



Dear friends at Braintree Scientific,

Hello there! How are things in your neck of the woods? It is getting hotter and hotter here. Flowers are blooming and odd-looking seeds are springing up everywhere. Summer is certainly on its way.

When I last checked-in with you, I was beginning the last and most difficult stage of my training to become a full-fledged HeroRAT: the advanced stage. At this stage, I must cover a 5x20 meter box everyday! In these boxes, there are zero to four landmines so I never know how many or where they will be. The grass is also longer and closer to how the terrain will be in a real landmine fields.



Racing the car to find the landmines!

Miraji, my trainer, said that I would need to concentrate extra hard in order to pass this stage. I didn't want to let him (or you!) down, so I put my nose to work and followed my instincts. In no time, I was hunting down those sneaky landmines and proudly indicating where they were. We may have little legs, but we can accomplish anything once we put our minds (and noses) to task!



Miraji and I concentrating extra hard during my first blind test.

Miraji was so proud of me that he said I was ready to take my first blind test. I was really nervous, but he assured me I was ready. He reminded me to keep my nose to the ground and scratch hard whenever I found anything. The test was really hard because no one knows where the mines are lurking. Even my trainers and the observer had no idea where they were! During my test, the observer wrote down on a grid every place I indicated. When the test was over, they compared my indications against the database at the office. To pass, I couldn't miss a single landmine!

While they were checking the results, I waited patiently for Miraji to tell me the news. And guess what...I didn't miss any landmines! Can you believe how far I've come since the early stages of socialization? Miraji and I were thrilled! He even gave me some extra peanuts and a good long pet!



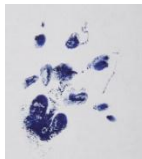
Our landmine training field. Can you see the landmines buried under the soil?

Now I am on holiday for a few months to rest up from all the training I've had. APOPO wants to be sure that us HeroRATs have not just memorized the placement of the mines, (which would be a challenge since our training field has 24 hectares of land with 1,500 landmines) so they rest us long enough to make sure it's really our skills and not just our memory. After six months of rest and relaxation, I'll have to take my second-blind test to make sure my skills are still there. But for now, I love being on holiday! They give

me lots of food, take me to play outside, and I have time to sit back and enjoy the summer. There is nothing like a cool banana in the shade on a hot day! It's good for the tummy and good for the soul!

I'll keep you updated on how my holiday goes and of course, my second blind test. None of this, not even the bananas, would be possible without your support! Miraji and I both want to thank you for believing in us and for helping us make the world a safer place!

Love and sniffs,



Sniffles the HeroRAT

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