

Do Dogs Have Different Blood Types

Yes, just like humans, dogs have different blood types. In fact, they have more blood types than people - approximately 8-12, which are referred to as Dog Erythrocyte Antigens or DEA followed by a number: DEA 1.1 positive, DEA 1.1 negative, DEA 1.2, DEA 3, DEA 4, DEA 5, and DEA 7.

Imagine for a very brief moment that your dog is in an emergency situation. He may need to be given a blood transfusion as part of his recovery therapy. Dogs that are DEA 1.1 negative are "universal donors", which means that their blood is the safest to give to most other dogs through a blood transfusion, without causing a negative reaction.

To save a dog's life it's critical for an emergency veterinary hospital to have a good supply of each blood group. Some clinics have dogs on-site at their emergency clinics for donating blood specifically for transfusions.

The challenge with this method is that the two dogs' blood types may not be compatible. Although this is not ideal, it's still possible for the recipient dog to get by with the incompatible blood on the first transfusion. But a few days later, when it's safe to do a second transfusion, the proper blood type must be used, in order to avoid an acute transfusion reaction.

In the past few years, canine blood banks have become available for supplying blood to veterinary clinics or hospitals, and veterinary emergency clinics across North America. They provide testing kits to veterinarians to help ensure that the donated blood they receive is compatible with the blood of the dog getting the transfusion, in a procedure known as cross-matching.

It's a good idea to have your dog's blood typed, in preparation for the quick cross-matching required in an emergency situation. Ask your veterinarian about this test, which uses a blood typing card to classify dogs as DEA 1.1 positive or negative, in order to indicate how blood reactive they are.

This information has been compiled by the Southeastern Newfoundland Club, as part of their comprehensive rescue program. We are grateful for their generosity in sharing all of their hard work.- NCA 2006