The Cat Doctor CATERWAULER™

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Tacitus Saves a Life!

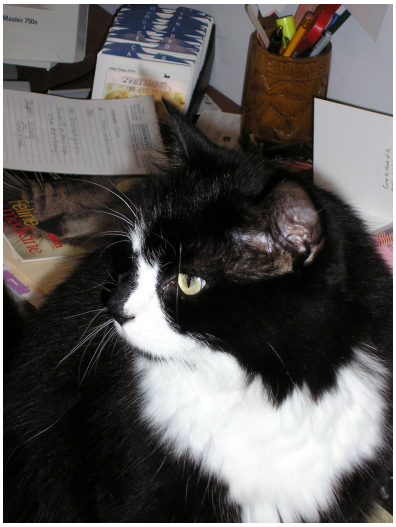
Sheaba

This is a story about Sheaba, a Maine Coon cat. Sheaba's owner was in the hospital, and relatives were caring for her. Sheaba came to The Cat Doctor because she was tired, and began to throw up fluid with blood. The family brought Sheaba to the Cat Doctor because they were very concerned, and Dr. Young did an immediate exam.

Sheaba was covered with hundreds of fleas, from the tip of her nose to the end of her tail! The fleas were sucking so much of Sheaba's blood that her color was very pale (Dr. Young checked Sheaba's gums, which were almost white). Sheaba's temperature was below normal, she was very thin, and her back was crusted over with scabs from all the flea bites. After examining Sheaba, Dr. Young thought that she might have lost so much blood that she might even die. Dr. Young discussed the seriousness of Sheaba's disease with the owner's family, and they decided to do everything possible to try to save her life.

Dr. Young took a blood sample from a vein in Sheaba's leg, and Sheaba's hematocrit (the percentage of her blood that was actually red blood cells, instead of the plasma or yellow fluid that the red blood cells flow inside) was only 15% (when a normal range is from 30% to 45%)! Sheaba was missing at least half, or up to two-thirds of her red blood cells that carry the oxygen to her tissues. That was why Sheaba was so tired, lethargic, and fatigued when she came to the Cat Doctor. Dr. Young started an intravenous line (IV), placing a catheter inside a vein to give Sheaba fluids, and put her on a heating pad to warm her up.

Tacitus



At this time, Tacitus (one of the cats staying at the Cat Doctor while interviewing prospective owners) came to the rescue, and he volunteered to donate a unit of his blood to help Sheaba! Dr. Young gave Tacitus a mild, fast-acting anaesthetic that wouldn't remain in his blood very long, shaved his neck to expose and cleanse a large vein in his neck, and then removed a cat "unit" of whole blood, about 50 cc's (a little over an ounce and a half). The blood was carefully transferred to a special solution to keep it from clotting and destroying the precious red blood cells.

Dr. Young had to be very careful when Tacitus' blood was administered to Sheaba. The blood was mixed with an intravenous electrolyte (salt) solution, and if it is given too fast, the fluids will dilute and weaken the blood, and if it's too slow, the blood might clot. It took three hours to get all of Tacitus' blood into Sheaba, but she began to perk up, and even ate a small amount of food. However, she was still drooling and throwing up bloody fluid.

Sheaba had already been given a dose of Revolution® (selamectin), a medicine that was placed on her back that kills fleas, right when she came into the hospital. The sample of Sheaba's blood that was taken was sent to the lab to be analyzed right away (STAT), and the results showed a possible bacterial infection, so Dr. Young also started Sheaba on some antibiotics. She was given medicine for her stomach, and another medicine to decrease inflammation (which might be causing the bleeding). Sheaba began to stabilize, and Dr. Young felt that she would be safe at the Cat Doctor overnight, with her IV fluids being carefully measured on a special pump.

The next morning, Sheaba had a lot more energy, she was much brighter, and her temperature returned to normal. She was given a bath to rid her body of all the dead and dying fleas, and flea eggs. The rinse water was colored with the flea dirt (feces) and blood from all the bites on her skin. She was still pale, but she didn't require anymore blood or IV fluids, so Dr. Young felt that she could go home on three different medicines. A special antibiotic to kill a particular germ that lives in fleas was ordered from a pharmacy in Nashua, that makes medicines that can be given topically (by rubbing it on the ears). "This flea germ is called *Hemobartonella*," Dr. Young explained, "and it's very bad because it can make the red blood cells break apart, or lyse, which makes the blood loss even worse."

According to Dr. Young, cats have specific blood types (A and B) just like people do, but most domestic short hair cats are blood type A. Blood type B occurs most frequently in British shorthairs, Exotics, along with Abyssinian, Rex, and Persian cats. There is also a type AB, but it is very rare. Cats do not have type O blood (as in humans). Although cat blood can be typed with a time-consuming test, in an emergency situation such as Sheaba's, cats can usually be given a one-time administration without testing because most cats in the US are type A.

Sheaba was rechecked four days later, and she was feisty and very active! She was back to her old self, and was giving everyone a hard time about getting her medication inside of her. Dr. Young rechecked her hematocrit (Packed Cell Volume, or PCV), which went from 15% up to 29%, or almost doubled, and just about within the normal range. Everyone (including Tacitus) was quite happy with her recovery.

Dr. Young reminds everyone not to use tinsel on your tree, so that our feline friends won't eat it and get an intestinal blockage (possibly requiring surgery). One of our customers found purrfect alternatives at All Things Bright and Beautiful, also at the Shaker Workshops, and they are "Cat Doctor" approved!

Kitty gifts and cards are available at The Cat Doctor of Dover if you're looking for a gift for that "special someone" in your life. We still have a good selection of cat ornaments for your tree, kitty picture frames for your favorite feline, and cards by Erika Oller. We also have a good supply of catnip knots and other toys available.

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