

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Friday, October 27, 2023.

Blood banks are facing critical shortages of life-saving blood and blood products. Your donation can help save lives. The shortages are particularly severe for types O and Rh negative blood, and for platelets. Blood donations significantly dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local and regional blood banks are still facing the effects, as many regular donors are donating less often. With fewer donations, blood banks worry they will not be able to meet the need for blood and blood products – like plasma – during a large emergency or natural disaster. Trauma patients, transplant recipients, and those undergoing cancer treatment also depend on the generosity of blood donors.

Donating blood is easy. Appointments can be scheduled at your convenience and take about an hour. Learn more details, including eligibility requirements, by visiting Northwest Blood Coalition members:

- Vitalant (<https://vitalant.org/donate>)
- Cascade Regional Blood Services (<https://www.crbs.net/aboutdonating/>)
- Bloodworks Northwest (<https://www.bloodworksnw.org/>)
- American Red Cross (<https://www.redcross.org/local/washington.html>)

This story is from this week's *PT Leader*. Humans in Clallam and Jefferson Counties have several emergency health care options, but the region's dogs and cats aren't so lucky. The Pet Emergency Group, a volunteer-driven organization, is seeking to change that with the establishment of a pet emergency clinic, meant to operate after most veterinarians close, after 5pm. Pet Emergency Group Board Chair Sally Rodgers said, "There is a tremendous amount of support for this. When the bridge is closed, people with sick pets can lose their animals. It's tragic that people on the Olympic Peninsula don't have access to urgent care for their pets."

Exact dates, location and funding requirements for the new clinic are uncertain. It would most likely be located in Sequim or East Port Angeles. The clinic could retrofit an existing facility. About \$500,000 is needed for initial startup and operation. The facility could be operating sometime in 2024, if all goes to plan. It would employ four veterinarians plus staff. Initial hours would be from 5 in the afternoon to 7 or 8 in the morning. A 24/7 schedule is the goal for the future.

Rodgers estimates there are 55,000 dogs and cats on the Olympic Peninsula, with one in three requiring emergency care at some point in their lives. At first, treatment would only be for cats and dogs. They might eventually treat pets like rabbits and reptiles, depending on the vets' training and experience. Currently, any Jefferson County pet in distress needs transportation to Poulsbo, the home of the newly constructed but already-stressed Animal Emergency and Specialty Center. If the pet can't be accommodated they are redirected to Seattle or Tacoma.

Dr. Ginny Johnson is a Port Hadlock veterinarian with an independent practice. Johnson said, "The biggest challenge for pet owners living on the Olympic Peninsula is the (Hood Canal) Bridge. I've known people who have tried to get to Poulsbo and the bridge closes, so they are (sitting) in their car for hours with a dying dog." She said the proposed Sequim location for a pet emergency clinic is ideal due to its centralized location.

Jim Sherwood, who operated a pet clinic in Port Townsend for 45 years before closing due to COVID, sees the necessity of an emergency clinic but acknowledges several obstacles. There is the staffing cost, as vets expect to earn a \$100,000 salary out of college, and emergency vets are a different breed than the average practitioner.

Sherwood recalls the time when veterinary clinics could trade on-call duties and handle emergencies as they occur. Until recently this was common in Port Angeles, and he suspects that the discontinuation of that type of practice spurred on the effort to open a new clinic.

The severe backups at Poulsbo are to be expected, he said, adding, “Every emergency clinic in the state is jammed up.” An animal with a skin rash can wait, but there are several conditions that require immediate attention. Among those listed on the Poulsbo clinic’s website are a potential broken bone, a seizure, or severe trauma from being hit by a car. For more information go to <https://aesccares.com/>.

The Pet Emergency Group is holding its first major fundraiser this Sunday, October 29 from 1 to 4pm at Le Petit Maison Blanche, 2134 East Washington Street in Sequim. The event includes a pet costume contest at 1:30pm as well as a silent auction. Rogers welcomes any volunteers. For more information or to donate go to <https://www.petemergencygroup.org/>.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.