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## NEWS & EVENTS

### MU Veterinarians Put Springfield Dog on the Road to Recovery After Overpass Fall

Chance Lawrence, a 6-year-old black Labrador-mix has a choice of dog houses. There is the dog house in the yard at his Springfield, Mo., home, and there is an insulated dog house within the garage. Chance opted for the warmer indoor option on a cold Sunday night in early February. The following morning, Debbie Lawrence went out to the garage to let Chance out and to feed him. He returned to the garage as Lawrence readied to leave for her job with the Springfield Fire Department. She believed he was still tucked into his dog house as she left for work. A short time later her husband, Hosea, a retired firefighter, left the house for a medical appointment. When he returned, he went to check on Chance, but the dog was nowhere to be found.

Hosea Lawrence got back into his truck and began searching his south Springfield neighborhood for his dog. He called his wife, who left work and joined him looking for Chance. They enlisted the help of neighbors, friends and the mail carrier, but there was no sign of the missing dog.

The Lawrences suspect that when Debbie Lawrence backed her vehicle out of the garage earlier that morning, Chance took the opportunity to sneak out. He didn't have to travel far before he found himself on a busy freeway. A motorist reported seeing a car slam on its brakes to avoid hitting Chance. The frightened dog then ran in front of another car. In what was an apparent attempt to escape the traffic, he jumped over a concrete wall that runs alongside the freeway. Unfortunately, he was on a bridge and the only thing on the other side of that concrete barrier was a two-story fall to the road below.

The driver of a passing school bus



Chance came to the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital after he fell from an overpass near his Springfield, Mo., home. He required two surgeries to stabilize the badly damaged ligaments in his front legs.



Dr. James Tomlinson reviews Chance's radiographs with his family Debbie and Hosea Lawrence.

spotted the falling dog and braked sharply. A couple in the car behind swerved to avoid a collision with the bus and saw Chance hit the pavement. They picked up the injured and bleeding animal and transported him to the Springfield Veterinary Center.

The Lawrences, unaware of what had happened, continued to scour their neighborhood for their missing dog. While they searched, Debbie Lawrence spoke with a woman she didn't know who was walking in the area and asked her to please call Hosea's cell phone if she happened to encounter Chance. As it turned out that encounter was a fortunate one. Shortly after 5 p.m., the stranger called Hosea and told him that she had seen a report on a local television news station about a dog falling from an overpass that matched the description of Chance. The Lawrences called the television station to find out where the dog had been taken.

"We went to the wrong veterinary office at first," Debbie Lawrence recalled. "The correct vet closed at 5:30 and we got there shortly after that, so we banged on the door and thankfully, they heard us and let us in."

Dr. Cynthia Wiseman had taken care of Chance at the Springfield Veterinary Center and found that he had sustained lacerations and knocked one of his canine teeth loose. It was also determined that he was struggling to walk despite having no broken bones.

Dr. Wiseman contacted Dr. Marie Kerl, associate teaching professor at the University of Missouri Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. As a snowstorm shut down the university and much of mid-Missouri for two days, Wiseman and Kerl, a small animal emergency and critical care veterinarian, consulted via email and telephone, reviewing radiographs and videos of the injured dog. Kerl consulted with the orthopedic and radiology faculty in the VMTH to analyze Chance's videos and radiographs and determine the best course of treatment.

On Feb. 6, three days after his fall, Chance's family picked him up from the Springfield Veterinary Center and brought him to the VMTH. Dr. James Tomlinson, a professor of veterinary orthopedic surgery, determined that Chance had injured the complex set of ligaments in both carpal joints of his front legs rendering them unstable and unable to support his weight. Tomlinson said the injury probably occurred when Chance landed from his fall from the bridge.

Repairing Chance's injured legs required surgery over two days. During the first two-and-a-half hour operation, Tomlinson, assisted by surgery resident Dr. Ryan McCally, placed a bone plate in Chance's right forelimb to fuse the damaged joint. They performed the same procedure on the dog's left leg a few days later. Tomlinson said scheduling the surgeries over two days was preferred to avoid having Chance under anesthesia for nearly six hours.

After each surgery Chance's legs were each placed in a cast, which provided additional support while the bones heal. Although they are awkward, he quickly adapted to walking with the casts.

After hearing Chance's story, a representative from SECUROS, the company that manufactures the arthrodesis bone plates, provided the implants for Chance at no charge.



**Debbie and Hosea Lawrence are reunited with their dog after he spent a week at the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital.**



**With his legs stabilized and placed in casts, Chance is ready to go home.**

The Lawrences had to return to Springfield after Chance's first surgery. Hosea Lawrence said they were grateful for the ongoing contact that they received from MU CVM student Bryan Davidson, who was assigned to Chance's case. "He has stayed with us on the phone the whole time. He would call with updates two to three times a day."

By Valentine's Day, Chance was able to bear weight on both of his front legs and was ready to return home with his family. He will need to remain in the casts for about six weeks while the carpal joints fuse. It is hoped that additional X-rays at that time will confirm healing adequate enough to allow the casts to be removed, and for him to begin using his legs unassisted once more. His veterinarians expect that Chance will be able to walk, run and play once the healing is complete in several months' time.

To help support families with veterinary costs for critical and long-term care, please consider a gift to the College's [Small Animal Surgery Fund](#) or Silent Partners Fund. These funds provide financial assistance to pet owners according to set criteria, such as financial need. For more information on giving opportunities, please contact the Advancement office at: 888-850-2357.

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Last Update: February 18, 2014