

The Dog Days ... of Winter



JEANABABCOCK

Jeana@BabcockAutoCare.com

Do you ever bite off more than you can chew? Then, do other unknown and uncontrollable circumstances arise that make you wonder why you took that extra big bite in the first place? But at that point, it's too late to undo your decision, so you have no choice but to just get through the tough days. This is what recently happened to my family, and I can sum it up in just one word: Hazel. Let me explain.

I have always wanted a German Shepherd. But our black lab rescue dog, Sadie, would not share me with other dogs. After losing her suddenly last October, our home felt empty and our hearts yearned for a new furry friend. My dream to have a German Shepherd resurfaced and I began searching out reputable breeders. Through my sweet friend, Patti, we found a great GSD breeder and were quickly put on a list to have one of the pups her female dog was carrying. Sadly, the first week of December, mama GSD delivered only two pups—one was stillborn and the other died shortly after birth. Thinking it was a sign to wait until summer—with more time and better weather, I put it out of my mind as the Christmas busy-ness ensued.

However, as Christmas approached, our memories of Sadie were all coming to the forefront of our minds and there

was an air of sadness in what it would be like to not have our girl on Christmas morning. I thought to myself—what better gift could we give our kids than news of a new furry family member? So I began to research other breeders. Long story short, I found a litter of ten black GSDs in Minnesota that were born just before Christmas and would be ready to go to their fur-ever homes on Valentine's Day. That became my new sign that it was meant to be!

Over the next weeks, we eagerly prepared for the homecoming of our new pup—buying all the things we thought we needed along with educating ourselves with training articles and videos. On February 14th, with great anticipation, we made the three-hour drive to pick up our new pup, Hazel ... and then the chaos began.

Not taking into consideration many factors, our expectations were higher than they should have been as we presumed she'd be potty trained within a week if we adhered to the schedule we read about and watched in the videos. First, Hazel came from a home in which potty training had not started in and the pups were allowed to eliminate all over the house. Second, a delay in remodeling our mudroom (the main entrance and exit for potty training) and unforeseen problems found during



Meet Hazel

demo led to puppy confusion. Finally, the biggest unexpected hurdle that has affected successful potty training—you probably know what I'm about to say because this problem has affected all Minnesotans in unimaginable ways and has really become a four letter word that hurts all of our ears—SNOW. Lots and lots of snow.

What sorts of troubles have our recent snowstorms and blizzard with mountainous snow accumulation caused you? Have you had any trouble with your vehicle? Many of us think about how the snow hinders our days in the moment—extra time to

remove snow from our cars, extra time for our vehicles to warm up and defrost our windows from the ice accumulation, extra time to get to work, etc. But after the roads are cleared, we don't often think about what other problems the snow may have caused, especially to the unseen part of our vehicle—the undercarriage.

As we bounce over the uneven, snow-compacted roadways, our suspension is working overtime to keep our ride as smooth as possible. Also, if we drive over loose snow piles or drifts, the snow can get pushed into the nooks and crannies under our vehicles and the tires can kick more snow up into places it shouldn't be.

Furthermore, the salt dispersed on the roads to melt the snow also gets onto our undercarriages and the slush can freeze and seal in the snow that's already stuck. Can you imagine what problems can potentially occur with all of this? It can lead to loosening of suspension components (especially if they were not healthy to begin with), negatively altering the wheel alignment, corroding metal components including wheels, brakes, exhaust system, etc. due to salt, drivability issues due to compaction, and so on.

Because of the potential for the snow

to cause such damage and problems, it is essential to clear out the snow and assess for possible problems. Since warm weather doesn't generally follow a snow storm and just melting the snow is not enough (the salt needs to be removed), the best option we have in Minnesota is a car wash—one that has the ability to shoot water up into the undersides of our vehicles. The more frequently we do this, the better. But with cold temps, it is essential that you not only wash our vehicles but also dry the doors and locks well to ensure they don't freeze shut and cause more problems.

To keep a safe and healthy vehicle, it's also important to pay attention to how your vehicle is driving and address issues at the first sign of problems. Does your suspension feel different? Is your car pulling to one side? Is your steering wheel crooked? Do you hear any noises? Our suspension, including alignment and our braking system, is essential to our safety. Because they can be affected greatly by the snow, getting an alignment check and having our vehicles assessed by professionals is always a great idea.

Minnesota friends, together we have endured two months of 2019's viscous weather records—with extreme cold in January and extreme snow in February. As we "March" forward, let's triumphantly persevere—driving into spring with healthy vehicles and happy dog-filled hearts. And if you need a little puppy love to help you through any more snow to come, stop on by—Hazel is our new shop dog, and she'll be delighted to give you sweet puppy kisses!