

Red fox's life saved by a dog!

(TORONTO: April 22, 2024) – When Andrea noticed the red fox stumbling off the road on March 27th, she became very worried. Assuming he had been hit by a car, she called Toronto Wildlife Centre's (TWC) Hotline right away to get him help.

Soon TWC's Rescue Team was on their way and they were able to capture the fox much more easily than most foxes. Right away, Assistant Rescue Team Manager Sarrah noticed his behaviour was odd – he appeared to faint briefly after being captured. "I've been doing wildlife rescue for almost 11 years," Sarrah said. "I've only seen a fox play dead once before."



After rushing the fox back to TWC's wildlife hospital, the medical team got right to work. Since the fox appeared very weak and lethargic they had to be very careful. The fear that wild animals feel from being close to people can sometimes be the final stressor that kills them.

A brief exam, ultrasound, and bloodwork yielded results that was not consistent with an animal who had been hit by a car, although the fox was pale and bleeding from minor wounds. Dr. Cameron Berg started emergency treatment to address the patient's symptoms and make him more comfortable, which included IV fluids and housing the fox in oxygen caging. Dr. Berg hoped he would be stronger by the next day.

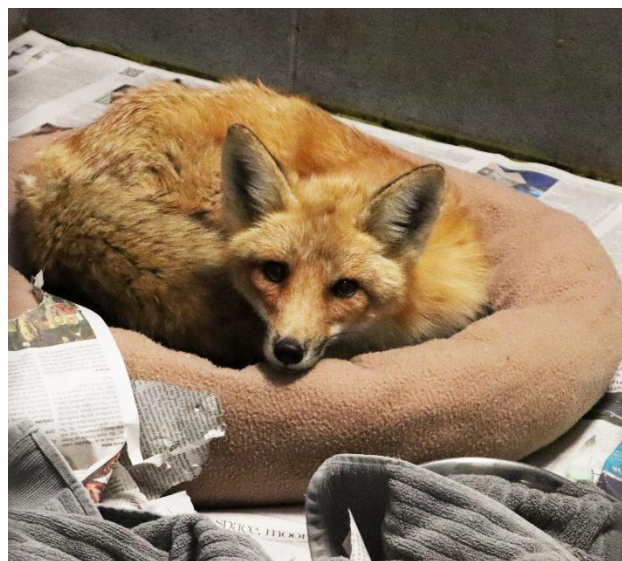
But that was not the case. The next day the wild patient was still weak and lethargic. The anemia was worse, but a full ultrasound and x-rays showed nothing. There was, however, still some mild bleeding from the fox's mouth as well as a small wound – signs the fox was suffering from rodenticide poisoning. It is very difficult to test for rodenticide poisoning, especially without knowing the specific chemical that was ingested. Nonetheless, the experienced wildlife veterinarian proceeded based on that diagnosis.

Dr. Berg had read a paper about a successful blood transfusion on a gray fox, using blood from a dog. There are emergency blood banks with dog and cat blood, but none with fox blood! So Dr. Berg decided to take a chance and try the procedure with a red fox, not knowing if it would work, but knowing the patient would die if he didn't try.

After obtaining a bag of dog blood, Dr. Berg and his team stayed very late, carefully transfusing the blood into the fox and monitoring his vital signs continuously. Dr. Berg was very encouraged when he observed that the fox's body seemed to be accepting the blood!

By the end of the procedure, the fox already seemed a bit brighter, and by the next day he was more aware and responsive. The bleeding had stopped.

The patient is now stable, eating well, and is acting like a normal fox – but is still being monitored closely by TWC’s medical team. Because of the rodenticide poisoning, he needs a full 30-day treatment to help his body recover. And then, happily, he’ll be released back into the wild to continue his life!



This fox was very lucky. Anticoagulant rodenticides (ARs) are chemicals that cause terrible, inhumane deaths in their target species, essentially causing the blood to stop clotting and the animal to bleed to death.

But, like this fox, animals who eat poisoned rodents are also affected by rodenticides. Many studies have confirmed this in bald eagles, turkey vultures, fishers and other species. One study in California, from 1996 to 2004, concluded that 83% of 24 dead coyotes tested positive for presence of ARs in the liver, with 12 deaths confirmed to have been caused by poisoning. And from 1997 to 2004, 93% of 89 dead bobcats tested positive for ARs in the liver.

We are happy to share this lucky fox’s story. And we strongly encourage people to refrain from using rodenticides for any reason.



For more information about this story, please contact:
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You can find the story about this fox on TWC’s [YouTube channel \(@TWCWildlife\)](#).

Raw footage and photos are available to the media upon request. Please credit Toronto Wildlife Centre.

Toronto Wildlife Centre is a registered charity dedicated to the rescue, medical treatment and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife, and to educating the public on wildlife-related issues. The centre runs entirely on donations.

More information about the centre can be found at www.torontowildlifecentre.com.