media *release*

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KENNEL CLUB CANCER CENTRE AT THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST MAKING PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Since opening its doors in early 2013, the Kennel Club Cancer Centre at the AHT has treated a fifth more patients than it anticipated. More than 250 radiation doses have been administered to 30 individual dogs, from more than 15 breeds with seven different types of cancer.

The AHT's clinical cancer team has also treated more than 150 new cancer patients and given more than 200 doses of chemotherapy. In addition, many patients seen have contributed valuable information to the charity's ongoing cancer research programme.

Breeds which have benefitted from the AHT's clinical cancer expertise and the state-of-the-art facilities available in the new Centre, include the Border Collie, Boxer, Bull Mastiff, Doberman, English Bull Terrier, English Cocker Spaniel, English Springer Spaniel, Golden Retriever, Greyhound, Jack Russell Terrier, Labrador, Pug, Scottish Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Weimaraner and Whippet.

Sue Murphy, Head of the AHT's Small Animal Centre and a Specialist in Veterinary Oncology, said: "It's been a busy six months for the team working within the Kennel Club Cancer Centre, but the Centre is making a big difference for the animals we are seeing through our doors.

"We are now able to offer each and every patient the specific treatment for its specific cancer. Being able to combine surgery with chemotherapy and / or radiotherapy on one-site is far better and less stressful.

"In addition by treating these animals here at the AHT, we are able to gather information which will contribute to our on-going cancer research. In time these patients may indirectly help us improve cancer treatments for other dogs across the world."

Vets working in the Kennel Club Cancer Centre at the AHT have to date treated dogs with radiotherapy for a variety of different cancers including; squamous-cell carcinoma, soft tissue sarcoma, mast cell tumour, brain tumours, histiocytic sarcoma, epitheliotropic lymphoma and melanoma.

Benson, a five year-old Golden Retriever, was one of the first patients to be treated. He was diagnosed with a soft tissue sarcoma when he was just three years old, when a lump was found on his front right leg.

The lump was surgically removed, but two years on the lump returned. After another operation to remove the lump Benson was referred to the AHT for radiotherapy to treat the disease left behind.

Benson needed 12 doses of radiotherapy; three a week for four weeks. Sue added: "Benson tolerated the treatment really well and only developed minimal side effects whilst receiving the treatment. He went home at weekends to be with his family and we are very pleased with his recovery.

"He now has a very good chance that his cancer has been definitively cured thanks to the radiotherapy. Having had treatment Benson now stands a much better chance of living a long, healthy life free from cancer. When we treated Benson he had a routine blood test taken to make sure he was safe to anaesthetise. His owner's consented for the spare blood from that test to be stored. We will be able to access Benson's DNA from this for research to help dogs in the future.

"Every cancer case we treat at the AHT contributes towards clinical and genetic research projects, helping us to better understand the disease and find ways to more accurately diagnose and treat it in the future."

The identification of inherited risk factors for cancer in dogs is one aim of the AHT's cancer research, and studies are currently being undertaken in several breeds that appear to have a risk of developing a certain type of cancer.

Currently scientists at the AHT are getting closer to identifying the inherited risk factor for a common type of skin cancer, mast cell tumours, in Golden Retrievers.

By comparing the DNA from dogs with and without the cancer, the precise genetic alteration(s) which carries the risk can be identified. It is hoped that a DNA test can then be developed to easily identify dogs which carry the gene and are at an increased risk of developing a mast cell tumour.

Dogs found to have an inherited risk can be closely monitored by owners and vets for signs of the disease, which will hopefully lead to earlier diagnosis and better treatment for that animal. The genetic information can also be taken into account in breeding programmes, to limit the number of dogs developing the cancer in the future.

Steve Dean, Chairman of the Kennel Club, said: "We're delighted to see such progress in the Kennel Club Cancer Centre. Whilst the treatment, and recovery, of individual dogs is important, it is the contribution the Centre is making to fighting cancer long-term through research which is so significant.

Research taking place now at the centre could revolutionise the treatment of cancers and even help prevent cancer in our dogs in the future, it is very exciting to be a part of this programme."

To find out more about the AHT's work to fight cancer in animals please visit www.aht.org.uk

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Please credit all images to the Animal Health Trust.

Additional notes:

- The **Animal Health Trust** is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit our website at **www.aht.org.uk**
- The Kennel Club is the largest organisation in the UK devoted to dog health, welfare and training. Its objective is to ensure that dogs live healthy, happy lives with responsible owners. Visit the website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk
- The Kennel Club Cancer Centre at the AHT has been made possible thanks to donations from Tom Scott, The Margaret Giffen Charitable Trust and The Jean Richardson Charitable Trust among many others, along with an loan from The Kennel Club.
- The loan is the latest in a series of link-ups between the Kennel Club and the AHT. The Kennel Club Charitable Trust is currently in the third year of a five year £1.2 million grant to the AHT to fund the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the AHT, which is investigating the genetic cause of several other inherited diseases in dogs and developing DNA tests to check for these. There will be considerable synergy with this work and research into cancer.