

Animals and Blood Transfusions

One of the many aspects of Veterinary Medicine is Blood Transfusion Medicine. Many people in the general public are unaware that animals can donate blood and receive blood transfusions, just as humans do. It all depends on the disease process that is occurring, and whether or not a blood transfusion is warranted, which is determined by the veterinarian or team of veterinarians.

Animals, as in humans, have different blood types. Cats have three different blood types, whereas dogs have several different types. Both cats and dogs have what is referred to as a universal blood type. The blood type is determined by a blood test, whether it be cat, dog, or any species.

As in humans, when an animal donates blood, the blood product can be separated into different components to help multiple animals of the same species, all depending on the disease process that the animal is fighting.

For a dog or cat to be a blood donor, they need to meet specific criteria, depending on the location of the blood bank, for their own safety and well-being. For instance, cats need to be between one year and ten years of age and more than ten pounds in weight. Dogs must be between one year and ten years of age and more than fifty pounds. All animals being considered as blood donors need to be current on their vaccines, on heartworm and flea prevention, and in good health with no major medical conditions.

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