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Independence Animal Hospital
300 S Noland Road
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June 3, 2024

Jackson County Sheriff's Office
K9 Unit
4001 NE Lakewood Court
Lees Summit, MO 64064

Members of the Jackson County Sheriff's Office

This is a letter regarding K-9 Deputy Racker and his handler, Deputy Norton.

Racker, an 8-year-old intact German Shepherd, was diagnosed with acute non-compressive nucleus pulposus extrusion (ANNPE), which is a type of intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) in which discs within the vertebral column rupture, bulge, slip, or herniate. Racker was diagnosed with this disease on April 11, 2024, and has since made progress toward recovery. ANNPE is a specific type of NOD in which damage is caused by outside forces applied to the intervertebral disc. High-impact movements such as "bite work" (e.g., PSA, IGP, French ring) can tear the outer annulus fibrosus of the intervertebral disc and lead to ejection of small amounts of the inner nucleus pulposus that impinge and injure the spinal cord. An MRI study of Racker's vertebral column revealed hemorrhage at the site of the slipped disc (C5-C6) in his neck with extruded disc material.

Although Racker has made significant progress toward recovery, he will likely be affected by the condition for the rest of his life. The prognosis for this disease is considered good in most cases, particularly for pets in relatively low-stress environments. However, it is crucial to note that Racker is an 8-year-old working dog with a physically demanding job as a K-9 officer. In my professional opinion, Racker is not likely to ever regain the level of physical strength and coordination that he possessed prior to injury. Furthermore, dogs with this condition are highly susceptible to reinjury, which can lead to permanent paralysis and loss of vital bodily functions. Given his condition, any physically demanding task asked of Racker in which forces are applied to his neck could be considered life-threatening. Therefore, I recommend that Racker be retired from the service at this time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions about Racker's condition or the above recommendations.

Sincerely,



Skyler P. West, DVM, MSc

Von Henger Kennels LLC

To: Deputy Brad Norton, Jackson County Sheriffs Dept.

Per our conversation about catastrophic injury to the spine of K-9 Racker, It is my opinion that along with his age, Racker would have no resale value as a Police K-9. There is no market for an 8 yr old police dog and with the injury he has sustained, Racker is not suitable for police service. Dogs of his age have either no value or are not eligible for donation. It is my opinion that the injury Racker has sustained he should be retired and given to his handler, Deputy Norton, for the care need during his retirement.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Scott Hedger

Von Henger Kennels LLC

Kingsville, MO