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9/11 rescue dog gets rare stem cell transplant

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Posted: Nov 11, 2011 2:28 PM PST

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GOODLETTSVILLE, Tenn. - A 15-year-old black lab underwent groundbreaking stem cell surgery Friday morning to relieve arthritis in her elbows.

Bailey, who lives in Thompson Station with owner Keith Lindley, served as a search and rescue dog with Tennessee Task Force One in the days following September 11, 2001. She helped in the Pentagon.

"I'm a fireman and I know what she did," said Lindley, fighting back tears. "She's a good dog, and I just want her to be comfortable."

According to Lindley, Bailey has had a particularly difficult time climbing and going down steps.

She stays mostly outside and plays with Lindley's four-year old twins, Savannah and Sidney.

"I am hoping she'll be able to walk through the yard and not limp," Lindley said.

Doctors at Companion Animal Hospital in Goodlettsville performed the stem cell surgery with Dr. Katherine Wilkie of Medi-Vet America.

Medi-Vet learned of Bailey from a photo spread in the New York Times featuring the 11 dogs still alive who worked 9/11 with the Federal



Bailey served as a search and rescue dog with Tennessee Task Force One in the days following September 11, 2001, helping in the

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The surgery involves removing fat tissue from the dog and reducing it to the point only active stem cells remain.

Those stem cells are then inserted back into the dog where they will repair the joints and muscles and relieve any pain.

"It's like a tissue transplant with their own tissue so you don't get rejection issues like you would transplanting with a different animal," explained Dr. Mary Ergen, who performed the surgery.

She said the procedure has been around for animals for only about a year, but can benefit any animal, regardless of age.

Older dogs though, are the ones who suffer the most.

"At about 10, when they start slowing down, we're like 'they're just getting old' but actually it might be pain that we can control and eliminate," Dr. Ergen continued.

Bailey's surgery to remove the fat tissue went well and she was walking about an hour after surgery.

Dr. Ergen said once she recovers from the second procedure to replace the stem cells, Bailey should be able to walk pain free for the rest of her life.

The stem cell procedure costs about \$1,800.

Medi-Vet and Companion Animal Hospital provided the surgery for Bailey at no cost to thank her for her service as a member of Tennessee Task Force One.

Pentagon.



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| <p>Barbara
5 days ago</p> | <p>I think you are very narrow in your thinking for a couple of different reasons. The financial aid available to perform the surgery to thank Bailey for rescuing humans during 9-11 is money/services provided gratis by veterinarians. Do you guys want a vet when you get ready to have heart or brain surgery or if you need to be treated for cancer? And secondly, the research performed on our animals is research that is going to benefit us sooner or later. I am legally blind with a disease for which there is no cure. Do you think I'm going to question the value of dogs being provided with eye surgeries and visual care free of charge when it may well restore my sight one day? One such experimental treatment is in existence right now. Widen your horizons; open your minds, and quit trying to do a political commentary on subjects where you are painfully shy of knowledge!</p> | <p>+4  </p> <p>Share Flag</p> |
| <p>Michael
6 days ago</p> | <p>I agree with cham77. What a waste of money. The dog is 15 frickin' years old! Most humans suffering with arthritis wouldn't be able to get/afford that kind of treatment. Yet another example of a society turned upside down.</p> | <p>-3  </p> <p>Share Flag</p> |
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