

Spaniel pups born with severe cataracts cured of blindness following pioneering operation

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When tiny spaniel pups Mickie and Minnie were born blind their fate seemed to be sealed. The breeder couldn't sell them because of their blindness, but luckily they were rescued by an animal rescue charity in South Wales.

And now a Bristol vet has stepped in and given them both the gift of sight - and a new life - by performing delicate cornea operations on both the pups. After the three-hour, tricky operations - where vet Tim Knott had to use special instruments because their eyes were so tiny - both Mickie and Minnie have been given a new lease of life.

Before they wouldn't leave each other's sides because they lived in a world of darkness - now they leap over agility courses at the home of their new owner Carol Reeves.

Mrs Reeves, 57, who lives with husband Ian, 66, a consultant for an internal construction company, said: 'It really is wonderful to see how well the puppies are doing now that they can see. 'When they were first rescued they were blind in both eyes because they had been born with cataracts.

'King Charles cavaliers are very pretty dogs and there can be problems with interbreeding. Their mother was unwell and as a result the pups were both born blind

'When they first came to me from the rescue charity they wouldn't leave each others sides because they couldn't see. But now they have been given their sight they are absolutely full of life. They love nothing more than racing each other around the garden.'

The puppies were rescued by the Many Tears Animal Rescue charity in October when they were 11 weeks old, and Mrs Reeves took them in for fostering. She is one of 400 fosterers used by the charity and has been fostering dogs for four years.



Sight for sore eyes: Micky and Minnie had their sight restored after tricky three-hour long operations



Dog Fosterer: Carol Reeves with Micky and Minnie after their successful operation

Mrs Reeves, who has a daughter Natasha, 27, and a son Ben, 26, said: 'They were so helpless when they arrived.

'The breeder couldn't sell them because they were blind and if they can't sell them, then I don't know what would have happened to them.

'They would cuddle up to one another. They could see a little distinction between light and dark but they were both blind in both eyes.'

Mrs Reeves then took them to see veterinary surgeon Tim Knott, from Rowe Referrals in Bristol. Mr Knott carries out voluntary work on dogs in Africa, and said he could help the puppies.

He and colleague Elena Fenollosa-Romero carried out the delicate operations in March, and the procedures were a success.

She said: 'It was an unusual and complicated procedure because the puppies eyes were so small. We had to use special tiny instruments to carry out the operations. We had to take out the cataracts and replace them with special lenses.'

For the following months the puppies had to have 32 eye drops each day to ensure the operations remained a success.

Mrs Reeves, who runs the Betty and Bernard Davidson Charitable Trust, said: 'It was a lot of hard work, but we wanted to do anything we could to ensure the sight that they had both been given remained.



On the mend: Micky and Minnie recovering after their eye operation

It really is a miracle. Before they were blind, but now they can see even the most smallest treat. They are like completely different dogs now.'

Mrs Reeves, who has another five dogs of her own, is now set to keep the puppies, and just weeks after their operations they had already mastered small dog agility courses.



Puppy love: Micky and Minnie have been given a new lease of life after the operation



Aiming high: Micky makes the most of his newly acquired sight jumping an agility course.

She said: 'I have some dog agility fences in my garden and both the puppies love jumping over them. When I look at them now its hard to believe that they were born blind. 'They are now living with us full time and have joined our pack of five dogs. They are just part of the family now. I started off by fostering them but I completely fell in love with them. 'After nursing them to that extent I couldn't give them up, so I've taken them on now to live with us. They are very special little dogs. 'They have such a strong between them too. After all they have been through they still stick close to each other. Minnie is the more dominant one and Mickie follows her like a little shadow. 'The operations have just been wonderful. When I talk to them now they can actually look at me, it really is amazing.'