

The Success of Neville Bardos: A Testament to Teamwork

In the aftermath of a tragic barn fire, Neville heals and goes on to compete with the best

BY SALLY SILVERMAN

When Neville Bardos was admitted to the George D. Widener Hospital for Large Animals on Penn Vet's New Bolton Center Campus in the early morning hours of May 31, 2011, the prognosis was poor. The 12-year-old, 16.1-hand chestnut gelding had been caught in a horrific barn fire. The last horse to make it out, he was rescued just before the building's roof collapsed. Neville was one of five surviving horses, and the most severely injured of the four admitted to Widener Hospital.

While Neville presented a bright and alert horse, his physical examination revealed an elevated heart rate, thick black nasal discharge due to smoke inhalation, and blood work changes consistent with dehydration.

When Neville and his three stablemates arrived, Samantha Hart, DVM and Megan Burke, DVM jumped into action.

"The initial work-up went as smoothly as it possibly could," said Dr. Hart. "I had nurses, nursing assistants and veterinary students with every case. Dr. Burke and I went around and triaged the cases."

The emergency team's initial goal was to stabilize Neville by placing the horse on intravenous fluids to address his dehydration, administering supplemental oxygen for the smoke inhalation and delivering broad-spectrum antibiotics to help avoid infection.

"I arrived at the barn at 4:00 AM," said Boyd Martin, Neville's trainer, rider and one of his owners. "Dr. Hart told me that Neville's blood results were terrible, but he was eating hay and wind-sucking on the stall, and that those signs were more important than the lab results. She told me that he looks like a horse that wants to fight on."

Neville had evidence of mild burns over his face, and generalized edema across his topline due to exposure to high temperatures. The fire had also inhibited Neville's normal lung function. His initial blood work indicated that his lungs were not able to absorb adequate amounts of oxygen without supplementation, and he remained on oxygen for several days. Endoscopic examination of Neville's upper airway showed significant thermal injury, with widespread sloughing of dead tissue resulting from that injury.

During his stay, numerous veterinarians teamed together to care for Neville, with constant support from the nursing team of certified veterinary technicians, and trained, experienced nursing assistants. He received treatment to help improve clearance of ash and other particles from his lungs, to support kidney and gastrointestinal tract function and to provide relief from the extremely painful burns.

On day one and throughout his eight-day hospitalization, Neville remained bright and attentive, with an excellent appetite.

"He is an extraordinary horse with an amazing attitude and a wonderful patient with whom to work," said Dr. Hart, board-certified in both veterinary surgery and emergency critical care, and a lecturer in large animal emergency and critical care at New Bolton Center. The intensive 24-hour monitoring and management provided by New Bolton Center's dedicated team of veterinarians, nurses and students gave Neville the best chance of recovering from his injuries.

"The service provided was flawless," said Boyd. "The doctors were diligent about updating all of those involved on the status of the horses, and they went far beyond the course of duty to research treatments for smoke inhalation."

Neville did his part, too. Boyd said of his attitude in the hospital and throughout his recovery, "This is a horse with plenty of passion left in him. He is an enthusiastic, spirited guy who really loves life."

Neville was discharged from New Bolton Center on June 7.


Just eight weeks after the fire, Neville Bardos showed just how big a heart he has. He and Martin travelled to England to compete in one of the most grueling three-day competitions in the world, the four-star international Burghley Horse Trials. In fourth place after a clean cross-country round, Neville Bardos finished the competition seventh. He is currently ranked as the number-one event horse in the US, and Boyd thinks a trip to the London Olympic Games could be in both of their futures. 



PHOTO BY LISA THOMAS BOYDANDSILVAMARTIN.COM