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9/11 rescue dog undergoes reconstructive surgery



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Posted: Nov 11, 2011 8:08 PM PST Updated: Nov 11, 2011 8:15 PM PST

Reported by Josh DeVine - email

NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) - A different kind of veteran is on the mend tonight, following some high-tech surgery.

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Bailey, a black Labrador retriever searched the ruins in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

She's one of about a dozen rescue dogs from back then still alive today, but arthritis was making it tough for her to get around.

So, a company stepped up to make sure her golden years are as comfortable as possible.

"She's certainly served her country in greater ways than I ever want to," said Dr. Marry Ergen, Companion Animal Hospital.

At 15 years old, Bailey has seen a lot. But time has been tough.

"She has trouble getting up, getting down. A lot of trouble going down stairs," said Katherine Wilkie, with Medivet America.

Bailey's finest days, as a search and rescue dog, came 10 years ago when Bailey and her owner Keith Lindley traveled from Thompson's Station to the Pentagon.

"We realized that the odds of finding a live person was a little bit unlikely," Lindley said.

"Although she didn't find anyone there, she did a lot for everyone that was there."

That's why Medivet offered to help. The Kentucky company pioneered technology to use stem cells to ease the pain of arthritis.

"Her quality of life is drastically going to improve. She's not going to be in as much pain anymore," Wilkie said.

"Animals are so giving, and to see her not have pain would just be wonderful," Lindley said.

Friday morning, a vet carefully removed fat from Bailey's shoulder blade. A tech added enzymes, then injected the cells that will soon become cartilage in Bailey's elbows.

"Hopefully we can get her to where she's active in her senior years," Ergen said.

The anesthesia had Bailey resting comfortably Friday afternoon, so a visit from her family seemed to help them more than her.

"Being a fireman, I know what she did," Lindley said. "She's a good dog."

Her owner didn't need to say much at all. The way he cared for his dog said enough. It'll be about 90 days before the procedure takes full effect.

The company donated the supplies for the procedure, which normally runs



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about \$2,000.

Medivet plans to also help two other dogs who helped searchers following the 9/11 attacks.

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