

## Near Death to New Life

Working in animal rescue exposes you to many heart-breaking cases of abuse and neglect. But there are some pets that touch you more than others, and Sierra was one of those special cases. After her original owners moved away, she was left with a neighbor who believed they would return for her later. But after several weeks it was obvious that she had been abandoned.

Sierra was left by herself in a dark, unheated garage through the coldest winter months. Chows thrive on human interaction, and she received almost none. She was rarely let out of the garage, forced to relieve her self right where she lived, and left alone for days in the dark. She grew thinner and thinner until she finally stopped eating the store bought hot dogs they'd been feeding her for months. It was only then that the people entrusted with her care decided they no longer wanted to be bothered with her.

TLC Chow Rescue responded to the call, picking her up just in time to save her from a trip to the pound. She was so thin and in such poor health that she probably would not have survived in a shelter. Even as weak as she was she wanted desperately to ride up front where she could be with us, she must have known she'd been saved and on her way to a better life. She was rushed to the vet as an emergency case where she received immediate treatment, at 25 pounds and with almost no muscle mass left Dr. Jim Bader said she was in the worst condition of any Chow he'd ever seen.

With proper care, a special diet, and a loving environment Sierra's condition immediately improved, and after several weeks she was strong enough to join the pack at TLC. She learned to run and play with the other rescued dogs, and slowly put on the much needed weight she'd lost. But she was still weak, and because she'd never been spayed Sierra was a prime candidate for a disease called Pyometra.

Once thought to be a simple uterine infection, Pyometra is recognized today as a hormonal abnormality that strikes middle-aged dogs that haven't been spayed. Although a secondary bacterial infection may or may not be present, the disease alone is deadly if left untreated. Pyometra usually follows a heat cycle during which fertilization does not occur, with symptoms showing 2 to 4 months after the cycle ends. In many cases the uterus fills with pus until it weighs several pounds and immediate surgery is required. Because Sierra was not fully healed from her terrible case of neglect, she was rushed back to Dr. Bader for treatment.

Jim Bader is widely recognized as one of Michigan's best Chow doctors, with patients coming to his Holland clinic from as far away as the Upper Peninsula. With all of his knowledge and experience, Sierra's health made her case more difficult than expected and she nearly died before surgery, and again during the procedure. But after several days in Intensive Care, she recovered well enough to go home to her friends at TLC. With love and care her health again improved and in no time she was outside with her very first case of the "Zoomies" (which any Chow person can tell you is what happens when they run full-tilt around the yard having the time of their life). After all she had been through it was wonderful to see such joy in her eyes, and although we wanted more time with her we knew we had to find her a forever home. When you care for a dog like Sierra through such difficult times you feel so much closer to them, and it's harder than ever to let them go. But, we knew it was for the best and with heavy hearts we posted her picture on [www.Petfinder.com](http://www.Petfinder.com)

In no time at all we received a note from a family interested in meeting her. We held our breath in hope that they would be the perfect home she deserved, and

after meeting Mark and Gail we knew Sierra was headed for a long, healthy life in a wonderful home. They have since sent several pictures of her new forever family and her pack, who gladly play along when she gets the Zoomies. After all she'd been through, we couldn't ask for a better end to the story of such a special girl.

Please remember how important it is to spay and neuter your pets, besides helping to control the growing population of homeless and abandoned animals it helps them avoid complications and diseases like Pyometra later in life. For more information on this serious condition please click the links below.

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=2+1629&aid=918>

<http://www.vetsurgerycentral.com/pyometra.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyometra>

<http://www.thepetcenter.com/sur/pyo.html>