

**Golden Retrievers are bouncy, happy dogs, who fill their owners' lives with light. Spangler shone the same magic on his family – until he received a booster jab...**

# Star-spangled Spangler

**MEET SPANGLER**, a bouncy, energetic, fun-filled and loving three-year-old Golden Retriever. "He's just absolutely beautiful," says Spangler's proud owner, Maria Cooper. "He's so full of life. He just loves people, and I just love him. All the family loves him. He's so gentle with my little grandson, who is only a year old. Mind you, he also - very carefully - steals the socks off the little chap's feet!"

"On the other hand, he can be boisterous. Martin and I have four children - three daughters and a son - between us. The interesting thing about Spangler is that he wants to play rough with Martin and our son, but when he's with the girls, he likes to sit and be stroked. It's as though he knows."

Spangler is also a proud dog. He seems to know that he's gorgeous and very, very loved. "I don't see him as a dog," says Maria. "To me, he's a person. He's no less than any person I know."

At the age of six months, Spangler was diagnosed with hip dysplasia and entered weekly sessions of hydrotherapy. "Spangler has been so unlucky with his health," says Maria. "He had to have an operation on his knee, and the op failed twice. He was referred to a specialist surgeon in the end, and that did the trick. The surgeon described Spangler as 'a resilient, happy character who gives unconditional love wherever he goes'."

Spangler is Maria and Martin's

constant companion. "He goes everywhere with us," says Maria. "If we go on holiday, Spangler comes, too - he was in France not so long ago, although I have to admit we decided not to put him through a long flight to Canada recently."

Considering that Maria was allergic to dogs when she was younger, Spangler was very much the miracle puppy. "When Martin and I got together and we visited Martin's brother who has a Golden Retriever, I realised that my dog allergy was a thing of the past," says Maria. "My dream was fulfilled when we brought this lovely, cuddly puppy home with us."

"Every morning Martin gets up before me, and Spangler follows him around. Then he'll wait by the side of the bed until I wake up. I go into the bathroom and he'll wait outside for me. On a couple of occasions, Martin has got into the bath, and Spangler has jumped in with him! He fills the house with fun and laughter. He's just full of life and happiness."

## Hopelessly devoted

So devoted is Maria to her special boy, that she took to sleeping downstairs while Spangler recovered from his knee operation. "He was in a frame for eight weeks," says Maria. "He went through so much, but I'm in awe of the fact that his personality never changed. He was gentle all the time; the pain and restriction never got the better of him."

When an animal is ill or suffering, and a human takes care

of him, a special bond develops - a tenderness. And so it was with Spangler. When he died, Maria and Martin were plunged into a grief so deep that Maria believes she will never recover from it. "I feel like I let him down so badly," says Maria. "If only I had known."

## Health concerns

On Saturday 18 March, three-year-old Spangler was taken for a free health-check and booster. By Sunday, Spangler was extremely lethargic and refused to eat or drink. Maria called the vet on the Sunday evening, who advised that as long as Spangler wasn't vomiting, he would be okay, and he should be taken back the next morning.

Spangler was panting rapidly through Sunday night and the couple tried to make him as comfortable as possible. He was given a thorough examination on Monday morning and the vet administered an antibiotic and a drug to bring down his high temperature. At home, Maria tried to spoon-feed water into him, as he appeared to be dehydrating.

On Tuesday, still panting and refusing food, Spangler was returned to the vet where another antibiotic was given, plus another drug to bring his temperature down. On Wednesday there was no improvement, and blood was found on his bed. Maria began to look on the internet to see if there might be any information about similar reactions to vaccines.

"I found that reactions like these are more common than are made

**"Spangler was deteriorating rapidly and it appeared to be the same as all the incidents I had read about on the internet. At this stage I knew in my heart that we weren't going to save him... I feel like I let him down so badly. If only I had known. I don't think I will ever get over this. It's like a nightmare, but I can't wake up. I feel so empty inside"**





public,” says Maria. She telephoned the vaccine manufacturer, and later took Spangler back to the vet. He was given another injection and seemed a little better. “We hand-fed him small pieces of liver and chicken and he stopped panting,” says Maria.

Although Spangler wasn’t panting by Thursday, he certainly wasn’t improving. “He was lying down all the time and he’d stopped eating again,” says Maria. “We took him back to the vet, who told us that his temperature was coming down slowly, so it was nothing to worry about since it could have been worse. Blood tests were taken again, showing that Spangler hadn’t been incubating any virus before the vaccine - so this pointed to it being the vaccine.”

### Worst fears

Spangler was taken back to the vet again on the Friday, as he was still not eating. He had another two injections. “The vet phoned on the Friday afternoon to say that the vaccine manufacturer had instructed the vet to invoice them with all the costs, as they didn’t want to speak to us directly,” says Maria.

By Friday afternoon, Spangler was eating again, and he was drinking water from his bowl, but then he started panting again. “I knew he couldn’t be too hot,” says Maria, “as the vet had said his temperature was almost normal and we had the windows open and I was blowing him with cold air from the hairdryer, which he usually loved. We tried to

sleep after midnight, but Spangler was still panting. When I turned the bedroom light on, to our horror, his chest had a gash around three or four inches long and was weeping. He had his back pressed hard against his bed and he seemed to be in agony. I phoned the vet and he told me to bring Spangler to the surgery.”

Maria and Martin were told that Spangler would need an operation in the morning. Spangler went home with the couple, as no staff would be on duty overnight. “Spangler was deteriorating rapidly,” says Maria,

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Spangler was returned to the vet on Saturday morning for his operation. The vet later telephoned to say that blood tests revealed that Spangler’s thyroid was suppressed, his liver was damaged, and his bloodwork revealed anomalies. “The vet told us that Spangler’s skin was dying and couldn’t be stitched back. He said it was creeping nephritis. He would have to undergo months of plastic surgery and he might have his front leg amputated - and that was the good news. This would only be possible if, after being examined by experts in another 24 hours, his blood and immune system could cope.

“We had no alternative but to do the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do in my life, and that was to put our friend to sleep.”

### It doesn’t matter until it’s personal

At Canine Health Concern, we usually receive three or four emails a week from people whose dogs have suffered as a result of vaccination. I am sure it happens far more often - as these three or four only represent the people who have found us.

Much to my own heartbreak, most dog owners are either oblivious to the many diverse illnesses that can be caused by vaccines, or they turn



away when someone like me starts speaking about them. It is generally only when it becomes personal - when your dog suffers and dies - that you start to take notice.

The vaccine manufacturer in question has conducted tests to ascertain why this particular vaccine went wrong for Spangler. According to the manufacturer, their own tests show that the batch conforms to specification.

### Avoidable suffering

A bacterin called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was found in tissue samples belonging to Spangler. Some of Spangler’s dead and dying skin was sent by his vet to an independent laboratory, which could neither confirm nor deny that the cellulitis (inflammation of the soft tissues of the body) was a result of bacteria entering Spangler’s body at the

time of vaccination. Maria’s vet told her that he had only heard of this bacterin in cattle, in chicken farms, and in contaminated water. Maria says that Spangler couldn’t possibly have met any of these naturally, since it had been only a week since he was allowed to exercise following his knee operation.

There are three possible explanations. One is that Spangler somehow had the bacterin on his skin and it was pushed inwards by the needle. Another is that it came from the needle. And a third is that it came from the vaccine. Ultimately, I believe - if anything is to be blamed - annual vaccination is at fault, because Spangler didn’t need any vaccine after his puppy shots.

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The latest guidelines issued by the American Animal Hospital Association are misleading: they suggest we revaccinate every three years. Even this can be a literal overkill. According to the world’s leading veterinary virologist - Dr Ronald D Schultz who advises the AAHA - once an animal is immune to a virus, he is immune for years or life. Further, if you vaccinate a dog who is already immune, existing immunity will merely fight the vaccine, and no additional protection is provided. If Spangler had only been vaccinated once every three years, this vaccine event could still have killed him. Why are we consenting to a medical procedure that has the potential of causing harm, when it’s not even necessary?

### Be informed

Maria’s vet has told her that their practice intends to change its vaccine protocol. They are now to offer an annual titre (blood) test option in place of vaccination. When she spoke to the veterinary manufacturer (which has offered to pay the bills), the spokesperson said he had lost sleep over Spangler’s death.

If you have read this article and taken Spangler’s story on board, then you will be giving Spangler’s life and tragic death meaning. If you need more information about canine vaccination, then please visit CHC’s website - [www.canine-health-concern.org.uk](http://www.canine-health-concern.org.uk), or read our latest book (*Shock to the System*), or attend one of our Foundation in Canine Healthcare courses.

Please do not find yourself in the situation Maria has found herself in. “I feel like I let him down so badly,” says Maria. “If only I had known. I don’t think I will ever get over this. It’s like a nightmare, but I can’t wake up. I feel so empty inside, and, as much as I love the people around me, I can’t connect with them.”

Nothing matters until it’s personal. Please don’t allow over-vaccination to become one of your own personal tragedies. Be informed; please make knowledgeable choices on behalf of your canine friends. ::

Catherine O’Driscoll is founder of Canine Health Concern, PO Box 7533, Perth PH2 1AD, email [Catherine@Carsegray.co.uk](mailto:Catherine@Carsegray.co.uk)