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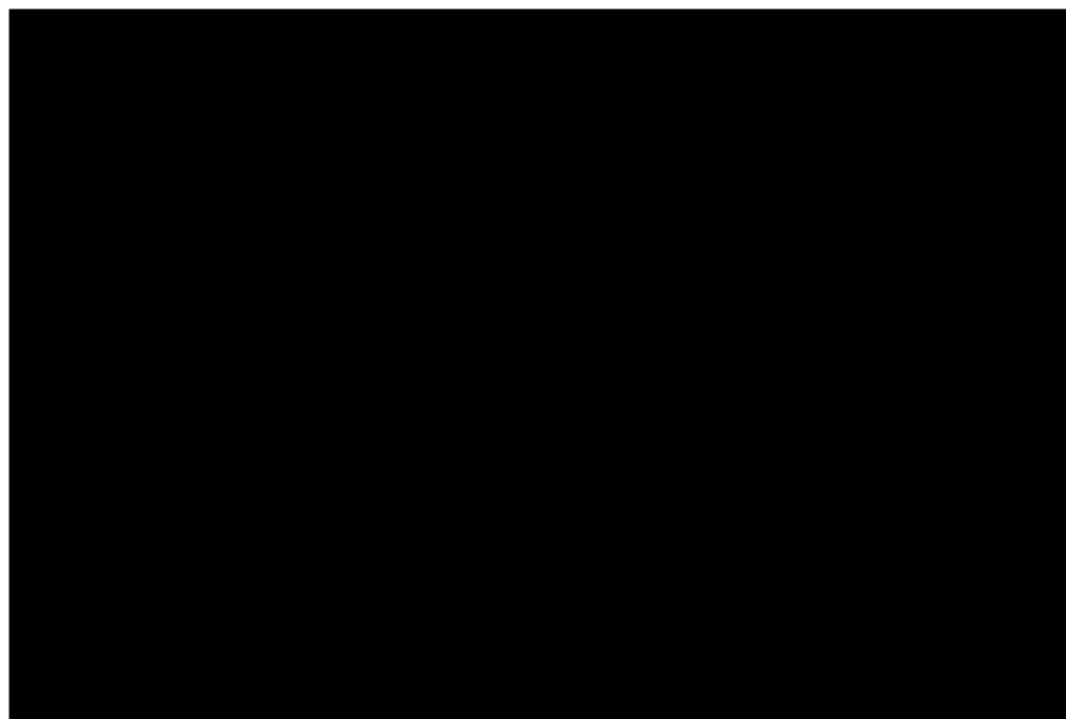
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JAMAICA PLAIN

At Angell, muscle transplant billed as first of its kind allows dog to walk again

Posted by Matt Rocheleau December 6, 2012 11:37 AM

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As part of her physical therapy rehabilitation, Bella has been walking on a specially designed treadmill at the bottom of a large water tank to strengthen her leg and improve range of motion. Above is video of one of her treadmill sessions at the [The Canine Joint](#).

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Veterinarians at the Angell Animal Medical Center in Jamaica Plain say they have successfully conducted a first-of-its-kind muscle transplant surgery allowing a 6-year-old dog to walk again six months after one of her leg's was disabled.

Bella, a Border Collie, fell off a platform bed at her family's home in Pawtucket in May, causing severe injuries to muscles and connective tissue in her right front leg, veterinarians at the Angell said.

Immediately afterward, the dog was unable to put weight on the leg and the triceps muscle contracted so tightly that it caused the entire leg to draw up and behind her where it remained frozen in place for months, officials at the center said.

Her owner, Anthony Martinetti, visited three veterinarians, the center said. None of them agreed on what was wrong with Bella or about how to treat the injury.

Martinetti's fourth try was a charm.

At the Angell Center, veterinarian Mike Pavletic performed the groundbreaking surgical technique, which he invented, to transfer muscle tissue from one part of her body to another, "training" the transplanted muscle to do the work the previous muscle had done before the injury, officials said.

In Bella's case, her back muscles now do the work that the muscle on the front of her leg had done prior to her fall, even though the back muscles were never designed for that kind of movement.

Three months after her surgery, the dog continues to undergo physical therapy, but she has regained use of the leg and can do most of the activities she did before the injury, veterinarians said.

"I'm overjoyed that Bella continues to recuperate and our family is grateful to the many talented individuals who have overseen her recovery," Martinetti said

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the many talented individuals who have overseen her recovery," Marchetti said in a statement from the center.

The animal surgeon said the dog's "road to recovery is a long one but we're confident she'll get back to her old self in time."

The center said Palvetic is globally recognized for his reconstructive surgery work on animals.

He has handled a range of peculiar cases in his career, including removing a tumor from a pet mouse, reconstructing a gorilla's finger and re-attaching a cat's face after it was torn off by an automobile fan belt, officials said.

To learn more about Angell Animal Medical Center's surgery services, [click here](#).

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(Angell Animal Medical Center)

Bella before her surgery.



(Angell Animal Medical Center)

Bella after her surgery.

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