

\$4,500 Buys Baby Burro a "Wooden" Leg

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Ft. Collins, Colorado: Primrose a three legged Daby burro who lives near Golden, was fitted on Monday with what veterinarians believe is the world's first artificial donkey leg. (Ed Alote: All BRAYER readers Know they are wrong about that, having just read about Choya's artificial leg).

She's been hobbling around on a crude crutch ever since surgeons removed her left rear leg in May. It was mauled by a pack of dogs when she was 3 weeks old and it later became infected.

Her owner, professional storyteller and burro racer, Bill Lee, told veterinarians to do whatever was necessary to save her life-not expecting the medical bills to top \$4,500 for an animal worth \$300.

"Had I known the bills would get this far out of hand, I probably would have said 'put her down'," Lee said Monday, as he waited with the 4 month old burro in the parking lot of the Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital. "But things just snowballed. And When you have an animal you have to take responsibility of it.



Dr. Troy Trumble pets Primrose as the 4 month old burro checks out her new prosthesis at Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital on Monday. Photo by Jessica Tefft, Rocky Mountain News.

Primrose's prosthesis was made by Theresa and Carl Conrath who run Veterinary Brace and Limb Technologies in Ft. Collins. It specializes in making braces and artificial limbs for small animals, mostly dogs. Theresa Conrath says she once fitted a horse with a brace, but this represents her first effort at donkey prostheses. Still, a small number of horses have been fitted with artificial legs, and veterinarians at CSU felt Primrose was a good candidate for one.

"She's young enough, and it happened so early in her life, she doesn't know what she's missing," said Dr. Gayle Trotter, Professor of clinical sciences at CSU and Primrose's surgeon.

Last week, Theresa Conrath took final measurements to make sure the leg would fit Primrose properly. While the burro has not reached adult size, her legs won't grow more than 2 inches, Lee says. So on Monday with onlookers gathered around, Conrath fitted the donkey's stump into a padded light-weight artificial leg and held her breath. It stuck out, but Primrose didn't try to kick it off, and was soon walking around the parking lot. With physical therapy to rebuild the strength in her atrophied leg muscle, "Primrose should do just fine", Theresa Conrath said. *Once Primrose* has recuperated, Lee has big plans for the little burro. "I'm interested in making her a spokes-animal for children with amputations," he said. "Maybe she can visit Children's Hospital".