



## The Soggy Dog Blog: Who is Lucy Belle?

We have a petite, comical chocolate female that you've undoubtedly seen in a variety of Soggy Acres and *SportingDog Adventures* pictures and videos, and if you're local, you've probably met her at any number of area sportshows. She's the family "ham," a born entertainer that likes to sing, dance, and wear crazy outfits (she has her own tutu collection). Never camera shy or afraid to ask new acquaintances for a "butt scratch", this little girl's personality is larger than any Lab's and disproportionate to her 50-pound size. This goofy little girl is Lucy Belle, born October 13, 2008, to the gorgeous huntress, Sadie Belle. We typically refrain from waxing lyrical on this blog and try to focus on educational posts, but this week we're going to make an exception and tell you about the life of Lucy. You see, Lucy was diagnosed with inoperable liver cancer on April 3 – exactly two months to the day of the passing of her illustrious grandmother, Dixie Belle – and before Lucy goes, we want to share her untold story.

Our story starts in the whelping box at Soggy Acres in fall of 2008. If having puppies was a sport, Sadie Belle would have been a champion, and the litter born that October was no exception. Squirming – barely – in that litter of 15 (!) was the future Lucy Belle. Lucy was more than the stereotypical "runt," she was downright pathetic, weighing a mere 2 pounds at seven weeks, when her brothers and sisters were all full-sized and healthy, raring to go home. Her ears stuck out like Yoda (a fact she'd rather we forgot) and she just wasn't putting on weight. Her frequent visits to the vet earned her the nickname "Dead Dog" by the staff, who clearly didn't see much of a future for her. It was decided that if "Dead Dog" survived, the Fuller family would keep her for themselves and name her after a Charles Schulz "Peanuts" character. (After all, *Happiness is a Warm Puppy* was the book that really catapulted Schulz's career.) Survive she did, and Lucy Belle became a central figure in the Fuller household from then on.

Lucy worked her first Milwaukee sportshow that following spring, hanging out in a basket for her comfort and protection. She's worked every MJS Sportshow and Madison Deer and Turkey Expo since. Annual visitors to the event invariably inquire when they see her whether this is the "same doggy from the basket." Lucy loves doing sportshows and actually gets completely impatient with her family when it's about time to go. She has a "tip jar" and we've taught her to "sing" for tips, head thrown back or prancing on her back haunches. She knows those tips go to her friend Jill who operates the doggy treat booth in the same aisle. Her childish good looks spurn the same dialogue hundreds of times at each show:

"How old is she?"

Answer: 9.

"9 months?"

Answer: No, 9 years!

And she loves the attention – and the occasional opportunity to try and steal a crock pickle or jerky stick from an unsuspecting fan!

Lucy works hard for our TV show as well. She's had the opportunity to run with professional sled dogs and track deer, to name a few of her favorite moments from *SportingDog Adventures*. No one would know, but she's the only dog we have that doesn't "weird out" when being asked to eat on camera: she has no objection to eating with a camera in her face! Never professionally trained, her hunting skills are all natural, thanks to her great bloodlines, and she's not afraid to show them off in the company of much larger, titled dogs. Nothing intimidates Lucy.

In her downtime, Lucy is a "rider." If it moves, she wants on it. When we brought home our American Landmaster UTV, she popped her front paws up on the car trailer to check it out before we had even taken the bungee cords off of it! As part of her bucket list, we make sure she gets a daily ride on something, whether it's a lap around the pond at home on the UTV, or a jaunt out into the marshes on our Argo at our Lodge. In a pinch, the Big Dog lawnmower deck will suffice (she thinks she's a better spokesdog for the brand than Rommel anyway). She's spent many a dusky evening making her boys paddle her about the Soggy Acres ponds on "her" paddleboat.

Lucy isn't going to be with us much longer – a few days to two weeks by our estimates – but we're enjoying every last minute of her company. Lucy has lived an incredibly full life, more so than many people! With over 25,000 people attending each sportshow each year that she works (and she usually works three), think how many people have been enchanted by the puppy-faced chocolate Lab singing in a tutu. How many smiles has she brought to peoples' faces, young and old, whether at a sportshow, during a puppy go-home at our house, or by hunting 'em up on our TV show. We'll never know how many lives this pint-sized dynamo has touched, but we know for certain that the lives in the Fuller household are forever changed for the better.