

Familiarising your dog to being held for a pre-donation blood sample

How will this leaflet help?

As part of your dog's pre-donation health check, our vet will collect a small sample of their blood. This helps us ensure they are healthy to donate blood. This training sheet will help you train your dog to become comfortable being held in the position required for us to do this.

At Pet Blood Bank, we like our donors to be as relaxed as possible during their donation appointment. Some dogs may be nervous on their first visit, which is understandable as this is a new experience. Being held with their head tilted or having their feet touched can be unfamiliar for many dogs. Doing this training with your dog will help to familiarise them with this process so they create a positive and relaxed association with these actions.

Building confidence in your dog

One of the most helpful things you can do to build your dog's confidence for attending the donation session is to visit your vets regularly with them. Give your dog treats in the waiting room and ask one of the staff to do the same. It may also be useful to walk them onto the weighing scales and ask them to sit down. This will benefit your dog both for coming to give blood but also for attending the vets more generally.

What is the best way to carry out the training?

It is most effective to carry out this training with your dog daily. We recommend building it up in stages and only moving to the next stage when your dog is comfortable with the current stage. If you progress to the next stage and your dog seems less relaxed, go back to the previous stage for a while longer and then try to progress again. Treats can be used to help your dog create a positive association with the positions. These can be gradually reduced as your dog progresses if you wish, but we do use treats frequently during the donation session for this same reason.

It may be worthwhile using a command such as 'stay' that your dog will associate with the training and the desirable action. This means when we repeat this command, they will know what is expected of them. Stay calm and be patient during the training and reward good behaviour. Never force your dog into the position or get cross with them.

The pre-donation blood sample

The pre-donation blood sample helps us check your dog is healthy before donating blood. The sample may be taken from the jugular vein in their neck or from their front leg; it depends on the vet's preference.



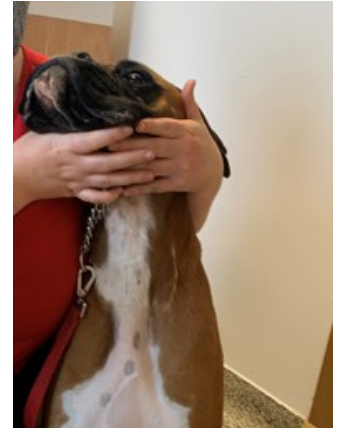
Jugular blood sample positioning

Ask your dog to sit. Stand behind your dog and place both your hands under their chin. Gently tilt your dog's head upwards until their nose is pointing to the ceiling. Standing behind your dog prevents them from shuffling backwards. You can easily look down at your dog and provide praise.

A treat can be held above your dog's head to focus them whilst they hold the position for 1-2 seconds and do not underestimate the effect of lots of positivity and praise, but be sure to only give it whilst they are holding the position calmly. Then relax your dog's head whilst they are calm and relaxed and give your dog the treat. Gradually build up the time they hold the position and extend the time before you give a treat. Build up the hold until they will sit calmly for 60 seconds.

Only release your dog when they are sitting still, otherwise they can quickly learn that wriggling means release. Only reward your dog when they are still and calm.

Alternatively, a variation on this technique is to ask your dog to sit and then kneel beside them either to the left or the right, rather than behind. Use the same method to gently hold and tilt their head. Do not pull their head back too far as this will be uncomfortable. If your dog tries to shuffle backwards, it may be useful to have them sit with a wall behind them or use a second person as a 'back-stop'.



Front leg sample positioning

Ask your dog to sit and kneel beside them. Place the arm closest to your dog over their back and reach behind their furthest elbow. With the other arm, gently cradle your dog's head. Push the elbow forwards so that their front leg is 'presented'. As with the jugular position, slowly build up the duration, rewarding your dog immediately after release when they have been still and relaxed holding the position. Again be sure to use lots of verbal praise when they are holding the position well.

Thank you for taking the time to familiarise your dog with being held for a pre-donation blood sample. Your commitment means your dog will be more comfortable at the donation session and so more likely to donate a unit of blood. We appreciate your time and are grateful for your support.