

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the initial pre-screening appointment consist of?

We give prospective donors a complimentary exam and take a blood sample, which will determine the blood type and test for infectious diseases like heartworm, Lyme disease, feline immunodeficiency disease and feline leukemia. We also conduct a behavioral test at no cost. Vaccination records are reviewed at this time.

How are animals typed?

Ideally, the donor and recipient should both have their blood typing done. Dogs have 5 major (but up to 13 different) blood types. The preferred donor is DEA 1.1, 3, and 7 negative. In the dog world, they are considered “universal donors,” and are similar to type O universal human donors. Dog breeds that are commonly universal are American bulldogs, mastiffs, greyhounds and pit bulls. Cats have 3 blood types – A, B and AB, with A being the most common.

If my cat or dog is eligible to be a blood donor, how often do they need to give blood?

Due to high demand, blood donors are required to give blood at least every 2 months— that’s 6 times a year. However, it is safe for dogs to donate every 30 to 45 days, but we leave that up to the owner to decide if they want to give more. There are added perks for donors that give monthly.

Will my pet require a mild sedative?

It depends on the animal. If they are anxious and wiggly, then we will need to administer a mild sedative. We get a better idea if sedation would be recommended for a particular donor after the initial consult. All cats require sedation, which lasts only a few minutes.

Are there any side effects?

There is very minimal risk—in most dogs, you won’t see a difference at all. Rarely, a dog may feel a bit tired after the donation, that resolves within 12 hours.

Where do you take the blood from?

For both dogs and cats, blood is taken from a large vein in the neck. The area is clipped and cleaned before the donation is collected. The donor’s body immediately starts to replace the blood used for the donation, and blood is fully replaced within 21 days.

How long does the donation take?

The donation itself takes 10-15 minutes, but we recommend allotting about 45 minutes to an hour for the full appointment. Pet owners can wait, or drop animals off and pick up them up later.

How will the blood be used?

It’s critical that blood is readily available to replenish blood loss during surgeries. Injuries due to trauma, toxicities that cause uncontrollable bleeding, and diseases that cause anemia all require blood transfusions. An animal’s immune system can sometimes attack its own red blood cells, and transfusions are necessary to prevent sudden and potentially fatal anemia.

