

Any dog can be a blood hound

Pet blood bank mirrors highly successful human model to help ailing critters

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

It was 4 a.m. on a Saturday and Rudy was being called to give the gift of life.

A tiny chihuahua had just delivered three large puppies by cesarean section and her uterus had started to bleed excessively. She needed a transfusion fast.

It was Rudy to the rescue.

The five-year-old lab-boxer cross is the lone blood donor at the Veterinary Emergency Clinic of York Region in Aurora. Shortly after a unit of his blood was given to the chihuahua, the new mother of three showed improvement and has fully recovered.

In some ways, Rudy is a pioneer, volunteered by his owner, vet technician Lori Stephens to have his blood typed and placed on a donor list for dogs that need a transfusion.

In an emergency clinic such as the one in Aurora, the need for blood is greater than at most clinics. Often the canine patients rushed to the clinic are suffering trauma as a result of being hit by a car, severe infection or post-surgical complications and are in need of fresh plasma.

But Rudy can't carry the burden on his own. The vet clinic on Yonge Street is looking for a few healthy dogs to become part of the clinic's donor list.

"We can buy synthetic canine blood products called Oxyglobin," said clinic manager Dr. Dawn Crandell. "But they are very expensive — \$225 per unit — and most large dogs require one to two units and that's just our cost. But there is a real advantage to fresh, whole blood. It has the vital clotting factors and often the dogs need more than just red blood cells."

Canine blood banks are not common, although there are at least three in the United States and one in Winnipeg called the Canadian Animal Blood Bank.

While feline blood donation is less common because cats are significantly smaller, making it more difficult for them to donate large amounts of blood, Dennis, the clinic's resident cat, has been known to give a unit or two for others in



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Lori Stephens, left, and her dog Rudy are the only canine donors for the Veterinary Emergency Clinic of York Region's new pet blood bank. Clinic operator Dawn Crandell, holding Dennis, is anxious for more donors.

need.

"Dennis is bled every three to four months, but feline donation is harder because the volume is smaller and it is difficult to store it," said Crandell.

Maintaining a blood bank would be too costly, so the clinic wants to create a list of willing canine donors to be called upon at a moment's notice in an emergency.

"It will work better than banking which is a hugely labour-intensive effort," she said.

Because emergency hospitals have greatest need for transfusions, Crandell's goal is to create a list of dogs who meet certain criteria, type them and then ask the owners if they would consider being placed on a list.

The ideal canine donor is a large, mature dog that is fairly calm, less than eight years old and has been determined to have the dog erythrocyte antigen 1:1 negative blood type.

For information call 713-2323.



Joan Ransberry

Farmers hope to replace hunger with smiles

Replacing hunger with smiles is the motto of the Canadian Foodgrain Bank.

When television footage from Ethiopia reached my living room a few days ago, there were no smiles. There was only pain.

I was reminded that it hurts to die. I felt helpless. I didn't want to look. To make the pain go away, I changed channels.

The Canadian Foodgrain Bank doesn't look the other way. Instead, the farm-based non-profit group has launched a country-wide grain drive.

Here in York Region, farmers are prepared to share the harvest with hungry nations, including famine-stricken Ethiopia. Worldwide, there are 800 million hungry people.

The grain drive is appealing to York farmers, churches and individuals. The need is astronomical. More than seven million deaths a year from a lack of food.

About 33,000 children die every day from hunger and preventable diseases, while famine claims an incredible number of lives every year.

Canada's input makes a difference. Last year, Canadian farmers donated \$5.8 million worth of grain, while food assistance was provided to 24 countries.

Now that spring is here, community growing projects are popping up. In Ontario, there are more than 110 projects, averaging 16 acres for each project, while in York Region, 15 acres have been donated by King, Howard Burkholder of Markham and Hugh Mitchell of King Township.

On a national scale, farmers grow wheat, beans, corn, barley, oats, soybeans, sunflowers and sweet corn. Donations of money, time and energy and commodities, including fertilizing, spraying and short-run trucking, are needed.

Last year, York farmers donated about 15 tonnes of grain. Since donations to the grain bank are matched by the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA) at a ratio of four to one, \$20,000 linked to York Region grain reached the hungry.

One tonne of grain feeds 2,500 for a day, while a \$100 donation will feed a family of five for three months.

The York farmers are helping to break the cycle of recurring hunger by providing food and development assistance to those who need it most and by working directly with people to find and implement long-term solutions to hunger. In the past 17 years, the grain bank provided more than 700,000 metric tonnes of grain to hungry people.

King, Burkholder and Dr. Terry O'Connor of Stouffville are seeking donations of grain, cash and other agricultural goods.

O'Connor is a familiar face in the local agricultural community. Before retiring to a small farm, he was a veterinarian, serving Stouffville and surrounding areas for 30 years.

O'Connor also practised veterinarian medicine in Nicaragua for two years. There, the vet came face to face with hunger. He saw it, understands it and, along with colleagues King and Burkholder, is doing something about it. I applaud them.

For more information call 640-1171.

OMB hearing for metal factory cancelled

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

An Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing linked to a proposed 76,000-square-foot steel plant near Whitchurch-Stouffville's border has been cancelled.

Stouffville officials and seven homeowners are pleased the OMB hearing slated for May 4 won't be held after all.

The homeowners had objected to a plan to have outdoor storage at the plant on the northeast corner of Regional Road 30 and Hwy. 47 in the Town of Uxbridge.

The plant's owner has agreed to exclude outdoor stor-

age, Mayor Wayne Emmerson has confirmed. Worried the metal fabrication plant would have a negative impact on their lives, area residents were prepared to spend about \$15,000 on lawyer fees.

Last week, Colleen Dalghiesh of the 10th Line convinced Whitchurch-Stouffville council to support the residents' cause.

"The outdoor storage will not be on the property," stressed Emmerson. "We're pleased an agreement has been reached. They'll be no need for the OMB."

Construction is expected to get under way soon. A site plan has just been signed by both parties.

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