

By BETTY MASSON

Two felines of the breed American domestic short-haired, Dr. K and Herman, are leading a pretty soft life after starting out as strays two years ago.

They never have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, because they earn their keep by providing a valuable service for their fellow felines.

They are on call 24 hours a day to give blood in case of a cat-astrophe — such as a cat which has been hit by a car and needs a transfusion, according to veterinarian Cliff McClumpha.

Herman, who is a lovely shade of tan, and Dr. K, who has a glossy orange coat, live at the Parkway Veterinary Clinic on Wilcox Road in Plymouth.

Cats suffering from severe anemia also require blood. This condition, caused by a virus, is fairly common among cats.

Sometimes Herman and Dr. K can go for weeks, even months, without being asked to donate blood. They purr at passerbys and romp with the attendants at cleaning time.

At other times, their blood may be required once or twice a week.

Although Herman and Dr. K reportedly recover very quickly from being anesthetized and having blood extracted directly from their hearts, ideally they should have two to three weeks to recover between donations, said Dr. McClumpha.

In a normal blood donation, the animals give about 60 to 70 cubic centimeters. This compares with about 500 cc for a normal human blood donation.

The cat's blood is drawn into a syringe and, when a new needle is attached, is injected directly into the cat donor.

"Some veterinarians use blood expanders, plasma and other things, but I like to use whole blood," said Dr. McClumpha.

DOGS ALSO require transfusions from time to time, but the clinic does not keep a dog on hand just for this purpose. Instead, Dr. McClumpha calls on the services of one of his own four dogs.

Economics are the reason. Cats are easy and inexpensive to keep, but a medium-sized to large dog is needed for transfusions and keeping a dog just to give blood is expensive.

Recalling some of the unusual operations he has done on animals, he said that he and two other veterinarians could have lost some blood

themselves when they had to deal with a 30-pound Gibbon's ape who was being operated on for the removal of his fangs.

"He was chewing up his owners," Dr. McClumpha explained. The ape was small, but powerful, and didn't take kindly to the idea of being anesthetized.

The ape emerged de-fanged, but not before he had laid such a tight grip on Dr. McClumpha's arm that it took the efforts of all three to release it.

The veterinarian also has removed tumors several times from a white rat from Ann Arbor.

"There's a gold-plated white rat running loose in this girl's apartment," he commented. And it's a good thing Herman and Dr. K are in their cages when this patient calls.

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