



## Pit bull's sight restored

By **J.J. Huggins**

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METHUEN — Baby is a laid-back, well-behaved 58-pound pit bull that was given up by a Wakefield family because their new landlord doesn't allow dogs.

The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at Nevins Farm at 400 Broadway took custody of the 5-year-old dog on March 12, and hopes to find a permanent home for him.

Mike Keiley, manager at the MSPCA's animal adoption center, said Baby made a great pet for his family, which had children, a 20-pound Lhasa apso and cats. He's housebroken and has no chewing issues. Keiley described him as a "nice, sweet, affectionate, mellow" dog.

But Baby had a problem: He was blind. Plus, pit bulls live under a stigma — they're widely perceived as vicious — so it's hard to find people to adopt them.

"Trying to place a blind pit bull was probably even more of a daunting task," Keiley said.

Baby had cataracts in both eyes. He would walk into things inside the shelter, Keiley said.

Dr. Ruth Marrion, a veterinary ophthalmologist at Essex County Veterinary Referral Hospital in North Andover, solved the problem in less than an hour — for free.

"He's been lovely to work with here," Marrion said after completing the surgery Tuesday afternoon. "He's just been a little scared because he didn't know what was going on."

Marrion, along with veterinary technicians Tracy Mason and Catherine Ouellette, put the dog under, cut out the cataracts and placed fake lenses in his eyes. The same surgery would be done on a human, Marrion said.

Normally, such a procedure would cost around \$4,000, Marrion said. Marrion volunteers for the MSPCA, treating its animals at no charge.

"We have a very special relationship with the MSPCA," she said.

When Marrion first saw Baby three weeks ago, she knew she could easily fix him. The doctor completes three to four of the surgeries per month. The animals can see as soon as the drugs wear off, which can be amusing to see, Marrion said.

"They wake up and you watch them just look, just look," Marrion said, moving her head to simulate a dog looking around the room.

Marrion estimated that Baby has been blind for a couple of years. Two factors typically cause cataracts: diabetes and genetics. Baby doesn't have diabetes, so bad genes are the perpetrators, Marrion said.

Keiley said workers at the MSPCA didn't realize at first that Baby's eyesight could be fixed. Baby has no other health problems of which Marrion or Keiley are aware. One of the technicians that helped during the surgery is fostering him, and is interested in adopting him, Keiley said.

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## Cataracts surgery saves dog's sight

Dr. Ruth Marrian, a veterinary ophthalmologist at Essex County Veterinary Referral Hospital in North Andover, solved Baby the pit bull's eye problem in less than an hour.



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