

Dr. Oakley says....Who's the Biggest Loser?

"Way to go, Gabby!" We are all so excited that the Zickmann's newest addition has, after 11 months, finally reached her healthy, life changing goal weight and can now try for puppies! Gabby Zickmann, at 9 years old, adopted a sweet Sheltie from a sick friend. This Sheltie, "Buttons," was morbidly obese at 52 pounds when Gabby took her in, in January. Her previous owner knew how to take care of dogs but during her illness had allowed Buttons generous portions of people food and they both spent their time on the couch.

Doctor Z and Gabby made a plan. Weekly weigh-ins, no food outside of mealtimes, only kibble in measured amounts, and daily exercise. The Zickmann's promised Gabby that if Button's got to a healthy weight that they would allow her to breed and the kids could enjoy the joy of having a litter of puppies.

When Buttons arrived at the Zickmann's she was only three years old but couldn't run, use stairs, or play due to her weight. She couldn't walk the length of the yard without resting and panting heavily. She was a gentle and sweet little dog but one without energy, personality, or interest in anything other than food. We were all eager to see if and how new habits would alter her life.

Progress was slow initially. Gabby was discouraged, and Buttons was "picky" with plain kibble. Fortunately, Gabby loved her, never gave up and just hoisted her into bed with her each night and read stories to her. They quickly became the best of friends.

As the months passed, the pounds dropped. Little by little her life and personality changed. She was no longer lying around all the time; she wanted to play and RUN!! Buttons began chasing me, Dr. Oakley around! She barks vigorously and dances around at meal times and chases the children.

The kids have kibble shooters; they are long thin PVC tubes that they put one kibble in at a time and blow out into the yard. Sometimes, if we are lucky they put marshmallows in to shoot too! I find it a bit degrading to sit and watch the children blow individual kibbles around the backyard, but they love it so and I get to have a bit of a snack. Buttons REALLY runs fast when she sees those come out!

Now, 11 months later, Buttons is a new dog. She is energetic, playful and almost at her goal weight! She now weighs....drum roll....23.6 pounds!!! 29 pounds-gone! She has lost more than her current total weight!!! The goal is 20-22 pounds, depending on the season-Dr. Z lets us keep on a few extra pounds during the winter months.

Gabby was diligent about measuring her food and encouraging her to move! Buttons no longer needs any help up or down stairs or jumping up into bed with Gabby. She can do it all herself! The big reward for Gabby will be the miracle of life. Gabby is currently searching for a suitable mate for Buttons and has been reading and preparing to take on the task of puppies. Now the task will be to keep Buttons healthy and find proper homes for the puppies to be.

Congratulations to Gabby and to Buttons for being Lebanon Vet's "Biggest Loser!" Write us with your biggest loser stories and stay tuned to hear about spring puppies!!