

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2025

ANAEMIA IN DOGS

Blood is made up of three main components: Red blood cells, white blood cells and plasma. All these components have different functions, but all are very important within the body and to normal bodily function.

- **Red blood cells:** Transporting oxygen around the body
- **White blood cells:** Immunity and prevention and fighting of diseases
- **Plasma:** Contains all proteins needed for the body alongside other blood components such as platelets.

Due to the function of red blood cells being transportation of oxygen around the body, when animals become anaemic they can become very lethargic and can tire very quickly. This can be caused by a number of factors including blood loss, destruction of red blood cells, or a lack of production. Symptoms of anemia include lethargy, pale gums, eyes or ears, loss of appetite, rapid breathing or fast pulse and signs of blood loss, blood in stools, urine or vomit.

The main thing we look at when anaemia is suspected is your animal's mucous membranes. They will generally present with very pale, almost white gums, as pictured to the right. We will then confirm anaemia with a blood test which looks at the percentage of red blood cells within the whole blood. Anaemia is the term used when animals have a low red blood cell count and is defined as anything lower than 35% of the total percentage being red blood cells.

There are 3 main types of anaemia, all of which can be caused by multiple factors:

- Total blood loss: Haemorrhage from somewhere
- Lack of production of red blood cells: Red blood cells are made in the bone marrow and stored in the spleen
- Increased loss of red blood cells: The body destroying red blood cells faster than they can be produced.

Once anaemia is confirmed and it is not through an obvious cause such as major blood loss following an accident, we may need to determine the cause which would require further diagnostic tests. Blood samples are tested in our in-house lab and may need to be sent away to an external lab for confirmatory tests to determine the root cause of the anaemia. Medication regimes are often extensive and animals will remain on them for several months.

In very severe cases, blood transfusions are often required to boost the animal's total blood cell count quickly. This is usually when the red blood cell count is so low there is a possibility of starving vital organs of oxygen. We have various ways of obtaining blood: A charity called the pet blood bank supply various blood products, but the quickest and most efficient source is from donors within our community. We are happy to welcome new dog blood donors. There is a set of strict criteria to meet for dogs to be blood donors. If you would like to put your dog forward to donate please call the surgery and speak to one of our nursing team. Pictured to the right is superstar Fern, a member of the Dalehead team, donating blood for a poorly dog who urgently needed a transfusion.



Meet Kez and Andy



As your local independent vet practice, it is important to us to support the vibrant local community we are proud to be part of. One of the ways we are offering our support this year is by sponsoring local search and rescue dog Kez.

Many of you may already know Kez and her owner/handler Andy Colau. There is a very special partnership, and as members of Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England, they carry out invaluable work attending incidents locally, alongside organisations such as Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association (UWFRA) and Cave Rescue Organisation (CRO).

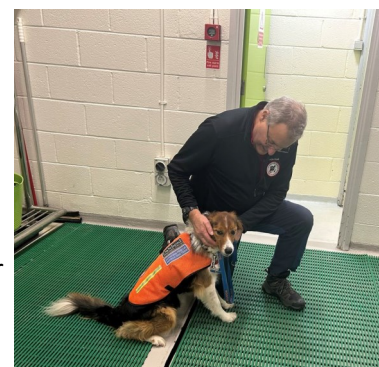


We are very lucky to live where we do, with such easy access to the wild and beautiful countryside with all the various outdoor pursuits this landscape offers. However, despite its beauty this is a landscape which must be respected and can be unforgiving to those who lose their way, have an accident or are taken ill whilst navigating its terrain.

These are the times when, alongside other emergency services, selfless local volunteers step up to be our heroes and rally to our aid. On many occasions this will include Kez and Andy who are needed to locate lost, injured, trapped, ill or missing vulnerable individuals, so that the rest of the rescue team can then get to them to provide the help they require.

Such days, sadly, do not always have a happy ending despite everyone's best efforts, yet still the members of these teams continue to volunteer, and we thank them for this.

To fulfil their roles Kez and Andy have trained extensively and their ongoing training never ceases. Kez regularly works in tandem with search and rescue helicopters and around the Air Ambulance attending various incidents. Kez has been trained to take all this in her stride.



In December last year Kez and Andy's helicopter training took on another dimension when they spent the day at South Shields Marine Centre to undertake helicopter underwater escape training. Although trained to work alongside helicopter crews and around helicopters, they had not received training in how to escape should the unthinkable happen and a helicopter, they may be travelling in, should need to ditch into water. Safety is always paramount for the pilot and air crew, but they do sometimes have to operate on the fringe of safety, whether this is due to severe weather or the exposed locations of shores. Also, like any mode of transport, the helicopter itself can encounter technical issues and not always make the intended destination. Should the worst happen, it is important that those on board know best how to escape even if this is when submerged in water.



You may have already seen the posts on our Facebook page in December showing Kez and Andy's training day at the Maritime Offshore Training Facility. If not, then why not check them out to learn more!

ITV News also sent across their Tyne-Tees crew to report on the day. Their feature was broadcast on Christmas Eve and is available on catch up on ITVX, for ease we have posted a link to this on our Facebook page - don't forget to look out for Kez and Andy!

We hope to share more of Kez and Andy's stories throughout 2025, so follow us on Facebook and check out future newsletters.



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