

Bomb-detecting rat wins medal for bravery

28th September, 2020



Photograph: PDSA/PA

A rat has been given a distinguished award for bravery for his services to humanity. The valiant rodent is called Magawa. He was awarded a gold medal for his seven years of duty sniffing out dozens of landmines in Cambodia. He was bestowed the award by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals charity. This is a veterinary charity based in the United Kingdom. The charity explained why Magawa was recognised for his courage. It wrote: "The PDSA...seeks to raise the status of animals in society and honour the incredible contribution they make to our lives. Magawa's dedication, skill and bravery are an extraordinary example of this and deserve the highest possible recognition."

Magawa is an African Giant Pouched Rat. He was used in the mine-clearing programme because rats are the creatures best suited to safely detect landmines. They are light and have a keen sense of smell. In his seven-year stint on the front line, Magawa helped to detect 39 landmines and 28 unexploded devices. He helped to clear more than 141,000 square meters of land - an area roughly the size of 20 soccer pitches. This makes him the most successful rodent in the history of landmine detection. The charity's chairman said: "This is the very first time in our 77-year history of honouring animals that we have presented a medal to a rat." Reporters tried to interview Magawa but he was unavailable for comment.

Sources: msn.com / usatoday.com / thesun.co.uk

Writing

We should give more medals to animals. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

rat / award / rodent / duty / charity / courage / status / animals / recognition / skill / programme / creatures / landmines / size / soccer pitch / history / interview / medal

True / False

- a) A rat was awarded for its services to humanity. T / F
- b) The rat spent a total of seven months helping to clear landmines. T / F
- c) The award was given by an animal charity based in Thailand. T / F
- d) A charity said the rat deserved the highest possible recognition. T / F
- e) The rat was chosen because of its ability to smell. T / F
- f) The rat helped to find 28 landmines and 39 unexploded devices. T / F
- g) The awarding charity first started over seven decades ago. T / F
- h) Reporters actually interviewed the rat to get a comment. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 1. valiant | a. merit |
| 2. sniffing | b. offering |
| 3. status | c. praising |
| 4. contribution | d. smelling |
| 5. deserve | e. discover |
| 6. creatures | f. standing |
| 7. detect | g. shift |
| 8. stint | h. statement |
| 9. honoring | i. brave |
| 10. comment | j. animals |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What is your idea of bravery?
- b) Have you ever received a reward?
- c) What is the bravest thing you have ever done?
- d) What's the bravest thing you've ever heard of?
- e) What do you think of the rat getting an award?
- f) What do you know about landmines in Cambodia?
- g) How important is it that animals help us?
- h) What other animals do we need to recognise?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. services | a. contribution they make |
| 2. raise | b. size of 20 soccer pitches |
| 3. the incredible | c. possible recognition |
| 4. dedication, skill | d. for comment |
| 5. deserve the highest | e. sense of smell |
| 6. creatures best suited to | f. and bravery |
| 7. have a keen | g. in our 77-year history |
| 8. an area roughly the | h. the status of animals |
| 9. the very first time | i. safely detect landmines |
| 10. he was unavailable | j. to humanity |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Who is the bravest person you know?
- What do you think of rats?
- How dangerous are landmines?
- What other things could rats help us do?
- What three adjectives best describe this story?
- How important is it to be brave?
- What questions would you like to ask Magawa?

Spelling

- given a ensiquihistdd award for bravery
- The tnlavia rodent is called Magawa
- He was edseobwt the award
- recognised for his auerogc
- an natarrdoixeyr example
- desreve the highest possible recognition
- rats are the uaeectsr
- best suited to safely etetcd landmines
- 28 xepdudlneo devices
- the size of 20 soccer shpicet
- our 77-year history of hnrnoiog animals
- ealiaulyban for comment

Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. d	3. f	4. b	5. a
6. j	7. e	8. g	9. c	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Bravery

You think bravery is the most important characteristic. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their characteristics. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): empathy, intelligence or honesty.

Role B – Empathy

You think empathy is the most important characteristic. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their characteristics. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): bravery, intelligence or honesty.

Role C – Intelligence

You think intelligence is the most important characteristic. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their characteristics. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): empathy, bravery or honesty.

Role D – Honesty

You think honesty is the most important characteristic. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their characteristics. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): empathy, intelligence or bravery.

Speaking – Characteristics

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| • Honesty | • Bravery |
| • Cheerfulness | • Empathy |
| • Punctuality | • Intelligence |
| • Loyalty | • Determination |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.