Oh, crap, I thought, most of my “horsey-friends” were with me. Then, someone suggested my wonderful new-ish neighbor across the street, Joan Peterson. I called her, she called Dan and they worked it out and he was fine. (Thank goodness for stockpile of Banamine).

Meanwhile, I arrived back home Sunday night (3/31). Laredo and I had a great weekend, didn't ride real hard, had lots of fun with friends and probably had more wine than I should have (smile). Monday came and went without incident. Tuesday, however, when I came home from work, I thought Laredo seemed “off”. When I brought him in at night, he didn't eat, seemed out of sorts. As the evening wore on, he appeared to be uncomfortable and, although not trying to lay down, wanted to pace around. Which, we both did all night Tuesday. By Wednesday, things were not good. Called my vet and brought him ASAP to Arcadia. They obtained 1 ½ buckets full of reflux from his nose (stomach contents from intestines backing up into stomach) and made him comfortable for his trip to Brandon.

“Wow, how on earth did we get to this point so fast?” I thought. The vet was honest and told my husband and I how much we could expect to “walk in the door” at the Surgi-Care Center in Brandon. Thank God, my husband never blinked; just said, “lets do it”.

When we arrived in Brandon, this is what part of the report read: Diagnosis: Medical colic of undetermined etiology. Exam: ...upon arrival Laredo was depressed. Physical exam revealed a severely elevated heart rate (96 bpm). Normal is 40. Four liters of foul smelling net reflux was obtained via nasogastric intubation...”

Laredo has recovered nicely (knock on wood). He did not require surgery. I will never know exactly what the cause was but my husband and I have our suspicions. I cannot say enough about the caring staff at Brandon Surgi-Care Center and Drs. Ruth-Ann Richter, DVM, MS and Leann Kuebelbeck, DVM. They were informative, always called after rounds (Laredo was there for 4 days) and were quite wonderful to my horse. It is expensive? Depends what price you put on healthcare these days. For humans, as well as animals, good physicians and diagnostic equipment does not come cheap.

In the January/February issue of our newsletter there was a article titled, “Just a Horse”. My Paso is probably “just another horse” to most people. To me, he has kept me safe, provided miles of trails of God's country to see, and been the most willing and trusting friend to me. I am grateful for the end result, most appreciative to my friends on Gopher Hill Road (Joan, Betty/Don, Becky), Dr. Davis and the highly-skilled staff at Brandon Surgi-Center.

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