

Advanced Nursing Care Provides a Chance at Survival

Brandie Johnson's around-the-clock care for lab mix Banjo exemplifies the importance of the veterinary nurse role.

When Banjo arrived at the emergency and specialty hospital, he was already in critical condition. His primary veterinarian had referred him after identifying severe pelvic limb edema and progressive respiratory distress. CT findings had also revealed innumerable pulmonary nodules.

On presentation, Banjo exhibited worsening hypoxia, coagulopathy, bruising, and declining perfusion—a combination that signaled a rapidly deteriorating and medically complex case.

With the situation dire, the veterinary team jumped into action.

The ICU team immediately began intensive care, but it was veterinary nurse Brandie Johnson who became Banjo's constant advocate at the bedside. Over the next several days, she provided advanced nursing support including central and peripheral line placement, oxygen therapy, continuous monitoring for hemorrhage and perfusion changes, and communication of critical trends to the attending veterinarian.

Johnson also served as the primary liaison for Banjo's family, talking them through each development and ensuring their wishes and his comfort remained at the center of every decision.

Despite around-the-clock care, Banjo's condition remained unstable.

With Banjo in need of a blood transfusion and the clinic not yet having its own established blood



PROVIDER

Brandie Johnson, RVT, LVT
Dogs and Cats Emergency and
Specialty, Bowie, Maryland

PATIENT

Banjo, 8-year-old
male neutered lab mix

donor program, Johnson took matters into her own hands. She took it upon herself to bring in her own dog, a 2-year-old male neutered pitbull mix named Zeke, to serve as a whole blood donor for Banjo. This high level of care provided Banjo with the strength he needed to make it to a nearby academic veterinary hospital for more advanced diagnostics.

The clients later provided Johnson with unfortunate news: Banjo did not survive. He was ultimately euthanized; an autopsy revealed histiocytic sarcoma.

While not the outcome Johnson was hoping for, the care she was able to provide for Banjo while at her clinic reminded her of the importance of her role as a veterinary nurse.

"Advanced nursing reminds me why our role matters," she said. "Even in loss, we elevate patient care, support our teams, and change outcomes—whether that means saving a life or ending suffering with compassion."

Over the course of Banjo's care, Johnson cultivated a strong and positive relationship with the dog's owners. So much so that the owners—as avid potters—made Johnson a coffee cup and dog food bowl, the latter of which remains in her office today as a memento.

Despite the ultimate outcome, Banjo's story, Johnson insists, is not one of defeat. It is a testament to vigilance, teamwork, and the irreplaceable role of veterinary nurses. His 5 days in intensive care exemplified what advanced nursing looks like using every tool, every skill, and every moment to fight for a patient's comfort, dignity, and chance at survival. **TVN**



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Scan the QR code to hear Brandie recount her story of caring for Banjo.



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