

Lifesaving pup has a nose for trouble

by BEN JAMES

ben.james@theargus.co.uk

MEET Treacle the lifesaving puppy.

The Cavapoo, a King Charles spaniel-toy poodle cross, is being trained to use his nose to detect when his owner, who has type 1 diabetes, needs lifesaving glucose.

Treacle sniffs molecules on his owner's skin and will raise the alarm if he detects sugar levels are unsafe.

He will bark, lay still and paw at his owner if she does not respond.

Owner Dr Moira Harrison, a principal lecturer in diabetes at the University of Brighton's School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, says Treacle is a potential lifesaver.

Danger

She is also using her dog to help teach pharmacy and medical students about the disease.

Dr Harrison said: "My blood sugar levels sometimes go below what they should be without me knowing it, and there is a danger of me having a hypoglycaemic (hypo) attack which can lead to unconsciousness and even death.

"Treacle is being trained to detect molecules from my scent that will alert him that my sugar levels are up or down. He's amazing."

Treacle is with Dr Harrison 24 hours a day and will raise the alarm in the middle of the night if needs be.

And he is a star attraction among Dr Harrison's phar-

macy students – she believes he enhances her teaching.

Treacle is still learning his craft and his Facebook site reads: "I am training to be a

hypo detection dog. Right now I can detect my owner's hypo scent on cloth and breath samples and soon will be able to tell her when her blood glucose is going low. And we are

nearly there."

Dr Harrison, who has had type 1 diabetes for 28 years, uses a pump which continually delivers insulin to regulate her blood glucose levels,

but they are still prone to fluctuate greatly.

She tests her blood every few hours using a device that pricks a finger to produce a bead of blood for testing with a blood-glucose meter.

When Treacle is fully trained he will give her added security and peace of mind, and she will be able to reduce the number of blood tests.

It was a diabetes consultant who gave Dr Harrison the idea of getting a detection dog and it was Nina Bonderenko, nationally-known for training sniffer dogs, who helped choose a dog with an "excellent nose" and temperament.

From just a few weeks old, Treacle has been trained by Sussex-based Michelle Garvey, an expert in animal behaviour.

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