



Tissue Donation: Guidelines for Veterinarians and Clinics

Donor Criteria:

- 1) Donors must be young to middle age:
 - Canines & Felines: up to 10 years of age.
 - Equines: up to 25 years of age.
- 2) Weight Consideration:
 - Canines should be at least 40+ pounds (at ideal body weight).
 - Felines must be at least 4 pounds.
 - Equines should be at least normal body weight for their age/breed.
- 3) Health Criteria:
 - Donors must be in good systemic health.
 - Vaccines:
 - (a) **Canines** *ideally should be current on vaccines* at least for rabies, distemper, hepatitis, and parvo and we would like to have documentation of vaccination.
>>If no records are available or not vaccinated we will try to track down records and/or do extra testing using PCR for the vaccine viruses.
 - (b) **Felines** *ideally vaccinated only for rabies or not vaccinated is preferred.*
>>We will be performing PCR tests for rabies, FeLV & FIV.
 - (c) **Equines** *ideally should be current on vaccines* at least for rabies and tetanus at least 2 weeks prior to becoming a donor.
>>If no records are available or not vaccinated we will try to track down records and/or do extra testing using PCR for the vaccine viruses.
 - Exclusions:
 - (a) malignancies, septicemia, bacteremia, autoimmune disorders, ingestion of toxic substances, recent exposure to or history of rabies, distemper, or parvovirus, general unexplained lethargy or malaise.
 - Note: Animals with acute trauma (including fractures), hip dysplasia, or other bone-involved conditions such as osteochondritis dessicans may be acceptable as bone donors, as long as the condition is not contagious or transmissible. Please call to consult with us.

Logistics and Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

How the Question Might be Broached

- If their pet appears to be within the criteria described above, we recommend that you consider offering the option of tissue donation to the owner.
- If you feel that tissue donation might be an appropriate and helpful option to offer to your client, it often can be broached as part of the aftercare wishes discussion. The owner may also bring up their interest in tissue donation. If they are interested, you could give them the brochure or the VTS Donor Program information sheet to review. Almost everyone has heard of organ and tissue donation for humans.
- You may want to mention that the Puget Sound has the only tissue bank for animals in the country, and has a donor program much like donor programs for human organ and tissue transplants. Usually we recover the long bones of the limbs, tendons, and corneas, as these are most needed by veterinary patients.
- It might help your clients to remind them that it is a surgical procedure, but it is performed only after the heart has stopped beating and of course there is no pain or suffering for their pet. Also, they can still choose to have their pet cremated after tissue donation.

Lift for More Information....

How to Proceed

Consent & Medical Records

We would like to be involved with final determination of donor suitability, (we recognize that this may not always be possible), and with coordination of the recovery of the donor. This is usually done over the phone with someone from your clinic. We have someone on 24 hour call; they should be able to respond within 30 minutes of your call.

If the donor seems suitable (good health, etc. as listed above) and the owner wishes to proceed, they should be **given 2 copies of the VTS Consent for Donation form** to review and sign (or have them sign one original and make a copy). Please hold one copy for us to pick up when we come for the donor, the other is for the owner to keep.

We will also need to have **copies of all available vaccination and medical records**. We can pick those up when we arrive to collect the donor's body, consent, and blood sample.

Coordination of the recovery

We will need to have you draw a **blood sample (2 red top tubes & 2 lavender top tubes)** for us to test.

We test for transmissible diseases in the same way blood donors are tested. These tests include CBC & Chem screen as well as PCR tests for: Anaplasma, Mycoplasma, Rickettsia, Ehrlichia, Leishmania, Babesia and Bartonella species in canines; and for felines – it includes FELV and FIV, as well as Mycoplasma, and Bartonella species. Equines are additionally tested for nearly 20 different viruses including West Nile, Herpes, Encephalitis, Influenza, Pigeon Fever, and various protozoal agents. We also archive serum and cell samples in case further tests are required.

How much time do we have after death?

We need to recover tissue grafts (or have the donor's body frozen) within 12 hours of death. Therefore, we do not necessarily need to be there at the time of death. This means that the owner can be with their pet at that time if they prefer, and we do not need to disturb them. We will normally move the donor to our facility where we have specially-designed operating rooms to perform the surgical recovery of the tissue grafts.

We generally like to pick up the donor within an hour or two of asystole, or soon after the owner has left. If the death is unscheduled and we are unable to pick up the donor's body immediately, we may ask you to place their body in the freezer, if possible, for us to pick up the following morning.

We cannot perform the euthanasia procedure.

This must be performed in your clinic and is part of the interaction between you and your client. The euthanasia costs are not part of the donation procedure, because we in no way want to encourage owners who may be vacillating about considering euthanasia to choose donation as a means to have euthanasia costs covered. Tissue donation is an option only after the difficult decision for euthanasia has been made.

What happens to the body after we recover tissues?

We usually send the remains to S. Morris for non-private cremation and the ashes are not returned. If it is important for the owner to have their pet's ashes returned, we will have the donor privately cremated and the ashes returned to them. There is no charge to the owners for either of these services. We perform the recovery as soon as possible after asystole, but the cremation process and return of ashes can take up to an additional 1 or 2 weeks.

There is no cost to the owner for choosing donation.

We will cover all costs for tissue recoveries, testing, and cremation.

Please call us if you have any questions. We can be reached at (800) 558-5223.

Thank you for your efforts to assist us and the pets needing transplant grafts!

The Staff of VTS

Veterinary Transplant Services, Inc.
(800) 558-5223