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PETS

Meredith Vieira's 16-year-old dog, Jasper, survives coyote attack

The senior dog bounced back after suffering a broken jaw, two lost teeth and severe abdominal wounds.



— Courtesy Meredith Vieira

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By Jen Reeder

Meredith Vieira's dog, Jasper, is a scrappy little survivor.

He was recently attacked by a coyote, Meredith told award-winning animal advocate Jill Rappaport in an exclusive on Pet Life Radio's "Rappaport to the Rescue" podcast on June 24.



Meredith immediately suspected something was wrong when she came home from a walk with a friend and Jasper just stood rigidly, staring at her. When she went to him, she noticed his fur was matted with blood, and he snapped at her – which the sweet dog never does.

“So I knew something was up,” she told Rappaport.

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With the help of police officers, Meredith rushed Jasper to a nearby animal hospital. The veterinary team assessed the severity of his wounds and transferred him to a trauma unit, where surgery saved his life.

A veterinarian told Meredith that Jasper's injuries were most likely from a fight with a coyote and that the 16-year-old dog had suffered a broken jaw, two teeth ripped out and deep puncture wounds, which led to numerous staples in his abdomen.

“He looks a little like Frankenstein,” she said to Rappaport.

— The day he came home from surgery, Jasper modeled the Thundershirt he wears to help protect his open wounds and the staples holding him together. Courtesy of Meredith Vieira / Courtesy Meredith Vieira

When attacked, Jasper was sunning himself outside in the yard, which is surrounded by an electronic fence, and most likely fought to protect his home. Meredith said the veterinarian thinks the little mixed-breed dog put up a good fight and quipped to her, “Think of the coyote.”

The tough senior dog is certainly displaying grit while healing at home. He wears a little jacket to protect his open wounds and the staples holding him together. His BFF – Meredith’s black cat, Felipe – stays by Jasper's side every step of the way.

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Jasper’s appetite is good – perhaps because Meredith is cooking him chicken and rice.

“I’m spoiling him rotten,” she told Rappaport. “He deserves it.”





— Despite being 16 years old and smaller than a coyote, Jasper survived the attack and is stronger every day. Courtesy Meredith Vieira

Rappaport, host of Animal Planet’s “Dog Bowl” and bestselling author, worked with Meredith for five years at TODAY, where Jasper often accompanied his owner to the set and the women discovered a shared deep love of animals. So she was particularly concerned when Meredith told her on the air about Jasper’s scrape with a coyote.



— Meredith Vieira shared the exclusive story about Jasper's scrape with a coyote on the premiere episode of "Rappaport to the Rescue," a Pet Life Radio podcast hosted by her former TODAY show colleague, journalist

and award-winning animal advocate Jill Rappaport. Rappaport's passion is senior dogs, like her 15-year-old dog, Petey, who is currently battling cancer. CHRISTOPHER APPOLDT / Courtesy of Jill Rappaport

“This is an amazing act of survival,” Rappaport told TODAY. “I don’t know too many Saint Bernards or bull mastiffs that could survive a coyote attack like that. And when you consider that this is a small dog, and let’s not forget 16 years old – what an amazing testament to the heart and soul of this little guy.”

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After Meredith’s scoop on the first episode of “Rappaport to the Rescue,” Rappaport followed up and was delighted when Meredith showed her a video of Jasper running and playing like a happy dog again.

Rappaport said Jasper is one example of why people shouldn’t count senior dogs out. She hopes her podcast, like so much of her previous work, will shine a light on “underdogs” like older pets and help lead to adoptions.

“I cannot tell you how many times when you save an animal in the twilight of their lives, they often thrive,” she said. “They will shock and amaze you – how much more life and love and time left they have – because they know they’ve been saved in the nick of time. They’re just wonderful animals.”

Jen Reeder

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