



**Dreamtime's Little Dove  
Jem  
3 yrs and Mother of litter**



**CH Dreamtime's Sweet Delight  
Cecily  
3yrs**



**CH Dreamtime's Holly Berry  
Holly  
6yrs**

### **IN MEMORY OF JEM, CECILY AND HOLLY**

Loved by Marilyn Harban

My 9-week-old litter of Australian Terrier puppies was diagnosed with coccidia. They were treated with Albon, a sulfa drug, which is one of the drugs of choice and commonly prescribed for bacterial infections. My veterinarian recommended that all dogs in the household be treated with SMZ for 10 days to cure and prevent reoccurrence of coccidia. None of the adult dogs showed any signs of coccidia. The puppies bounced back and were fine within 2 days of the start of treatment. Four of the other 7 adult dogs came through the 10-day treatment with seemingly no ill effects...HOWEVER...3 bitches developed Immune-Mediated Thrombocytopenia (IMT)...Immune Destruction of Blood Platelets as well as severe liver damage. Dogs with blood platelet concentrations of less than 40,000 per microliter of blood are at risk for spontaneous bleeding. The 3 girls had platelets between 1100-1800. Their liver enzymes were elevated to the extent that they didn't register when tested. Their bone marrow was compromised and in one case ceased to function. The girls had several transfusions during the next few days; however, there was no significant increase in platelet count. They were also supported in other ways with prednisone, Baytril, Amoxicillin, B-12 complex, Milk Thistle, Sam-E, and others. Two of the girls were sisters; the other girl unrelated. (The common link among these girls was that their immune system had seen this drug before when they were treated about a year and a half prior with SMZ. At that time they experienced stomach upset and were taken off the drug. They appeared fine and had no other ill effects.)

During the ten-day course of treatment, symptoms seen on all three of these girls could have easily been mistaken for many things. Cecily, experienced symptoms of polyarthritis during the course of treatment. (She exhibited symptoms of having hurt her back and found it difficult to go up and down stairs and hop up in her crate.) On day 11, she developed bleeding in the gums that pooled along the folds in her mouth. She was transfused and on day 14 she started vomiting blood that looked like coffee grounds. During the night she was transported to my Vet where she died after additional transfusions and supportive care failed to revive her. Her post mortem on day 15 indicated an extremely irritated colon and damaged liver probably caused by a reaction to the massive steroids she received to stop the bleeding and the deterioration of blood platelets.

Jem had experienced loss of appetite during the final days of treatment with SMZ. Jem had always been a picky eater so stopping eating wasn't abnormal for her. By the time the last pill of SMZ was given on the 10th day, she was bleeding in the mouth. Within twelve hours, she was bleeding from the anus and vagina as well as the mouth. The transfusion and IV steroids she received quickly stopped the bleeding. By day 15, she started bleeding in the sinus cavities and

sneezing out droplets of blood as well as having a fever of almost 106. She had no blood platelets as her bone marrow ceased to function. The fever indicated she had developed an infection, probably in her blood. She was euthanized on day 16. Her post mortem showed she had developed sepsis in the liver. She was the mother of the puppies.

Holly developed a cough during the later days of her 10 days on medication. Day 11 she was taken to the Vet for treatment of the cough and received cough syrup. Later that night she started bleeding in the gums. Blood work taken indicated she was experiencing liver failure and had a poor prognosis. After several days of decline she was taken to be euthanized. She was transferred to a critical care facility under the care of Dr. Sallye Gregg where she was put in a hyperbaric chamber for five consecutive days doing dives to one and half atmospheres for an hour and a half, used a magnetic belt, as well as supplemented with several nutritional supplements and antibiotics. The ascites (fluid transfer from cells to belly) she was experiencing prior to being transferred to this facility was completely reduced due to the treatment she received. Following extreme measures of treatment, Holly's blood report returned and her health returned to normal. Her compromised liver would be considered for the rest of her life. After a year and four months, Holly suffered ventricular fibrillation and died. This was confirmed by post mortem.

The occurrence of IMT has been indicated in one report to effect mainly female dogs with males tending to be less sensitive to the drug. I had a male who was on SMZ for extended periods for treatment of bacterial infection in the testicles and prostate. He remained unaffected.

Symptoms of drug reaction or sensitivity. Depression, lethargy, nausea, swelling of throat (cough), vomiting, fever, anemia, bruising, acute inflammation of colon, leukopenia, irritation of kidneys and liver causing hepatitis. Usually IMT is reversible if the medication is discontinued; however, none of these dogs showed any side effect that alerted either the Vet or me, the owner, that serious drug sensitivity was taking place.

Sulfa/trimethoprim (Bactrim Rx, Tribissen Rx, Ditrin Rx, Sulfatrim Rx, SMZ-TMP, other generic names) are some of the sulfa drugs on the market that can cause serious medical afflictions in Dobermans, and Rottweilers and is implicated in immune mediated thrombocytopenia (IMT) in many dog breeds Miniature Schnauzers, Airedales, many sporting dogs, sight hounds, etc. Thrombocytes are the platelets in the blood, responsible for blood clotting. Thrombocytopenia is a decrease in the number of platelets. Obviously, if they get low enough there is a great risk to the pet.

SMZ is widely prescribed. It has a broad spectrum of action, it is inexpensive and most of the time it doesn't cause problems. Sulfa drugs have also been linked with Auto Immune Hemolytic Anemia in dogs.

My personal recommendation is:

**DO NOT USE ANY FORM OF SULFA DRUG AND DO NOT BLANKET TREAT ALL YOUR DOGS IN YOUR HOME WITH ANY MED UNLESS THEY SHOW SIGNS OF ILLNESS.**

*Sallye Gregg, DVM is a criticalist. A criticalist is a specially trained veterinarian dedicated to treating life-threatening conditions. A critical care specialist has performed at least 3 years of intensive training in emergency and critical care medicine and has passed a rigorous test to become a Diplomate in the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care (ACVECC). The 'residency training' period includes instruction in surgery, internal medicine, anesthesia, pain relief, neurology, cardiology, radiology, mechanical ventilation, dialysis, and emergency procedures like CPR. This intense program focuses on cutting edge techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of life-threatening diseases and for management during the critical time when your pet is recovering from severe illness or injury.*

Since the writing of this article several other Australian Terriers have suffered from treatment with sulfa drugs resulting in death or near death. Please notify your Vet of our Aussies sensitivity to this drug.