

# Familiarising your dog to being lifted and positioned for donation

## How will this leaflet help?

As part of the donation process, our team will lift your dog onto a table and have them lay on their side for the blood collection. This training sheet will help you train your dog to become comfortable with being lifted and positioned for blood donation.

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 lifted off the floor can be unfamiliar for many large dogs, as can being placed onto their side. Doing this training with your dog will help to familiarise them with this process so they can 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.

## Practicing the lift hold position

This training can be carried out by one or two people. The purpose is to familiarise your dog with how they will be held by our team when they are lifted during the appointment. You want to get your dog used to the feel of your arms around them so that when we adopt this position in preparation for lifting them on the day, they will be used to this.



## One person lift position

Kneel at the side of your dog. Place one arm under their abdomen and one around the front of them in front of their front legs. Hold them close to your chest for a few seconds until they relax, and then release.

## Two person lift position



Kneel at the side of your dog. One person holds the front end of your dog with an arm around their front. Their other arm is placed under your dog's chest. Bring your dog towards your body firmly so they will be safe and secure when lifted.

The second person puts their arm underneath your dog's tummy and supports the rear of them with their other arm. Hold them close to your chest for a few seconds until they relax, and then release.

## Donation positioning

With your dog on the floor, encourage them to lie flat on their side. This can be done by encouraging them with a treat held close to their nose, or by gently rolling them onto their side when they are lying on the floor. Start to use a command such as 'over' at this point to help them associate this word with the desired action.

First, praise and fuss your dog whilst they are lying in position and after a few seconds allow your dog to get up if they are calm and relaxed and reward them with a treat. Slowly extend the length of time they lie on their side. Once your dog is happy and calm lying on their side, run your hands over your dog from their neck to tail and down each limb. Spend a little time touching the neck area. Speak reassuringly and praise them and then when they are calm and relaxed allow them to get up and reward them with a treat. This training helps them become familiar with lying on their side and being gently touched so they will associate this position positively and feel relaxed at the donation session.

Repeat this training at least once a day until your donation appointment. You might find it easier to do this training following exercise when your dog is more tired, or when your dog is naturally lying snoozing. If you like, you can use a particular blanket while doing this training. This can then be brought to the donation session for your dog to lie on, helping them remember the training they have done.

## At the donation session

At the donation session, once we have lifted your dog onto the table, they will be asked to lie down on their side while the donation site (the shaved area on their neck) is cleaned, and the blood collected. This generally takes between 5 and 10 minutes, but it can vary depending on the dog. Our trained team will normally hold your dog's head, front legs, and rear legs lightly during the donation for safety reasons, using the minimum amount of restraint necessary.

During the donation, your dog will be stroked, praised, and have their tummy tickled. We see many donors close their eyes and relax during this time; some even fall asleep! All this training helps to ensure your dog has a relaxing and positive experience with us during their donation.

Thank you for taking the time to familiarise your dog with being lifted and held for donation. 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.