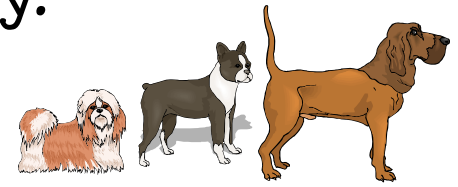
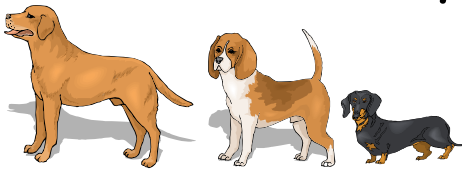


# VSES Success Story: “Sparky”



## ***Sparky and Cooper***

had high bilirubin and changes in the shape of his red blood cells (spherocytes).

Sparky was diagnosed with a disease called immune-mediated hemolytic anemia, or IMHA. In this disease, the dog’s body starts attacking his or her own red blood cells, destroying them. When red blood cells are destroyed, bilirubin (a yellow product) is released, causing the skin, gums and whites of the pet’s eyes to appear yellow. Because the red blood cell count is so low, the dog becomes very weak. IMHA can be caused by any number of things, but after radiographs (x-rays), an ultrasound, and blood tests, no underlying cause for the disease was found in Sparky. Because Sparky’s red blood cell count was so low, he was given a blood transfusion. Sometimes donor blood comes from animal blood banks, but in this case Sparky received a donation of blood from Toby Greco, a yellow Lab owned by two specialist veterinarians at VSES.

IMHA is treated mainly with medication to suppress the immune system so that it stops attacking the body. Sparky was placed on two medications, which were started at high doses, and then slowly lowered if the red blood cell count comes back to normal. The results of this treatment can be varied, but in Sparky’s case he started to show signs of improvement after being on a medication for several days. His red blood cell count normalized, his bilirubin started going down, and Sparky started to feel better!

Since going home, Sparky has been doing great! His energy level is up and he’s back to his old self (although he does beg for more food now!). Every two weeks Sparky comes in to have his blood cell count checked, and his housemate Cooper always comes along for moral support! Sparky’s values continue to do well and at this point he is almost completely off of his medication. Despite being so sick, with Sparky’s strong will power and his family’s fantastic care, he has been able to fight off this disease and have a great quality of life.

Sparky, an 8 year old Jack Russell Terrier, was seen by his regular veterinarian, Dr. Karen Oros, for a 2-day history of weakness, lethargy, vomiting and diarrhea. She noticed that Sparky’s skin, eyes, and gums were very pale and yellow, and that he had increased respiratory and heart rates. Because of this, Sparky was brought to the Animal Emergency Service and eventually to the Internal Medicine specialists. Blood work was performed, and showed that Sparky had a very low red blood cell count (anemia). Sparky also