



## McMASTER & HEAP VETERINARY PRACTICE

### BLOOD SAVES LIVES

Steve Heap, at McMaster & Heap, has recently performed 2 blood transfusions in 5 days on young dogs at the Practice, both cases in his own time. This procedure isn't common practice but when

you have a patient presented pale, collapsed and bleeding out essentially, you have to be geared up to immediately transfuse. You also need a capable skilled team around you as this isn't a one person job as you'll see below. A blood transfused patient needs to be intensively monitored by a nurse to make sure we don't get transfusion reactions (ie tremors, vomiting, labored breathing, swelling and skin reactions, seizures, coma or cardiac arrest). The important things are having a team capable of performing the transfusion and closely monitoring the patient for reactions. "Poppy" the Hungarian Visla made a full recovery after her near death experience of ingesting rat bait. "Bella" the Airedale unfortunately wasn't so lucky. She initially improved, but after a few weeks of intensive care and huge amounts of love, was very sadly put to sleep after complications with her kidneys. This article is specially dedicated to Bella.

Obviously both cases required blood fast. A dog can take another dogs blood ONCE without being cross matched to check blood type. We obtained 500mls of blood and 200mls of plasma for Bella from the After Hours clinic on a Sunday and Steve obtained 400mls of blood from Clive, a German Short haired pointer, for Poppy. We have the transfusion bags and filters at work and the blood is delivered slowly via IVF pumps over 2-3 hours. A vet must sit with the patient the entire time and monitor vitals. The blood is delivered via large bore catheter into the cephalic vein. Both dogs accepted the procedure well – admittedly both were very ill.

Having blood readily available is helpful. We didn't but luckily were able to source it fast. In the past I've used Lola for obtaining blood from but since she's had cancer and received chemotherapy, she now isn't a suitable candidate.

Six year old Bella presented initially for unexplained bleeding from her bowel. After a lengthy work up involving blood testing, radiographs, abdominal ultrasound, bladder catheterization and intensive care monitoring, she deteriorated quickly and needed a blood transfusion in the hope it would save her life. She was losing large amounts of blood from her urinary system and large bowel. Her kidneys were failing, she was depressed and inappetent. Despite intravenous fluids and over 10 different medications she was still deteriorating. We still don't really know what caused the huge blood loss but the transfusion initially helped, providing her with clotting factors, blood and an immune system to fight whatever was going on.

Poppy, the 14 month old Visla, knibbled on RAT BAIT 3 days before presenting near death. This poison destroys platelets and coagulation factors and causes their victims to bleed to death because they can't clot blood. Within hours Poppy would have died due to blood loss into her chest, preventing oxygenation and ventilation. She presented collapsed, was as white as a sheet and in total respiratory distress – she couldn't breathe at all. Our amazing team moved quickly, calling in Steve and Kirsty who worked together over 4 hours – Kirsty draining the blood from her chest (the blood was around her lungs) and Steve transfusing her with Clive's blood. She was monitored by

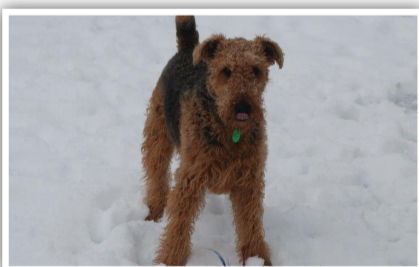
two nurses throughout the procedure. Her recovery was instantaneous – after being transfused she basically leapt into the back of the car, totally transformed. She was monitored carefully at the After Hours clinic that evening and returned to us the next day.

These two cases highlight to me the need for speed and urgency in seeing these cases (whether

it be late at night or over a weekend), dedication to our patients, commitment to our clients and skilled and passionate professionals prepared to go the extra mile. Our nurse took the call from Poppy's owner seriously, late on a Thursday night when we were getting ready to close. At that stage we had no idea Poppy had ingested rat bait. She was just quiet and very lethargic. Not the norm for a 14 month old Visla! Our nurse also asked the colour of Poppy's gums and was told they were white!! This raised alarm bells. Our consulting vet that night was fully booked until 7pm so our nurse called Steve, who immediately responded to the call.

A special mention must be made to the dedicated clients who trusted in us and allowed us a chance at saving their dogs by giving blood, which in itself isn't without risks. When we undertake a transfusion, we have no real idea of outcome but we all do our very best. Our patients all deserve a chance.

Dr Michele McMaster



**This is specially dedicated to "Bella" who was so stoic and fought so hard to make a full recovery. She was a patient I'll never forget. No matter how sick she felt, she always had a tail wag for me. She was kind, trusting of us all and brave until the end. Not being able to pull her though affected us all. RIP dear Bella. You are never forgotten.**



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