



# **media release**

Tuesday, 13 December 2011

## **PADDLING PAWS CELEBRATE OPENING OF NEW HYDROTHERAPY CENTRE**

**Animal Health Trust opens Hydrotherapy Centre for dogs and cats**

Two doggy paddlers have officially opened a brand new Suffolk-based state-of-the-art hydrotherapy unit for small animals.

The Hydrotherapy Centre at the Animal Health Trust, in Kentford, houses a 14 feet by eight feet by four feet hydrotherapy swimming pool and an electronically-programmed water treadmill. Both aid in the treatment of a wide range of painful conditions, as well as helping to ease pain and stiffness.

AHT patients, Sponge the Collie-cross and Mitch the Labrador officially opened the new centre on Tuesday 13 December, ably assisted by Mrs Barbara Cozens, a long term supporter of the AHT's hydrotherapy service.

Jo Handley-Howard, Head of Hydrotherapy at the AHT, said: "This is a very exciting day for us. We've offered hydrotherapy to dogs and cats at the AHT since 2005 but this is the first time we've had a purpose built facility housing both the pool and the water treadmill and all the other support items we need.

"We're grateful to all those who have helped make this possible and are looking forward to helping many more dogs and cats using the facility."

Hydrotherapy is an ideal way to provide relief from pain and stiffness. It also builds muscle strength and joint mobility, providing patients with a better range of movement and a greater level of fitness.

It is one of nine referral disciplines the AHT's Small Animal Centre offers and is often used as a way to help patients who have had spinal or neurological problems, such as a stroke, get back on their feet.

Within the new Centre there are internal and external ramps in and out of the pool, along with an overhead hoist to help larger recumbent patients in and out of the pool or water treadmill.

Jo Handley-Howard, added: "We are in discussions with a nationwide hydrotherapy trainer about using the new Hydrotherapy Centre as a UK 'Centre of Excellence' training centre for animal hydrotherapists.

"This would mean that we would not only be helping the hundreds of patients we see through the AHT on an annual basis, but dogs and cats in need of hydrotherapy across the UK."

For more information on the work of the AHT, visit its website at [www.aht.org.uk](http://www.aht.org.uk)

**Ends**

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Photographs:**

The following photographs (attached at lo-res) are available from the AHT press office:

- Mitch the Labrador and Mrs. Barbara Cozens, along with members of the AHT's Hydrotherapy team, officially cutting the ribbon to open the new Centre
- Mitch the Labrador and Jo Handley-Howard, Head of Hydrotherapy at the AHT, demonstrating the new hydrotherapy pool
- Sponge the Collie-cross and Gemma Dorling, Vet Nurse at the AHT, demonstrating the new water treadmill.