

Bella's story by Debbi Cliff

My beautiful Bella was born on 18th May 2007, I saw her in a pet shop 13 weeks later, and she was in an enclosure with two much larger male puppies.

At 13 weeks of age, Bella was the size of an 8 week old puppy, she had a hernia & a few other small issues, I was surprised to learn the other puppies were her brothers and that, as she was "failing to thrive", she was to be returned to the breeder for euthanasia the very next day. It was obvious to me that she was only failing to thrive as the male puppies were devouring the food before she had a chance to get any. Bella is quite timid and not food motivated.

It only took a cuddle from her for me to decide that I wasn't letting her be euthanized and even though I had two other poodles at home and Bella would put me over the council limit, I purchased her immediately anyway. (I didn't get a discount either!)

I took her straight to my vet who told me to love her and feed her and she'd be fine. He was right!

After moving to Cairns in 2013, a new vet diagnosed Bella with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. This is a defect in the collagen genes and the proteins that interact with them. This proved to be serendipity when a few months later, after a lifetime of symptoms and hundreds of doctors, that I was also diagnosed with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (Vascular & Hypermobility.)

I spend a lot of time in hospital and hate it, so a friend suggested I train Bella as a 'MindDog', this means she can go to hospital with me, in fact she can go into any public building or space, except hospital operating theatres. Having Bella with me reduces my anxiety and allows me to lead a better quality of life.

In essence I rescued Bella and now she's rescuing me.

