

Rescued Dog Shows Off New Prosthetic Paw

New titanium implant helps a Saluki from Kuwait walk on hind leg again.

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Photos courtesy Colorado State University One year ago, Sally the Saluki was wandering in the desert in Kuwait with a bloody stump in place of her left hind foot. Her rescuers believe she lost her foot from escaping a trap.

Typically, dogs in her situation would face amputation. Sally, however, was rescued by Kuwait's Protecting Animal Welfare Society and flown to see Dr. Erick Egger, an orthopedic veterinarian at Colorado State University.

Egger immediately adopted the Saluki, a royal dog breed in Kuwait known for its speed. He began to consider Sally as a potential candidate for a new kind of veterinary prosthetic that is fused directly into the end of the bone through the stump end.

This approach to prosthetic treatments holds better promise in animals than strapped-on prosthetics, since dogs tend to chew the straps and the implant doesn't hold well, given the animal's activities. The new kind of prosthetic, a titanium rod fused to her leg, will avoid problems with skin irritation and wear sores typical of "socket" devices, according to Egger.

The permanent bone attachment also gives better "feedback" of foot location and consequently improves limb use, Egger said. After undergoing a series of surgeries to be fitted with a metal implant into her bone for attachment of the external artificial limb, Sally has slowly started to walk on her new foot.

"Sally's doing well," Egger said. "We could see that she wants to use her leg and is using it."

The 2-year-old white dog with a curly tail recently showed off her new back leg at an event hosted by CSU. She was featured in local TV newscasts and newspapers.

Sally demonstrated her new permanent implant, a prosthetic foot padded with part of a Croc shoe. Egger said the dog's bone and soft tissues are healing well, and he believes the procedure might help human amputees in the future.