

Breaking the stereotype

Gift underscores reality that all animals are created equal

Wally was getting arthritic before his time. Despite being just a year old, the 600-pound Yorkshire pig limped painfully through his days. With an average life-expectancy of eight years, Wally seemed destined to hobble through much of life. And then he was adopted. Fortunately, new owners George Goldner and Nancy Krieg chose not to ignore Wally's obvious discomfort.

"As a species, pigs are sometimes treated poorly," said Goldner, who currently ensures the care of six pigs, 15 chickens, four cats, a goat, and six rabbits—all rescue animals—on 187 acres just outside of New Kingston, N.Y. "Sometimes, it seems they're written off as undeserving of care. For us, pigs behave similarly to dogs: they're responsive and friendly. When treated well, they respond accordingly."

Goldner brought Wally to Cornell where Dr. Lisa Fortier, Associate Professor of Large Animal Surgery, and her team considered a variety of options. Although they initially thought that standard arthroscopic surgery and cartilage repair would alleviate the pain, a preliminary examination extinguished those hopes—the damage was too widespread. After a regimen of drugs also proved unsuccessful, Dr. Fortier contacted Dr. Scott Rodeo at the Hospital for Special Surgery/Cornell Weill Medical School in New York City where a custom-fit knee replacement was going to be made for Wally. Then, Wally developed a very large abscess on the same leg, putting all plans on hold.

Admitted to Cornell's Hospital for Animals, Wally quickly became one of the favorite patients.

"Wally has a special personality," said Veterinary Technician Margie Vail, who took an instant liking to Wally's people-oriented, friendly demeanor. "Wally seemed to recognize us as individuals. He loved his belly rubbed and was especially partial to strawberries and melons that we picked up for him at the local farmer's market."

Today, with the infection cleared, Wally appears to be strong and is walking much more easily, with only a slight limp.

"Seeing him walking around looking well makes us happy," said Goldner, who has established a charitable annuity at Cornell to ensure that other animals have access to the same level of care. "Everyone at the Cornell veterinary and medical schools was truly a professional. Everyone who dealt with Wally did an excellent job. They were smart, thoughtful, and went to the limit to help Wally. These are the kind of people we want to help to continue their excellent work."

With the charitable annuity, an agreement between Goldner and Cornell ensures that a family member will have lifetime income, significant tax savings, and the satisfaction of providing Cornell University with vital, long-term resources.

"As much as any experience at a hospital can be pleasant, this was it," said Goldner, who has indicated that the College may direct the proceeds from the charitable annuity toward the College's greatest needs. "When you've seen an animal suffering and then see the suffering relieved, it's an exhilarating experience. We made our gift in Wally's honor, but we hope that it serves animals for many years to come."

