

AP

DOG'S BEST FRIEND? OTHER DOGS THAT GIVE BLOOD

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HARLEYSVILLE, Pa. (AP) — If man's best friend is a dog, then who is a dog's best friend? That would be Rover. Or Glow. Or Ivan or Raina.



Matt Slocum

In this Thursday, May 8, 2014 photo, Paula Hackett, of Harleysville, Pa., leads her dog Tosey, a 5-year-old Great Dane, into the University of Pennsylvania veterinary school's animal bloodmobile in Harleysville, Pa. The university operates the bloodmobile around the city to raise awareness and make it easier to garner canine blood donations.

(AP Photo/Matt Slocum)

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About 150 dogs participate in the program. Each donates three or four pints a year, which can help animals suffering from illnesses like cancer or an accidental trauma like being hit by a car. One pint can save up to three dogs.

Sandy Lucas brought her 7-year-old black German shepherd to the bloodmobile last week, when it was parked at a strip mall in Harleysville about 14 miles from her home.

The Pottstown, Pennsylvania, resident said she wouldn't have braved highway traffic and city parking problems to take the dog to Penn Vet's animal hospital in downtown Philadelphia, which is twice as far. But the bloodmobile made it convenient to find out if Raina could donate, she said.

"I was very, very thrilled that she had the right blood that was needed to help another dog out," said Lucas. "We'll definitely do it again."

Just like people, the furry donors get a snack and a heart-shaped "U of P Blood Donor" sticker immediately after giving. In addition, they receive free blood screenings and dog food to take home.

While the bloodmobile helps solve Penn's urban logistical challenges, not all donation centers have such issues. Traffic and parking aren't big problems at North Carolina State University's pet blood bank in Raleigh, where owners can easily drop off their dogs for donations and pick them up later, spokesman Dave Green said.

And what about a catmobile? Perhaps not surprisingly, felines are bit less cooperative. They need to be sedated in order to give blood, so Penn does that only at its animal hospital.

Online:

www.vet.upenn.edu

The four canines recently donated precious pints of blood to their fellow pooches. And they did it without having to travel far from home: They visited an animal bloodmobile.

Similar to the Red Cross vehicles for humans, the University of Pennsylvania's traveling veterinary lab goes to where the donors are to make it easier to give.

"You don't really think about it until you actually need it," said Kym Marryott, manager of Penn's Animal Blood Bank. "Just like in people, dogs need blood too."

Officials at Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine said they don't know of any other animal bloodmobiles operating in the U.S. Theirs makes weekly rounds through suburban Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Dogs must have the correct blood type, weigh at least 55 pounds and be younger than 8 years old. Owners volunteer their pet for the short procedure, which requires no sedation.

However, Marryott said it's the dog that ultimately chooses to lie still and give.

"If (the dog) wanted to get up and leave, he could," said Marryott. "But they're really good about it, they trust their owner."