

Have you ever wondered what it's like becoming a host practice for Pet Blood Bank UK?

Carrick Veterinary Group in Chesterfield recently became a host venue. We asked Vet Nurse Molly Vallance to tell us a bit more about becoming a host venue practice and what is involved; here's what she had to say.

Why did Carrick Veterinary Group want to become a host venue for Pet Blood Bank?

I previously worked for Pet Blood Bank and always wanted to host donation sessions when I was settled into a practice. I put the idea forward at a staff meeting and everyone was very excited at the prospect of being involved and keen to do something positive to help.

What did the process of becoming a host venue involve?

It was really easy to apply. We got in touch with Pet Blood Bank and after explaining to us what was involved, they asked us to complete and return a few forms. Pet Blood Bank then visited us to explain a little more about it and to make sure we had the right facilities to host the session.

We were given a date for our first session and then, with the help of Pet Blood Bank, started contacting our clients who we knew owned dogs that met the criteria, particularly focusing on those breeds likely to be DEA 1 Negative blood type, to invite them to register for the session. We sent out over 100 emails and letters, advertised across our social media channels, and displayed flyers and posters in the practice waiting room.



How easy was it to source donors?

We found we got the best response when we spoke to our clients face to face and explained more about what was involved. Facebook performed exceptionally well as it allowed our clients to share the post with their friends, giving us the opportunity to reach a wider audience. We also spoke to cat owners who we knew had friends or relatives with large dogs. Overall, the response was very positive. We created a database of potential donors which we then shared with Pet Blood Bank.

What was the response from clients regarding blood donation?

A lot of clients were surprised to hear that the service existed and most of them just wanted to know more about it. Some clients were excited and wanted to register their dogs straight away, while others needed a bit more information and time to consider it.



How has the team at Carrick responded to the session?

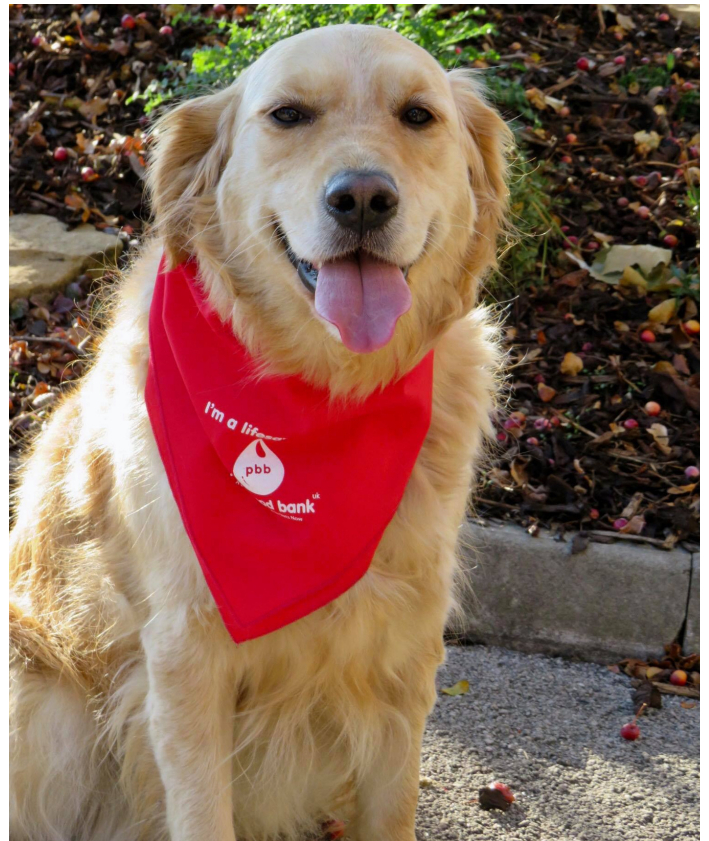
The team has been fantastic. It was a real team effort on the day of our first session and lots of people volunteered to be involved. Everyone was so enthusiastic, so much so that they were arguing over who would do what! It really felt like they were giving something back while helping a worthwhile cause.

How did your first session go and what did you learn from it?

Our first session was a huge success. We created a bit of a party atmosphere with drinks, food and some balloons so it was lots of fun. We didn't get many donations, but this is expected with most of the dogs being first time donors. Having people come out of consultation rooms smiling and bursting with pride was lovely to see. There was a real sense of excitement throughout the practice and it felt like we were doing something special.

From the first session, I learned that certain breeds of dogs are more likely to donate than others. Based on this, I have tried to source more relaxed breeds such as Greyhounds for future sessions. We're also focusing on recruiting more negative breed dogs as we know how important these are for Pet Blood Bank.

I am really looking forward to our next session and welcoming all the new and existing blood donors to the practice. One unit of blood helps save the lives of four other dogs so it's an amazing thing these dogs (and their owners) do!



How will the sessions benefit you as a practice going forward?

We think the sessions will have a positive impact on our practice. Most of our time is spent helping sick or injured dogs so it is lovely to spend time with and make a fuss of all the healthy dogs who come to donate. It gives us all something in the diary to look forward to and it's even better knowing that we are helping to save lives.

Our clients are also really pleased to see us supporting a charity in this way. Hosting donation sessions allows us to help more dogs as well as a charity so it's a really nice thing for us to support and our clients to be involved in.

