

Help for Hounds

While many promising stem cell therapies are still awaiting approval for use in humans, vets are already using the technology to treat arthritis and tendon ailments in dogs and horses.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

By Jamie Reno

Three-year-old Nakota, a Siberian Husky, is one of more than 200 dogs who've received high-tech stem cell therapy to relieve pain due to ligament, joint or tendon problems.

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Sept. 13, 2007 - Mike Zaremba, an operations manager for a software company in Denver, was desperate and searching. His dog Nakota, a three-year-old Siberian Husky, was in severe and chronic pain and could barely walk after an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) surgery in February failed to achieve the desired result. The dog would hide in different parts of the house, he always had his head down, and he couldn't walk without limping severely. "The surgery went as well as it could have, so another surgery wasn't an option," says Zaremba. "But Nakota just wasn't healing. He was really suffering. I wanted so badly to help him, but I had run out of options."



When Zaremba's veterinarian told him about a new procedure in which Nakota's own fat-derived stem cells could be used to expedite the ligament's healing, Zaremba was skeptical but willing to try it. Within a few weeks after the minimally invasive procedure, Nakota was back to running long distances and jumping into the car with no visible sign of pain. "He's just like his old self again," Zaremba says. "It's unbelievable."

While humans are still waiting for stem cell treatments to become available, animals like Nakota already have a paw up. Poway, Calif.-based Vet-Stem, which touts itself as a world leader in

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