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The new Animal Bloodmobile was unveiled at VHUP on May 7. It was made possible by a generous gift from the Wurster Family Foundation. Bogie, a Labrador retriever owned by members of the Wurster family, was a VHUP patient whose life was saved by numerous blood transfusions.

The new vehicle is impressive with a length of 24 ft., a width of 8 ft. 4 inches and a weight of 7 tons. The Animal Bloodmobile, custom-built to the specifications of the Penn Animal Blood Bank team, consists of a Ford chassis with a V-10 engine and a custom-built body. The vehicle is equipped with a hydraulic exam table, a scale, a holding cage, sink and ample counter space for equipment. There are seats for three people. The new vehicle has storage space, including a compartment accessible from the exterior for dog food that is given to the donor’s owners.

The new bloodmobile will be used for blood drives organized by breeders, dog clubs and veterinarians in the Delaware Valley. These drives are held two or three times a week. Blood is collected from 10 to 15 dogs that are brought by their owners. The donation takes just a few minutes and the dogs don’t mind the collection. They are rewarded with a treat of meaty dog food and lots of pats on the head. The blood is brought back to VHUP where it is processed and separated into its components such as red blood cells, plasma and clotting factors. One unit of blood helps more than one patient. The blood and blood products are typed and matched to ensure compatibility between donor and patient.

VHUP’s blood donor program has the motto “Pets Helping Pets” and began in 1987 to meet the need of the hospital’s critically ill patients. The Penn Animal Blood Bank has grown tremendously over the years; since its beginning more than 3,000 dogs have participated. Currently close to 1,000 dogs from the Delaware Valley are active donors. It is the largest voluntary canine blood donor program in the nation. The bloodmobile is a vital part of the hospital’s lifesaving treatments for patients. Each day, more than 10 blood transfusions are administered to VHUP’s patients.

To donate blood, a dog must be good-tempered, at least one year of age, weigh at least 50 lbs., be in excellent health and have current vaccination status. Those interested in having their dog donate blood should contact the Penn Animal Blood Bank at 215-573-7222.

Dr. Virginia Reef has been appointed the Mark Whittier and Lila Griswold Allam Professor of Equine Medicine at the School. “I am very pleased to make this announcement for Dr. Reef is a distinguished member of our faculty and one of the most accomplished equine cardiologists in the world,” said Dean Alan Kelly. “The new chair was made possible through Betty Moran’s generous investment in the School many years ago. It is the third endowed chair to go to a woman at the School.”

Dr. Reef joined Penn’s New Bolton Center in 1979 as an intern in large animal medicine and surgery after graduating from the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University.

Following her internship and a residency in large animal medicine, she joined the faculty as a lecturer in medicine in 1982. She was appointed assistant professor in 1986, associate professor in 1990 and full professor in 1996. Dr. Reef was appointed to her current position as director of large animal cardiology in 1981. In 1995, she was appointed chief, Section of Sports Medicine and Imaging at New Bolton Center, and she is an executive board member of the Allam Center for Equine Sports Medicine at the School.

The Mark Whittier and Lila Griswold Allam Professorship in Equine Medicine is the 19th endowed professorship at the School.