ACVIM Forum Cancelled

On April 10th, organizers of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum officially announced its cancellation. The Forum was to take place in Baltimore, MD but due to concerns regarding the coronavirus pandemic and ongoing travel restrictions, the meeting has been cancelled. Conference organizers shared that they will be delivering selected content virtually, focusing on RACE-approved CE sessions featuring new research or time-sensitive updates and additional sessions from the specialty program and technician tracks. In addition, the organizers said that an interactive Solutions Center floor plan will be available for attendees to check out the latest industry products and services. At the time of this newsletter’s composition, the organizers did not know the exact number of sessions that would be available, but they promised to share pricing information as soon as the program information is determined. AVHTM still intends to hold a virtual Special Interest Group meeting, with details to be shared as soon as plans are confirmed.

AVHTM Updates

Our group is continuing to grow – we have more than 300 members!

Please note that the AVHTM has decided to sponsor a research grant starting in 2020. As such, you will be asked when you renew your membership if you wish to contribute any funds towards the grant. We encourage people to donate any amount they choose, which will be used towards a grant for research being completed in the field of hematology or transfusion medicine. Stay tuned for more information!

AVHTM continues to be an active group on social media and within our private email group. Recently, our email group has shared discussions on several topics including methods of thawing plasma, antibody viability in plasma, drug washout periods, identification of blood bank donors, and medication washout periods. We encourage AVHTM members to continue using this fantastic resource by emailing questions or sharing (continued on page 4)
Rationale for a COVID-19 Blood Banking SOP at The Animal Hospital at Murdoch University

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Early on during the COVID-19 pandemic, as I was involved in writing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for operations within my hospital, it became apparent that our blood bank operations would also need to be adjusted in light of current guidelines for social distancing to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The primary goal of our blood bank is to meet the transfusion needs of patients within our hospital. Not only are veterinary services in general considered essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, but so too are blood banking and transfusion medicine services since we cannot provide high level veterinary care without them. As a referral hospital, many patients are referred to us for transfusions and so we wanted to also ensure that we continue to be able to meet the needs of our referring veterinarians. We are not a commercial blood bank and so all our blood is used in-house.

The specific situation of the Community Blood Bank at our hospital is that most of our dog owners hold their own dogs for donation resulting in a period of 10-15 minutes of close contact (< 1.5 m) between donor owners and blood bank staff. The presence of their owners during donation is important for many of our donors to feel relaxed during their donation, however, it does not facilitate social distancing. As such, this approach required adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our cat owners do not usually stay at the hospital while their cats donate but do traditionally have contact with staff at reception and the blood bank coordinator as they bring the cat in and then pick the cat up after donation. Therefore, smaller adjustments in our approach for cat donors were necessary.

To balance these needs I wrote an SOP for our Community Blood Bank Operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the policy was two-fold: 1) to provide guidance for Community Blood Bank staff and donor families aimed to minimize high-risk interactions with regard to COVID-19 transmission, while ensuring our ability to provide a reliable blood supply for sick patients in The Animal Hospital; and 2) to maintain the relationship between Community Blood Bank staff, donors and their families, while implementing social distancing measures.

In summary, the protocol involved the following changes:

- Keeping dog and cat blood stocks at minimum safe levels
  - For our hospital this is the equivalent of 6 full bags of dog DEA 1 negative pRBCs and one bag each of type A and B cat pRBCs
  - So far this is serving us well, but we have had to do some collections at short-notice when demand increased – like bleeding three type A cats on a Sunday!
- Informing our clients of the temporary new approach, and giving them the option of taking themselves off our donor register if they did not feel comfortable with the changes, including:
  - Screening them by phone when scheduling the donation, and then again on the day of their pet’s donation
  - Doing all paperwork (consent forms etc.) online prior to the donation; and
  - No owners in the building; rather pets collected from and returned to their cars, and donating with blood bank staff present only
- Prioritising dog donors that can donate happily without their owners’ present
  - We essentially sat down with our list of dog donors, and divided them into three groups: 1) those that can happily donate without an owner present; 2) those that could donate without an owner present but may have slightly increased anxiety; and 3) those that cannot feasibly donate without an owner present, without sedation or anxiolysis
  - As such, we are prioritizing using donors from the first group, followed by group 2. Only if all other options are exhausted would we consider using dogs from group 3, and would plan to have their owners present with us wearing full PPE
- Temporarily suspending the recruitment of new donors and friendly visits (i.e., visits during which a donation does not occur).

Not surprisingly, given how wonderful donor families are, all our donor families were in full support of this SOP and when we have needed to call on them at short notice have been extremely supportive and willing to help. It is always a pleasure working with donor families, and this has been no different during COVID-19. This protocol has facilitated our blood bank continuing to be able to meet the transfusion needs of our hospital, and keeping our donors happy, while minimizing owner contact.

*If you wish to receive a complete copy of the protocol, please contact Dr. Sharpe directly ([C.Sharp@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:C.Sharp@murdoch.edu.au)).*
Recently Published Articles

The articles listed below are a selection of those published **October 2019 – April 2020** in the field of veterinary transfusion medicine, blood banking, and hemostasis:

AHVTM is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit professional association composed of veterinarians, hematologists, academics, veterinary technicians, blood bankers, and interested public who desire to further scientific advances in transfusion medicine and veterinary hematology.

We engage in veterinary research, promote industry standards, develop guidelines for canine and feline blood collection and processing, and publish scientific research in peer-reviewed publications.

Visit us online to learn more about AVHTM!

AVHTM Updates (continued from page 1)

ongoing research endeavors with the group. Please note that access to the Google Group is only for those with membership fees in good standing. Previous discussions can be accessed online by signing into your Google account at https://groups.google.com/. You must use the same email address for your AVHTM membership as what you would use to sign into your Google account, otherwise you will not have access to previous discussions.

We also have more than 1,000 followers on Facebook and have good engagement with our posts in terms of people liking or sharing them. Please ‘like’ or ‘follow’ us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AVHTM/) and feel welcome to post links, images, and questions pertinent to veterinary hematology and transfusion medicine.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

As an AVHTM member, you are eligible for the following:

- Reduced IVECCS registration fee (veterinarians save $100 and technicians save $25!)
- Access the a “Members Only” section of the AVHTM website, which includes access to:
  - Other AVHTM profiles
  - PubMed articles
  - Forum for posting questions, cases, and research
- Ability to ask and answer questions posted to the AVHTM members-only email group.

Please feel welcome to share this newsletter with interested colleagues and encourage them to become an AVHTM member!