

Leaping dogs take the meaning of Leap Year to a new level

March 1 2016, by Sue Manning

Shayna, a Labrador retriever in Holiday, Florida, had taken the same leap several times and had fun swimming. So she got a running start and sailed over the canal wall, only to learn it was low tide and she was going to end up on a bed of sharp oyster shells.

"She was cut up pretty bad," said her owner, Judi Dunn. "I had to coach her to swim over to a dock where we had a floating doggy platform. She had to go about 70 feet," Dunn said.

Shayna, who is now 6, looks at Dunn for permission before she takes off these days—everywhere except the family swimming pool.

In honor of Leap Year, The Associated Press looked at a few dogs that had taken big leaps and survived. Nationwide Insurance is the largest pet insurer in the United States with over 550,000 covered animals, and insures all four dogs.

Since last Leap Year, Feb. 29, 2012, there have been 107,502 claims submitted for soft tissue trauma, said Dr. Carol McConnell, Nationwide's vice president and chief veterinarian medical officer. Cuts and bruises are the most common injury related to leaping accidents, she said.

Sprains come next, with 20,006 claims over the past four years for an average of \$183 per pet; 46,386 back problems or slipped vertebral discs with claims averaging \$1,133, and 6,335 broken legs averaging \$1,792 a

claim.

Paige Allford of San Diego, California, said her Lab, Henry, in his excitement, overshot a reunion with his neighbor and launched off a two-story balcony, landing on a car. Despite the 20-foot fall, Henry's injuries were limited to a broken toenail.

"Henry is a very popular neighborhood dog. One gal came to take him for a walk. She was holding out her hands. She thinks Henry is running to her and he runs right past her into 'Nowhereville.' Luckily, he landed on a roof," Allford said.

Eero (AIR'-oh), a Husky from Lawrence Township, New Jersey, was on the way to the dog park with owner Chelsea Brandt when the dog squeezed through a side window and tumbled out of the car.

He was 8 months old and about 65 pounds when that happened.

"Something caught my eye in the rear view mirror. I saw him fall out. There was a high-pitched squeal from him. I slowed the car down. We were under 35 mph but there was another car behind me. When I pulled over, he was in the road, standing up. I scooped him up, put him in the back of the car and immediately called the vet," she said.

There were no [broken bones](#) but a lot of skin lesions, she said. "It took him a few weeks to recover. He is a big, healthy 2-year-old now."

Eero doesn't do anything different these days, but Brandt does. "I definitely keep my distance if I see a whole dog hanging out the window. If it's just a little of his head, I don't worry about it that much." She also keeps her windows rolled up tighter in her own car.

Heidi Elizabeth is a cocker Spaniel from Cumberland, Rhode Island, and

was headed for the sofa in front of a second-story picture window where she always watches her owners when they leave the house. She misjudged her leap though and crashed through the window, landing right in front of owner Monique Johnson. The window screen hit Johnson on the head but she wasn't hurt.

Heidi was a little sore, but made a full recovery.

You would think there would have been more broken bones from all the leaps. But McConnell said bones are meant to be strong and it takes involved trauma to break them.

No matter what kind of dog you have, you should always watch for signs of pain, McConnell said.

"Any dog will show some degree of pain if something is wrong, if it is protecting some part of its body. It may be a little lethargic. It can't find a position that's comfortable or it might be limping if there is a broken bone," she said.

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