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Nala peeking over a shoulder as she heads to work



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Hello Friend,

Greetings from HeroRAT headquarters! I hope all is well in your part of the world. A lot has happened in my life as a HeroRAT, so I hope you're prepared for a big update.

Well the last time you heard from me, I was being trained in the "three hole" cage. One positive sample of TB and two neutral, or negative, pots were placed underneath the holes of the cage as a part of my training. In order to pass on to the next stage, I had to find the right one every time. It took a lot of hard work, but I got my sniffer in shape. I had to be sure to hold my nose in the hole long enough to let Fidelis my trainer know that I found the right one. I was so full of determination and made up my mind not to stop sniffing around until I passed every test!

I am now officially a TB-Detection HeroRAT! It turns out that I have done so well that I have graduated to the second line screening stage faster than anticipated. Fidelis always says I am a star among my peers and that motivates me to do even better. Now I am actually working and helping save lives of my Tanzanian people by detecting TB in sputum samples so that those with the disease can be identified and treated quickly. Boy was I excited about the chance to show everyone what I was made of!

Every morning I am placed in a long glass cage with ten holes beneath my paws. That's seven more holes than my last stage of training. Then Fidelis fits a row of samples to the bottom of the cage so that I can sniff for that pesky TB. Now I have to admit, I was a little shy at first because this was a big change. There were more trainers in the room to watch me, and I wanted to make everyone proud while earning my treats. Fidelis stayed right by my side, and he reassured me there was nothing to worry about. He was very patient with me and was a helpful guide when I needed him.

Last month my work got even more challenging but of course I was up for it. Traditionally, a liquid buffer is added to the TB sample when it first comes into our lab. The lab technicians add this buffer so my fellow HeroRATS and I have a large sample to sniff. The TB team had such confidence in our abilities to detect TB just about anywhere, that they asked us to sniff the samples without buffer. And guess what? They were right! I am able to detect the TB without any liquid added. This means less handling of the samples by the lab technicians. They do not have to risk exposure to TB before it is deactivated anymore. This means processing is now faster too; TB positive people can get their results and treatment more quickly. This was all so exciting for me!

I keep you in mind when I am working my hardest. I know I have your support and that is very important to me. Even when I am faced with challenges, I know you are at home rooting for me. Thank you for your support of the important work I do!

Love and whiskers,

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P.S. We rats can tweet as well as we squeak! See and share the latest heroic happenings: become a fan on [Facebook](#) or follow our tweets [@HeroRATs](#).

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