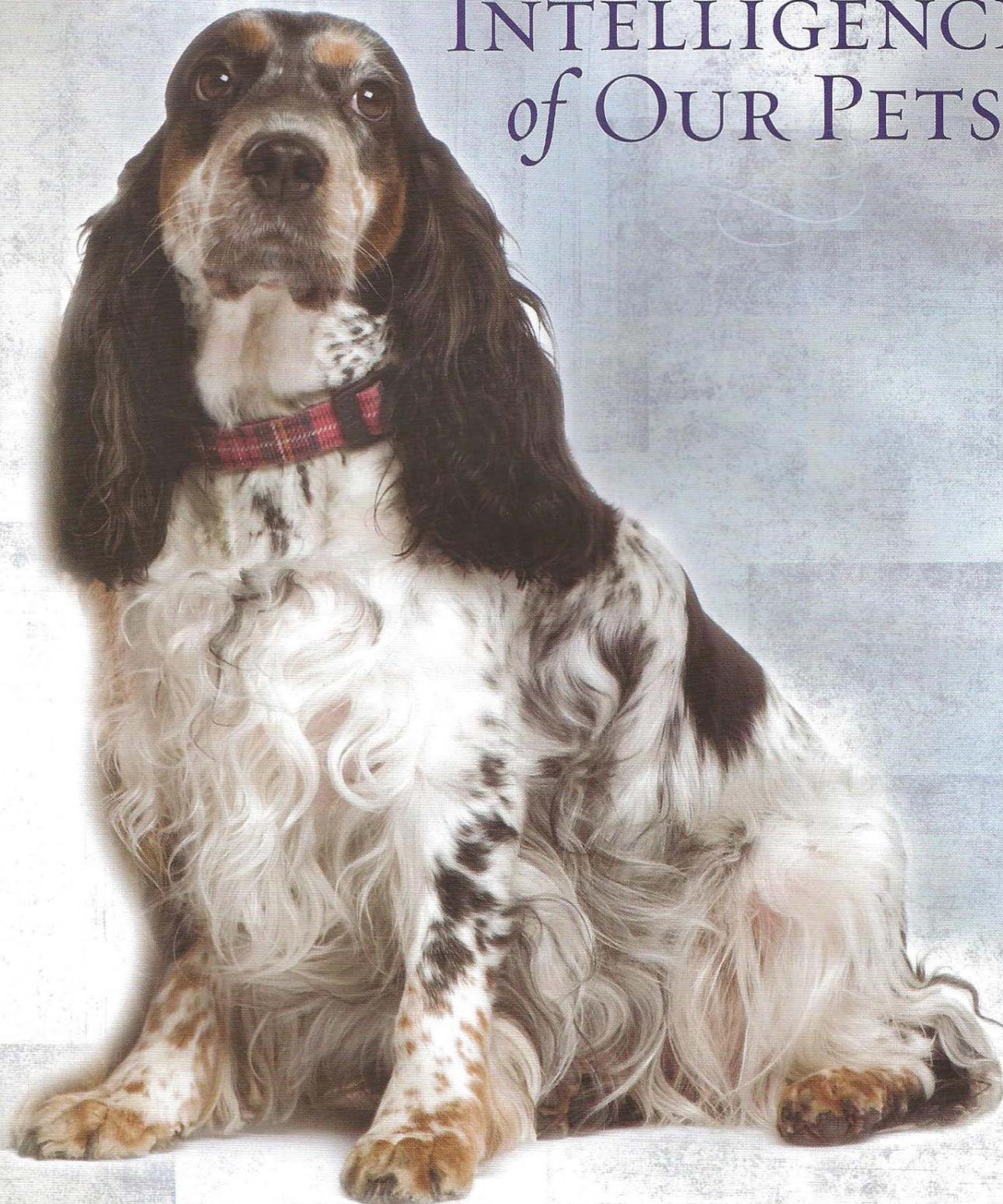


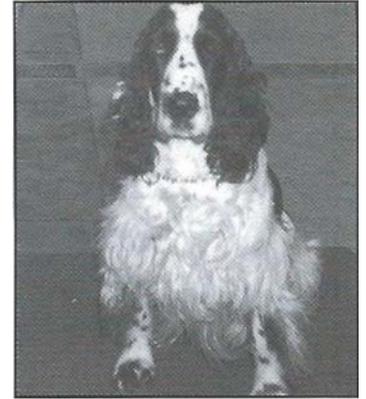
*Pets / Animals*

# The INTELLIGENCE of OUR PETS



Sweet William

Sweet William was my wonderful, faithful companion. An English black and white cocker spaniel, he was my shadow. One day I noticed his stool was white. I made an appointment with the vet but, at the last minute, was not able to take him. My daughter took William to the doctor instead. They took a sample of the stool and sent it to a laboratory. This was on Friday. By the end of the following week, I had not heard from the vet so I called. They had forgotten to send the sample they said. Besides, the lab was closed for the weekend but no worry.



William seemed fine now, didn't he? At that point he did. However, we had a trip to take. I had rented a U-Haul truck to deliver some furniture to my father's house in North Carolina. It was a long drive from Charlottesville, Virginia, to Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Of course, Sweet William was coming, but I also took along my daughter's Doberman. The whole drive down, William cuddled next to me on the seat. The Dobie stayed on the floor. We stopped twice at rest stops. Both times, William drank an entire bowl of water and seemed unwilling to saunter around the dog parks.

We arrived late, leaving the unloading until morning. William normally slept at the foot of my bed. That night, he chose not to and let the Dobie take his spot. In the morning, I woke up with a start. Something was wrong. I looked across the room and there was Sweet William leaning strangely against the wall. His eyes looked dazed so I approached him very quietly and slowly, afraid of frightening him. He was postured as if being tied against the wall, almost rigid. Not a comfortable position. When I reached out to pat his side, he cringed. Immediately I knew he was in pain. I called the vet and got his emergency number. He would meet us at the clinic.

The Doberman was left at the house while I ran across the street to borrow the neighbor's car to take William. Taking the U-Haul would have been impossible since it was still unpacked and the cab was far too high for a pup in pain. Coming down the neighbor's walkway, there was William walking very slowly up the hill just to be with me. It was painful to watch. He would not let me carry him. It was difficult getting him into the car, but somehow, I did as the tears welled up in my eyes. Fortunately, the veterinary hospital was close. We arrived at the vet in minutes.

William was immediately placed on the operating table and a tube was put in his side. He was dehydrated and in severe pain. The doctor said he could not determine the cause of his problem until the pain was under control. He had more to say but I did not hear him. I was focused on my brave little man lying on the cold steel table. He asked that William be left with him for the day and possibly the night so that he could do some tests.

I had no choice. I went home to the Dobie and made myself busy unpacking the truck. In the afternoon. I returned to the vet. William was in a cage with an IV attached to his side. I spent about an hour on my knees talking to him through the bars. His sweet eyes focused on me and almost shifted back and forth as if to say, "I'm all right. Please don't worry" The other dogs in the clinic were respectfully silent.

That evening, my son and a friend came from college to help unload the truck. We had no food in the house so we stopped to have pizza and then went to the hospital. It was locked. No visits possible with William until morning.

The boys chose sleeping bags to sleep by the fire in the living room. I retired to the bedroom with Jessie, the Dobie. The vet was supposed to call if there was any change when he went that night to check the animals. Nevertheless, even with Jessie at the foot of my bed, I found it very hard to go to sleep. The

lights were off leaving only flickers from the fire reflecting on the walls leading to the living room. Just as I was dozing off, Jessie leaped off the bed. She dashed into the living room and raced from one end to the other waking up the boys and terrifying me. Then, just as sudden, she came back to my room, jumped on the foot of the bed, curled up, and immediately fell fast asleep! Within seconds, the telephone rang. It was the veterinarian. William had just passed away

When I told the doctor about Jesse's performance, he replied that he had heard of this kind of thing happening before. "You see," he said. "William just passed over to say goodbye."

The autopsy revealed that indeed the white stool had been a warning, though probably too late to do anything. The liver and kidney were practically non-existent. It was amazing he had lasted this long. We suspect he had raided a trashcan in our Charlottesville neighborhood and a poison had been part of its contents. This poison had slowly eaten away his insides.

With the boys' help, we dug a grave on the hillside below the house. It was a lovely setting with overhanging trees and flowering bushes all around and a vista of the mountain peaks in the distance.

Although William's body is buried in North Carolina's Blue Ridge, we know his soul has moved on. Perhaps he'll come live with me again, but as another dog