



from

## All Creatures Veterinary Hospital



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DOCTOR'S EDITORIAL ...

SPRING 2003

### Spring Always Looks Good!!

Have you noticed that with the arrival of spring and its warmer weather, people act differently? People actually seem to be happier! Maybe it is the return of the song birds to our greening yards. Maybe it is the sight of budding trees and flowery blossoms. Or maybe the spring marks the time of the year when, as temperatures rise, we get out of our homes and enjoy the outdoors once more. Regardless of the cause of this happiness, it is certainly welcome. For many of us, winter could not leave fast enough!! With all of these wondrous arrivals of nature, we would like pet owners to keep in mind the following:

- For many, the return of spring also means the return of fleas that can agitate your pet and make your home uninhabitable. In this day and age and with all of the advanced products on the market, there is no reason why any one's home or pet needs to feel the torment of fleas. Please call us - we have the latest and most effective products that can make both you and your pet "flea free"!
- Mosquitoes also return in the spring. With their return, come the danger of heartworm infection in your dog or cat. We strongly recommend that you make an appointment with the doctor for a heartworm screening. A relatively simple blood test is all that is required to detect the presence of heartworms in your pet's system. We will also prescribe the correct preventatives to protect your pet from this dreadful disease.



In this issue, we have addressed a number of topics that are both timely and relevant to pet owners. One topic we find particularly comforting is the health benefits we humans derive from our relationships with our pets. This topic is of importance for two reasons. First, by disseminating this information, it is hoped that many more people and families will acquire pets and begin to reap the positive health benefits of their companionship. Second, this information will prompt pet owners into taking the best possible care of their pets as they understand that the health maintenance of their pet is not a cost or an expense but rather an investment in their own health and well being. So as we give thanks for the onset of spring, remember to take care of Fido and Kitty - they're good for your health!!

# ANIMALS AND HUMAN HEALTH BENEFITS

## Why Pet Owners are a Healthy Breed

*There is a wonderful body of evidence that has been accumulated over the years that dramatically proves that our pets are good for our health! As a rule, our pets (especially dogs) keep pet owners much more active than non-pet owners and this has obvious positive health consequences.*

- A study among elderly individuals with and without pets found that individuals who owned pets and were experiencing stressful life events reported significantly fewer contacts with doctors than those without pets.

- One study reported a reduction in minor health problems during the first month after pet acquisition. For dog owners, this effect was sustained throughout the study and suggests that pets may influence perceptions of stress.

- A UCLA study found that dog owners required much less medical care for stress induced aches and pains versus those who did not own dogs.

- City Hospital in New York found that heart patients who owned pets had a significantly higher survival rate than those patients who did not own a pet.

- Pet owners with AIDS have less depression and reduced stress compared to non-pet owners with AIDS. Pets are a major source of support and increase a patient's perception of the ability to cope with illness.

- Infants exposed to pets during their first year of life have a lower frequency of allergies and asthma.



- 70% of families surveyed reported an increase in family happiness and fun after acquiring a pet.

- One study indicated that, on average, pet owners have lower blood pressure and lower levels of triglycerides than non-pet owners. Additionally, this study indicated that just ten (10) minutes in the company of an animal significantly reduces one's blood pressure.

- Pets dramatically help alleviate loneliness and one of the most damaging risk factors for people recovering from heart disease and other ailments is loneliness. This may be the reason why pet owners who suffer from heart attacks are likely to have five times the survival rate of patients who do not own pets!

- Positive self-esteem and advanced cognitive development is more likely in children if there is a pet in the home.

We could go on for several more pages listing the dramatic positive impact that pets have on our lives. Those of us that own pets understand this but the impressive findings of various studies reinforces our understanding. We strongly encourage you to share this information with your non-pet owning family members and friends. Studies don't lie! Pets are good for our mental, emotional and physical health - it's that simple.

Additionally, pet owners should not look upon the expense associated with pet ownership as a cost; rather it should be viewed as an investment in long life and happiness. (With the stock market the way it is these days, what better investment can you make??!!)

Our animal companions enrich our lives and give us a sense of optimism, safeguard us from depression and loneliness, and break down the barriers that isolate us from one another.

“The best kind of doctor is a vet. Nobody going to tell him what the problem is ... he just has to know!”

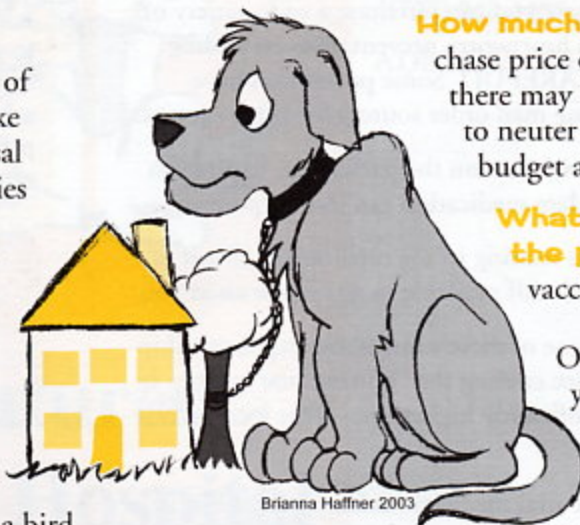
*Will Rodgers*

### Some Suggestions When Choosing a Pet

Now that you are armed with all of the necessary information to make you a strong advocate for universal pet ownership, here is a good series of questions that a potential pet owner (like your soon-to-be-pet-owning friends and family!) should first ask themselves:

**Do you have room for a pet?** Is there room for a large or small dog? If you leave early and get back late or travel a lot, maybe a cat, a small mammal or a bird would be better.

**What activities do you like?** If you are an outdoors person who loves to hike and walk, a dog would be great.



**Can you devote the time needed?** Some pets require more time than others.

**How much does a pet cost?** The purchase price of pets varies greatly. Additionally, there may be licensing fees and veterinary costs to neuter an unaltered pet. Make sure you budget accordingly.

**What sort of medical care has the pet had?** Has the pet received any vaccinations or had any problems?

Once a pet has been chosen, make your purchase conditional on having a veterinarian examine the pet to ensure its good health. Not all breeders and pet stores are created equal and conditions may vary greatly.

If your friend or family member is local, we would welcome the opportunity of performing a pre-purchase examination. As you know, we are here to help.

### FOOD ALLERGIES IN DOGS AND CATS

Experts suggest that 10% to 20% of all pets may exhibit some sort of allergy to food. Additionally, approximately 1% to 6% of pets exhibit some sort of dermatitis (skin disease) allergic reaction to food making food allergy the third most common hypersensitivity skin disease in dogs and cats.

#### Symptoms of a Food Allergy

- ◆ **Vomiting & diarrhea:** All of the gastrointestinal tract can be damaged by food allergies including stomach and small bowel dysfunction and inflammation of the large intestine.
- ◆ **Dermatologic (skin) reactions:** Dogs usually exhibit a Pruritic (itching) dermatitis which may also be accompanied by vomiting and diarrhea. Lesions around the ears are typically shown in a quarter of all dogs with adverse food while cats usually have bumps around their head and neck.

#### Causes of Food Allergies

Medium to large size proteins are the primary culprits because they are viewed by the animal's immune system as being foreign bodies. Close to two-thirds of food allergies in dogs are caused by certain proteins in dairy products, beef and wheat. In cats, 90% of their allergic reactions are caused by proteins in beef, fish and dairy products.

If you notice that your pet has signs of a food allergy, call us immediately for an evaluation. If an allergy is confirmed, we have the expertise and products to manage the problem and keep your beloved pet healthy and happy.



# ANIMAL HEALTH NEWS

## Be Careful Where You Purchase Your Pet's Medications

Almost nightly, various channels on cable television carry advertisements from "dot coms" or give an 800 number where you can purchase a wide variety of medications for your pet ranging from heartworm preventatives to leading flea-fighting products. PLEASE BE CAREFUL! Some pet owners have undergone frightening experiences using mail order sources for these reasons:

1. Received medications with an expired date on the packaging! Expiration dates serve a vital purpose and out-of-date medication can lose its potency.
2. Inability to ask important questions relating to the medication. Most of these sources don't have trained medical staff available to answer or assist you.
3. Higher than anticipated prices. Some of these sources add expensive shipping and handling charges to the invoice causing the "bottom line" cost to be much higher than anticipated and significantly higher than what local veterinary practices charge!
4. Lost shipments. Much needed and vital medications have gotten lost in the mail!
5. Receiving the wrong medication. Pet owners have complained of submitting an order and having their credit card charged only to receive the wrong item! Now the hassle of sending back the incorrect medication for credit and waiting for what is hoped to be the correct medication begins. Of course, during this waiting game, your pet is without needed medications! By comparison, our practice has been here for years and we know both you and your pet well. We won't ship the wrong medication or over-charge you. Also, we are pleased to answer any important medical questions concerning your pet. If there is a problem, we will do everything possible to make sure your pet has the correct medications in a convenient, efficient and economic manner. This is our pledge!

## Future Birth Control Vaccine for Dogs & Cats Being Studied

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could administer a birth control medication to your pet via a simple vaccination? Research is currently being conducted on just such a medication. At present, there are still several major obstacles that must be resolved:

- ◆ Females would still have a heat cycle complete with the mess that goes with it.
- ◆ Male reproductive behavior is still intact. Dogs will still want to travel to a neighboring female dog that is in heat and male cats may still exhibit some of their aggressive behavior.
- ◆ At present, several vaccinations in a series would be required for the medication to be effective. This can create scheduling problems for the owner.

Until these problems are corrected, the surgical altering of your pet is still the logical option for pet owners and, unless you desire to breed your pet, one that we strongly recommend. Please call us if you have any questions and/or to arrange to have your pet neutered.

## SPRINGTIME HEALTH SUGGESTIONS

We all love spring but it brings some unique problems that your pet (and you) must face. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Flea Prevention:** Never - in the long history of veterinary science - has there been such a wide variety of effective flea prevention and flea fighting products on the market. **NO PET AND NO PET OWNER SHOULD HAVE TO SUFFER FROM THE ILL EFFECTS OF A FLEA INFESTATION!** Please contact us for the right product that fits your pet's needs.



2. **Heartworm:** Warmer weather means that mosquitoes are soon to follow. Mosquitoes are the carrier of heartworm and, when they bite your pet, they also present the risk of infecting your pet with heartworm larvae. Depending upon the pet, we may want to examine the animal first prior to prescribing the correct heartworm preventative. Give us a call so that we can ensure your pet possesses the correct protection.

3. **Physical Examination:** If it has been a long time since we've examined your pet, now is a wonderful time to arrange for a physical examination. We will check his or her vital signs, do a blood test, examine his or her teeth, as well as performing a wide variety of examinations depending upon your pet's age and medical history.