

## Italian Golden Retrievers??

Betty Smith

We had a wonderful adventure, but I am glad to be back home! My husband, Greg, taught in Rome last semester, and since we didn't want to be without our dogs for four months, we took them with us. I did a lot of research and found that there is no quarantine for most European Union countries as long as the dog has a microchip and is current on rabies vaccinations. There were some rules and timelines to follow, and I had to visit the USDAA office near O'Hare to get an official stamp. It was a bit of a hassle—one more thing to do while packing for 4 months away (and 3 seasons worth of clothes), and then when we landed, the customs officials didn't even look at the paperwork. But of course we had to have it!

We flew in and out of Paris because it was a shorter flight for the dogs, with no change of planes. They were very happy to see us in the airport, but seemed to be fine. We got a great deal on a lease-buy back car and took 3 days to make the 15 hour drive to Rome. (Greg broke his kneecap 2 weeks before we left, so I did all the driving for the first 2 months.)

I had found an apartment outside of Rome which had an enclosed yard, and it worked well for us. The suburb proved to be not ideal for walking the dogs, as there were no sidewalks on many of the streets, but I did eventually find a site where I went for agility practice. The owner/instructor was very friendly and spoke fairly good English. They practice outside all year, as Rome's climate is fairly mild, but we had some windy, cold, and wet sessions in October and November. It was fun, although we're all quite rusty and out of shape!

We took several trips with the dogs to Tuscany, northern Italy, Sicily, and a few other areas. I searched online to find B&Bs and vacation rentals that welcomed dogs, and found mostly very nice places, some of which had yards or safe areas so the dogs could run. The hosts/owners were happy to greet and fuss over the dogs, and one even provided a big yellow quilt as bedding for them (which was fortunate since we had forgotten to bring their beds on that trip).

Two hosts even helped when one of our Goldens needed to see a vet. Jason had become uninterested in eating, leading us to worry about a relapse of Blasto, which he had in the fall of 2013. Each B&B host recommended and helped us find the location of an English-speaking vet. The first vet did a brief exam, gave him two injections—an antibiotic and one “for his stomach,” a prescription for each of these, and asked us to come back the next morning for 2 more shots. We did, but since we were heading to Venice, we could not return for a third round of shots. Her total charge for the two visits and 4 injections was 45 Euros (about \$55).

Two days later, Jason seemed worse, and we visited a clinic near Venice. After a more thorough exam, this vet suggested that to diagnose the cause of the “intestinal area” pain she detected would take an ultrasound, which was not possible for several days. (It was Friday afternoon; Saturday was a major Italian holiday, and facilities were closed Sunday except for emergencies.) Her charge was 25 Euros (\$30). Fortunately, by Monday he seemed better, and the antibiotic and other shots and prescriptions seemed to be working, so we didn't follow up. He has been fine since then.

The visits were somewhat different—and certainly less expensive—than what we experience in the U.S. Each practice seemed to be a one-vet office, with at most one other staff member, and

no itemized accounting of the visit. It bothered me that I didn't know exactly what the first vet was giving Jason, but in the end, he recovered, so all was good!

Our trip back to the U.S. just before Christmas was long but uneventful, and again the dogs seem to have handled it well. We are all getting back to normal routines, and I'm looking forward to our next agility trial—probably sometime in February—and hope the 6 months break from trialing will have been a good thing!