



media *release*

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DOGGED DETERMINATION AND VETERINARY EXPERTISE GETS GUIDE DOG 'BUNTIE' BACK ON HER FEET

Buntie, a six-year-old black Labrador guide dog, has returned to work following successful treatment at the UK's leading veterinary charity, the Animal Health Trust, after losing the use of her legs.

The complete loss of physical strength had made it impossible for Buntie to carry out any of her usual duties as a guide dog and had reverted her back to early 'puppy-hood', making it difficult to eat, drink and go to the toilet.

On arrival at the AHT, Buntie was barely able to walk, stumbling on her front legs and having to shift her weight from side to side in order to remain balanced. Anita Shea, Clinician in Neurology and Neurosurgery at the AHT, performed a neurological examination and noticed Buntie's biggest abnormality was weakness on all four of her limbs. Buntie also had decreased reactions to basic reflex tests, demonstrating multiple nerves had stopped functioning properly.

Anita explained: "As with all neurological cases referred to the AHT, several initial tests were performed to ensure that there was no obvious cause for Buntie's weakness elsewhere in her body. In Buntie's case, we then performed further tests, under general anaesthesia, where little needles were placed in her muscles and nerves to measure electrical activity. This showed the nerves were not properly stimulating the muscles, so biopsy samples of muscle and nerve were submitted to a large neuromuscular laboratory in San Diego for analysis to try to determine the cause of the problem."

The results of the investigations did not suggest any signs of disease, leading the AHT team to suspect an unknown kind of toxin exposure, (either poisoning or an allergic reaction), as the cause of Buntie's sudden loss in muscle and nerve function. Unfortunately, this could not be cured by a form of medication.

Physiotherapy was chosen as the best treatment option to give Buntie the very best chance of recovery, enabling her to rebuild her strength through muscle and nerve stimulation.

During her stay at the AHT's Small Animal Clinic, Buntie underwent intense daily physiotherapy with AHT nurses, which was later complemented by a course of hydrotherapy treatment at the AHT's award-winning Hydrotherapy Centre. Initially unable to support her own weight, this treatment allowed Buntie to gain the necessary therapy in a weightless environment - the hydrotherapy pool.

Following three weeks of pool sessions twice a week, Buntie progressed onto the underwater treadmill to build muscle and improve the co-ordination and placement of her feet. Less than a month later Buntie's strength rapidly increased. Soon she was able to stand up unaided and take small steps around the pool house.

With her resolved determination and support from both AHT hydrotherapists and her owners, Buntie's health continued to improve and eight weeks after being referred to the AHT, Buntie resumed her role as a working guide dog, providing her delighted owner with the daily support that she needs.

Anita added: "During her time at the AHT, Buntie became a firm favourite with all the staff involved in her care and recovery. She is such a lovely dog, even in the early stages when she had difficulty in standing, Buntie was always positive and motivated with her tail constantly wagging! She was so inspiring, with her dogged determination to get back to the duties she was trained to do."

On Buntie's recovery, Samantha Gould, Hydrotherapist at the AHT, said: "I'm over the moon with how far Buntie has come in such a short time, she is a true fighter. Giving in to her illness was never an option for her. Buntie remained a happy and

determined lady, which in no doubt stems from the remarkable way in which she was trained by Guide Dogs.”

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For further information, please contact:

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Photographs & Videos:

Images of Buntie can be requested from the AHT press office. A short video on Buntie’s story can be found on the AHT’s You Tube channel:

www.youtube.com/ahttv

Additional notes:

- The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit the website at www.aht.org.uk