

Police Dog Shows Softer Side at Home

Yasko, a 10-year-old police dog, went back to work shortly after undergoing decompression surgery.

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Dog owners and veterinarians recently had the opportunity to share their animal survivor stories at the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine's Forum, which took place in Seattle in June.

One case summary was of a police dog named Yasko, a 10-year-old German Shepherd Dog. Four years ago, his owner, Officer Tim Reeves of the Everett, Wash., Police Department, noticed that Yasko had an abnormal gait in his hind legs and brought him to the Animal Neurosurgery & Neurology Clinic in Tacoma, Wash.

Michael Harrington, DVM, Dipl. ACVIM, found mild neurologic deficits in Yasko's hind legs. An MRI revealed a disk protrusion in the caudal spine. Decompression surgery was performed, improving his condition substantially, Dr. Harrington said.

Yasko, who has been a police dog since 1998, returned to active duty shortly after. Reeves said that one of Yasko's best attributes is his tracking ability.

"We will respond to the scene of a crime where the suspect has fled on foot," Reeves said. "Yasko will then track the suspect from the last place the suspect was seen. He has caught 142 suspects thus far and is well respected throughout the area."

Reeves also provides demonstrations of Yasko's abilities to schools, community groups and charity events.

"I owe [Harrington] a lot," said Reeves, who has two young daughters. "Yasko is not only good at catching bad guys, he's also good at tea parties."

Other case summaries included stories about a 1-year-old Maltese that had congenital heart disease, a 9-year-old Beagle who had been diagnosed with lymphoma, an 11-year-old Rottweiler-Shepherd mix that had been diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease and most recently underwent a partial mandibulectomy due to a tumor on his left mandible.