

Crufts 2011 and 2012

It is now over a month since Crufts 2011 but, much more importantly, just eleven months to Crufts 2012 and now is the time to start preparing.

Crufts is all about dogs being healthy and exhibiting that health whether it is through a breed standard, displaying excellent build and structure that is 'fit for purpose' or being fast and agile over jumps and obstacles, as in agility; hurdling and returning with a ball, as in Flyball; or exhibiting magnificent core strength and handler/ dog communication as with obedience and heel work to music. All of these disciplines require the dog to be healthy but also, really importantly, to have their muscles, and therefore movement, at the optimum, facilitating peak performance.

Leading up to Crufts, I was contacted by several people who were worried about their dog's movement and we are actively working with many who want to improve this. Sadly this does not happen fast as muscles take a while to change and basically re-programme. Therefore, if we had more time, we could have done so much more. However, we are now looking at this season's qualifiers and 2012.

Improving movement and performance is not a 'quick-fix', no matter what anyone might tell you. It takes time and work but the rewards are huge and long lasting.

The Dream Team Flyball and Galen

The story below is about the Dream Team Flyball and Gemma Mitchell (Galen Myotherapist) who started working with the team in May 2010 and, yes, the team have done well in the past including qualifying for Crufts, as they have fit dogs and are good handlers, but this year they won the final and that is the big difference.

So what makes the difference between doing well and winning? Lots of things, rarely one only, but enhancing and maximising mobility, strength and balance is a great way to start!



The Dream Team having their pre-event treatment by the Galen Myotherapy team before the final at Crufts 2010.

The Dream Team is not the only success story Galen had from Crufts. They all demonstrate teamwork, whether it is one dog, one handler and a therapist or a whole team, the approach is the same, to enhance performance through health and, at the same time, reduce the risk of injury.

Dream Team Story by Gemma Mitchell (Galen Myotherapist)

'I had a stand at the Dream Team Flyball Show in May 2010. Galen Canine Myotherapy was known within another Flyball team but, before we attended their show, not really known about by the Dream Team. Sara Bennett (Galen Myotherapist) and I worked on the stand for two days talking to the teams about Myotherapy and the benefits it could have on their dogs, their performance and ultimately team results. The club organisers, Michelle and Roland White, are always keen to keep their dogs in the best possible health and muscular condition. They always put the dog's welfare first so they were very interested to hear what we had to say. After carrying out 'Muscle Balance Assessment' (this is a specialist Galen assessment tool that is NOT a treatment) on the canine team, we found a few muscular injuries that required treatment and would ultimately improve the dogs' performance and speed by reducing pain and compensatory issues from this tough but highly charged sport .

Flash, Michelle's dog, had an old shoulder injury that had been regularly "seen" by another form of therapy. However, the issue was still apparent and he had been slowing down in races. After just ONE Myotherapy session, Flash was back on form and, at the next show, he ran his fastest time on record!

We found the rest of the team just had maintenance issues from the sport they play in - neck and shoulder congestion and tightness in the lumbar back and hip flexors.

I have been working with Dream Team for just over ten months and played an important role in helping them to prepare for their Crufts performance. All the Team had a Pre-Crufts Treatment to erase any minor muscular issues followed by Pre-Event warm up treatments at the show.

The team looked fit, athletic and really professional running at Crufts and the result reflects all the hard work gone into preparing them for the event. First Place at Crufts 2011 for Dream Team South East!

The Dream Team were so delighted by the work that Gemma/Galen had performed, they placed our name on their shirts and we were included in their radio and TV interviews.

Michelle says 'there is no doubt that the work we did with Gemma helped the dogs' muscles but it also helped to focus and calm them before a competition. It is a high stress sport and to enable them to be calm and fit really helped!

These dogs, like all those that compete, are athletes and need to have their muscular health reviewed and maybe treated on a regular basis. This really helps with their performance but also helps to reduce or cope with injury which inevitably may happen.

Misha and Rowan

Another great story is that of Rowan Saxton and his delightful dog, Misha. Rowan is 8 years old and Misha 11, not often is the handler younger and smaller than his dog!

Misha is a rescue dog and the lucky dog found the Saxtons 5 years ago where he has led a fabulous full life, including Agility.

Rowan started to be Misha's handler seriously a year ago and since then they have done brilliantly. Unfortunately, last summer Misha became so lame that it looked like his career was over, (we believe this injury was due to laminate flooring a common CAUSE? of forelimb lameness). He came to see me and it took a few treatments but eventually he was completely sound and back to his normal active self and was fit enough to compete in the KC Agility Festival in August 2011.

The timing was tight and neither Claire (EXPLAIN WHO IS CLARE) nor I were going to let Misha run unless he was completely sound. When the time came, he was and both Misha and Rowan ran a brilliant round to qualify for Crufts 2011.



Rowan and Misha at the KC Festival



Rowan, Misha and myself at Crufts 2011.

Misha was then rested over the winter and was about to be brought back into work in January when he had an accident and became lame again. We really thought that this time he would not be fit enough for Crufts and both of us would only let him compete if he was showing overt signs of health, feeling good and completely sound, which he did the week before Crufts.

Misha arrived at Crufts displaying his normal cool yet 'knowing' self and both he and Rowan went brilliantly around the qualifying round and came 3rd gaining a place to run in the main ring. That was such a great achievement for an 8 year old boy and a 11 year old dog. He may not have been placed in the final but Rowan knows he took the best dog home! Misha is now reflecting on his glory and enjoying retirement but including a little Agility now and then.

If you would like to find out more about how we could work with you or your team please call 0845 3751767 or go to our website www.galentherapycentre.co.uk or email julia@caninetherapy.co.uk