

**NICKERSON
ANIMAL HEALTH
CENTER**

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INTRODUCTION

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CARE PROGRAM**

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NICKERSON ANIMAL HEALTH CENTER

"Where pets are friends and family"



WELCOME

On behalf of the staff, we welcome you to our family and thank you for entrusting your friend to our care. We are continually striving to improve the quality of veterinary health care and value your opinions regarding our services and areas where we can grow. The future of veterinary medicine is very bright and in future years we shall see major advancements in diagnosing and treating our friends. This handbook addresses a number of health problems and concerns that can assist you in providing your pet a long and healthy life.

PET HEALTH CARE

Our full time staff is here to care for your pet's medical needs including general health care, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, nutrition counseling, surgery, and a number of other services.

CURRENT OFFICE HOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mondays through Fridays: 7:30 am to 6 pm

Saturdays: 8 am to 12 noon



To assist you better, all visits should be scheduled in advance. To make an appointment, please call 925-8835 during office hours. If you are a new client, please have your pet's previous medical records forwarded to our office at least a week in advance and plan to arrive 15 minutes before your first visit to complete necessary paperwork. If you must cancel an appointment, please call our office at least 24 hours in advance out of consideration to others who may wish to be seen at that time.

If you have any questions of a general medical nature, feel free to call our office. Our staff has been trained to answer a wide range of general questions. They can also relay any concerns or questions to the doctor to be dealt with in a timely manner.

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES OFFERED TO OUR CLIENTS

If your pet has a medical emergency and needs immediate medical attention, please call our office at 925-8835. You will hear a taped message with our answering service number. Our answering service will take your name, number, and the nature of the problem and then page the doctor. Please use this service for emergencies only out of respect for the staff's personal time spent with their families. On occasion, a doctor other than one from Nickerson Animal Health Care will handle emergency calls. We offer emergency care 365 days a year.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Your medical records are strictly confidential and any information in them cannot be discussed or released to anyone without your expressed written permission.

PRESCRIPTION REFILLS

Please request refills of prescriptions during normal business hours, Monday through Saturday, preferably 48 hours in advance of when the prescription is needed. *Each prescription and refill needs a doctor's authorization before it can be honored. Please do not ask the doctor to treat new medical problems by prescribing medication over the phone.* Our medical standards and insurance company require examination of the patient prior to treating new conditions or a prior condition if indicated.

When you call for refills, please give your name, your pet's name, the name of the medication, and the strength of the medicine. This will help us greatly in our ability to assist you.

SERVICES

The following are some of the services we offer:

- Comprehensive physical examinations, preventative health care, and vaccinations
- Nutrition counseling
- Soft tissue and bone/joint surgery
- In house laboratory testing
- Digital radiology services (x-ray)
- Behavior counseling
- Dental care including dental x-rays, bonded sealants and surgical procedures
- Emergency care
- Laser surgery for many different surgical procedures.

FEES AND PAYMENT

You can help contain health care costs by paying in full upon completion of each visit. We accept cash, checks, Visa, MasterCard, Care Credit, and Discover Card. Other arrangements must be made in advance with the accounts manager. Feel free to discuss any questions you may have regarding your account.

***If you're interested in copies of any articles in this book, please let us know.**

PETS KEEP PEOPLE HEALTHY

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835



Dedicated pet owners shower limitless love and affection on their animals. This is reflected in a number of surveys:

- ◆ More than 70 percent of pet owners view their pets as children
- ◆ 48 percent depend on their pets emotionally
- ◆ 89 percent believe that their pets understand much of what they say
- ◆ 83 percent would risk their lives for pets.

As we treat our pets better, we reap benefits. Caring for a pet not only satisfies our desires to nurture and be needed and loved but also improves our overall emotional and physical health.

1. **Pets are good for the heart.**

Research has shown that pet ownership increases heart attack survival. One study reported in the *American Journal of Cardiology* in 1995, showed that only 1 of 87 dog owners that suffered heart attacks and irregular heart beats passed away, compared with 19 of 282 people who did not own dogs.

2. **Animals can help lower blood pressure.**

The blood pressure of dog owners decreased more around pets than with friends because people often are considered judgmental and this can increase stress. Another study revealed that the high blood pressure of elderly women living alone with little social support dropped significantly when they owned pets.

3. **Pet owners are more physically fit.**

Most pet owners are more athletic and more satisfied with their health than people who do not own pets. They generally have lower blood cholesterol and fewer heart problems and visit the doctor less according a study in Australia in 1994.

4. Animals improve older people's outlook.

Pets help senior citizens ease the grief they feel after a spouse's death. In addition, a study of children, depressed patients, and elderly people who live alone or in nursing homes showed that 12 out of 15 patients felt that animals lessened fears, despair, loneliness, and isolation. Living with a trusted pet also increases a senior citizen's sense of security.

5. Animals make great assistants.

Dogs assist people with vision and hearing problems and other physical disabilities. Social assistance dogs help people interact with others and gain acceptance as well as decrease loneliness. The dogs also reduce the need for human assistance up to 78 percent. Rehabilitation therapists also use animals to improve patients' balance and coordination. Children undergoing rehabilitation therapy often walk farther if a dog is in the room. And animals help children with emotional disorders to speak and interact with adults.

Though pets are not able to cure or prevent the above diseases, they do assist us in overcoming some of the obstacles we face. They can add years to our lives and life to our years. Pet owners need pets and pets need us. Keep you pet healthy and happy and nurture the special bond you have with your pet. Animals will feel better and you will enjoy a happier and healthier life as well.

Excerpted from an article by Marty Becker, DVM, in *Veterinary Economics*, Summer 1999



CHOOSING THE RIGHT PUPPY

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

Picking the right puppy can be a challenge. As a prospective owner, you should familiarize yourself with the characteristics of the breeds you are interested in. Of course, mixed breeds of dogs or "Heinz 57's" can also make fine pets. Other considerations are the size of the animal as an adult, coat care, and inherited medical conditions. In addition, your lifestyle and the size of your home and yard also play very important roles in the type of dog that is appropriate for you. If you have a small residence, a smaller pet would be more ideal and if you are rarely home, a bird or fish may be more suited for your schedule.

Pet stores and shelters are sources of puppies but a concern is information regarding the early influences of a puppy's life (ex. contact with people, early handling, nutrition and environment of the mother and pups). This lack of information may be a drawback since studies show that nutrition and social interactions in the early developmental stages can affect later behavioral development.

Predicting adult behavior based upon puppy behavior is usually unreliable. Many factors will enter into a pet's adult behavior. Environmental factors, genetics, and breed characteristics play important roles. The behavior seen at 6 to 8 weeks of age can change as the puppy matures.

When a puppy is first approached, it may come close, run away, or do nothing. A puppy that approaches people is usually outgoing and friendly. As an adult, this puppy may be more assertive than other dogs. A puppy that does not readily approach people or runs away may be shy and fearful. As an adult, this puppy may be withdrawn, fearful, and uneasy in more activity filled situations. A puppy that does not move toward or away from people until something distracts it from its littermates may simply be busy with something else. Also keep in mind that a puppy that does nothing may be ill.

Ideally, as a possible new owner, you should visit with a puppy in an isolated area away from littermates to see how the puppy reacts. Does it readily follow you and allow handling of its feet, face, and other body parts? Does it act playful in response to your interaction with it? These times spent with the puppy may give you some idea of the puppy's temperament. Meeting the mother and father of the puppy may also provide information about the puppy's potential temperament.

Generally, the best time to obtain a new puppy is when it is between 6 and 8 weeks of age. The puppy will have had a time to be with other dogs and learn appropriate interactions with dogs but will still be open to new experiences. Moreover, during those first 6 to 8 weeks the puppy should have interacted with people and been handled. At this age, puppies are willing to bond with new people.

Excerpted from an article by DEBRA F. HORWITZ, DVM, Veterinary Behavior Consultation, 1242G Natural Bridge Rd., Bridgeton, MO 63044

CANINE HEALTH RECORD

Pet name _____

Date of birth _____

Sex _____

Breed _____

Owner _____

Nickerson Animal Health Center
 921 Nickerson Ave.
 Benton Harbor, MI 49022
 (269) 925-8835
 nahc@att.net

Date							
Weight							
4 way vaccine (distemper, parvo, hepatitis, parainfluenza)							
Rabies vaccine							
Bordetella (kennel cough)							
Leptospirosis vaccine							
Lyme vaccine							
Intestinal parasite check							
Heartworm test & preventative							

HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR DOGS

6 TO 8 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • First vaccine (protection for 4 diseases, the core vaccines including distemper and parvo) • Laboratory examination of stool for parasites • Start heartworm preventative with an intestinal dewormer, give year round. • If warm weather is present, start a monthly topical treatment for fleas, flea eggs and ticks.
12 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • Second vaccine • Recheck stool if positive at first visit • Consider first vaccination for Lyme disease and Leptospirosis if at risk, can be started at a later date too depending on size of the pet
16 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • Third vaccine • Recheck stool if positive at second visit • Rabies vaccine (first vaccine protects for one year) • Second vaccine for Lyme and Leptospirosis 1 month after the first of the series
4 - 6 MONTHS OLD	• Spay (before first "heat") or castrate
1 YR 4 MOS. OLD (approximately)	• Comprehensive physical examination • Booster with the four way vaccine (distemper/parvo), lasts for three years • Laboratory examination of stool for parasites • Three year rabies vaccine • Update Lyme and Leptospirosis vaccines
YEARLY THEREAFTER	• Comprehensive physical examination • Booster Lyme and Leptospirosis vaccines • Laboratory examination of stool for parasites • Heartworm test each spring and preventative medication year round
IF YOUR DOG BOARDS OR IS GROOMED	• We strongly recommend the bordetella vaccine

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PLAN

A long, healthy life for your pet is our primary objective. As pet owners, we have a moral obligation to supply the appropriate food, shelter, and health care for our friends that can not speak for themselves. Below we have outlined the areas that are important in order to achieve our goals. Together we can add years to their life and life to our years.

Physical examinations

Comprehensive physicals supply critical information for the doctor and many times reveal the first indication of a health problem. We do not have a substitute for a good examination and history. They are as important as any medication or vaccine and their value cannot be over-emphasized. Twice a year examination is recommended considering that over this period your pet may age 4-7 years.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations have greatly reduced diseases that only a short time ago were prevalent: distemper, parvo, and rabies for example. Not all pets require all the vaccines but all pets need some vaccines, even those friends that are indoors. We will make our best recommendations based on your pet's risk of acquiring the diseases.

Nutrition

Research in the area of food science has grown dramatically over the recent past. Healthy pets have benefited from foods developed specifically for their stage in life to meet the body's changing nutritional requirements. Specific foods to help the heart, kidneys, liver, diabetes, obesity, urinary tract disease are also a few examples. Feeding your pet high quality food for its age and health condition will assist in prolonging a healthy life.

Check for internal parasites (fecals) and heartworm testing for dogs and prevention for dogs and cats

A good number of parasites that pets carry can affect their health and spread to people causing serious health problems especially in children (see "Important Information Regarding Parasites and Your Family"). A routine check twice a year is highly recommended.

Heartworms primarily infect dogs but cats can also acquire them. Testing dogs each spring and placing both dogs and cats on a monthly preventative are important steps to prevent this life threatening disease.

"Over 40" (6 years of age or older) examinations and diagnostic work

Aging of your pet over the years can affect the health of the major organs systems. Depending on their size, pets age the equivalent of 4-7 human years for each year of their life. Early detection and treatment of diseases enables us to extend and improve the quality of your friend's life. Though people are not considered "old" when they are over 40, they begin to have regular physicals, bloodwork, prostate checks, mammograms, etc. We strongly recommend yearly examinations and testing to keep your pet healthy.

Exercise and attention

Both dogs and cats thrive on interaction with people and exercise keeps the body stronger and healthier. Slow down, spend some extra time with your four-legged friend, enjoy that soft purr, and let those big brown eyes melt your heart.

SPAYING OR CASTRATING YOUR PET

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Pets are our friends, companions, and members of our families, however 11 to 20 million dogs and cats are euthanized each year because they are unwanted. Two cats producing eight kittens a year could build a family tree of over 174,000 cats within seven years.

Female and male cats are capable of reproducing by the time they are six months of age. Females come into heat cycles every three to four weeks during certain times of the year. Many female cats will become nervous and exhibit rolling on the floor and crying when they are in "heat" and they are capable of having at least 2 litters a year.

Male and female dogs are often able to reproduce between the ages of six to nine months of age. Female dogs go through an estrus ("heat period") about every 6 months. They have a proestrus period when they are spotting blood for 7 to 10 days followed by the true heat period which may last for several days or up to three or four weeks. Often the female dogs will experience personality changes such as becoming short-tempered or anxious during this time.

Female dogs and cats benefit greatly from being spayed. This surgery eliminates the heat cycles and also reduces the risk of uterine infections, uterine cancer, difficult or dangerous pregnancies, and breast cancer. The best time to spay your female pet is *before the first heat*, generally around 4 to 6 months of age. The surgery is called an ovariohysterectomy and it requires that your pet be anesthetized, her belly shaved, and an incision made to remove both the ovaries and the uterus. She is generally hospitalized for one night and at home she will need to keep her activity level down for a period of time. Generally the sutures will be removed about 10 - 14 days after going home.

Male dogs and cats benefit from castration since this surgery eliminates the possibility of testicular cancer and some prostate problems. Neutering also eliminates the desire to roam which greatly increases the chances of contracting diseases, fighting, and being hit by a vehicle. When a young animal is castrated this also helps to discourage aggression and indoor urination. We recommend neutering animals four to six months of age. Male dogs and cats are sent home the same day as surgery and dogs may or may not have sutures while cats generally do not have sutures. Both male dogs and cats need to have their activity levels decreased for a period of time at home.

It is a myth that spaying or castrating your dog or cat will change his or her whole personality. Your pet will not become depressed, have a drastic personality change, become obese or lazy because of surgery. Repeated research has shown that *overeating and lack of exercise are the most common causes of weight gain in pets.*

(over)

Important facts regarding spaying your female pet:

- If spayed before the first "heat", your pet will have a less than 1 percent chance of developing breast cancer.
- If your pet is spayed after one heat cycle, your friend has about an 8 percent chance of developing breast cancer.
- If your pet is spayed after 2 heat cycles, the risk increases to 26 percent.
- After 4 or 5 heat periods, (about 2 years of age), spaying will not reduce the risk of breast cancer but it can help prevent other reproductive health problems.

If you have any questions about your pet's health or would like more information concerning the above procedures, please feel free to call our office. We can arrange to speak with one of the doctors or send you more information if necessary. Thank you.



CANINE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Certain infectious diseases may affect your dog and may be so serious that prevention is the only way to avoid death or a disabling illness. As a pet owner, it is important to understand the threat of infectious diseases to your dog's health and to provide a lifetime health care program to ensure long term health and happiness. It is significantly less costly to prevent diseases than to treat them.

Most common infectious diseases can be prevented by routine vaccinations and examinations. Like children, we do not put them at risk if we can avoid it. Among the diseases that your dog can be protected against are Parvovirus, Distemper, Hepatitis, respiratory diseases, and Rabies.

Puppies receive some temporary protection through the mother's milk the first few days of life. This natural protection begins to disappear over 6 to 16 weeks of age and as a result there is not a clearly defined period when vaccines should start. Most vaccination programs begin when puppies are 6 to 8 weeks of age.

Vaccines typically provide effective disease protection in more than 95% of all animal vaccinated but it should be kept in mind that no vaccine is 100% effective in all animals. For your part you can help your dog maintain its good health by periodic examinations and vaccinations.

CANINE PARVOVIRUS

Parvovirus is a highly contagious virus that may cause severe vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Symptoms may also include a fever, lack of energy, and loss of appetite. The heart muscle may also be affected in very young puppies and may cause death. The severity of the disease varies from mild signs to dehydration, shock, and death. The disease is most severe in young puppies and possibly older animals. Early recognition of the symptoms and very aggressive treatment may be lifesaving.

Transmission of the virus occurs through feces and can be transported on the hair and feet of infected dogs, clothing of people, water and food bowls, etc. This organism is very resistant to dying and can persist in the environment for many months. Restricting contact of your dog with other dogs and their stool and using a bleach/water solution can control the spread of the disease somewhat. Vaccination however is the best method to prevent this potentially fatal disease.

CANINE DISTEMPER

Canine distemper is a contagious virus seen most frequently in puppies but dogs of all ages are at risk. It is spread through the feces of infected dogs and early signs of disease are fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, mild inflammation of the eyes, and possibly a discharge from the nose. As the disease progresses, increased amounts of discharge from the eyes and nose occur as well as diarrhea, pneumonia, convulsions, and possibly paralysis as it attacks the nervous system.

Distemper is a difficult disease to treat successfully and almost all infected animals die. Vaccination remains your best defense against this disease. Raccoons can harbor the virus in the wild.

CANINE HEPATITIS

Infectious canine hepatitis is caused by a contagious virus that primarily affects a dog's liver. Early signs are similar to those found with canine distemper and may also cause respiratory tract disease. This disease is transmitted between dogs by direct contact with infected urine, saliva, and feces. The dog hepatitis virus does not cause hepatitis in people. Vaccination is very effective in preventing this disease.

KENNEL COUGH

Commonly called *kennel cough* but more correctly referred to as *tracheobronchitis*, this is a disease that can be caused by a variety of organisms: viruses such as adenovirus 1 and 2, parainfluenza, and bacteria such as *Bordetella*, and possibly others. These are highly contagious and airborne agents that can cause inflammation of the lung tissues and possible pneumonia.

Symptoms of the disease include a harsh, nonproductive cough that can occasionally be severe. It is usually a self-limiting disease unless pneumonia develops. Situations where exposure can occur include but are not limited to boarding, dog show events, grooming, etc., i.e. anywhere dogs gather in a building. Vaccinations are recommended to help minimize the chance of the disease from occurring, however due to the variety of organisms that may be involved, complete protection is difficult.



RABIES

Rabies is a fatal disease that affects the central nervous system of almost all mammals including humans. It is a virus that is spread by contact with saliva through bites or a break in the skin. Vaccination gives your dog a great deal of protection in case of exposure to rabies but a cure is not available once symptoms occur. A person exposed to rabies must undergo a series of injections to prevent this fatal disease. For this reason, local ordinances and state law require that all dogs have a current rabies vaccination. The first vaccination protects your friend for a year and subsequent injections provide 3 years of protection.

You can provide a lifetime of health and happiness for your pet by vaccinating your pet at the appropriate times and having periodic examinations. Since pets can not take the necessary steps to ensure their health care, it our moral responsibility to be sure that we provide the best level of care for them. Together we can give them the best possible chance for a long and healthy life.





Frequently Asked Questions

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. It is caused by bacteria of the genus *Leptospira*. In humans it causes a wide range of symptoms, and some infected persons may have no symptoms at all. Symptoms of leptospirosis include high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, and vomiting, and may include jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or a rash. If the disease is not treated, the patient could develop kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), liver failure, and respiratory distress. In rare cases death occurs.

Many of these symptoms can be mistaken for other diseases. Leptospirosis is confirmed by laboratory testing of a blood or urine sample.

How do people get leptospirosis?

Outbreaks of leptospirosis are usually caused by exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. Many different kinds of animals carry the bacterium; they may become sick but sometimes have no symptoms. *Leptospira* organisms have been found in cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, rodents, and wild animals. Humans become infected through contact with water, food, or soil containing urine from these infected animals. This may happen by swallowing contaminated food or water or through skin contact, especially with mucosal surfaces, such as the eyes or nose, or with broken skin. The disease is not known to be spread from person to person.

How long is it between the time of exposure and when people become sick?

The time between a person's exposure to a contaminated source and becoming sick is 2 days to 4 weeks. Illness usually begins abruptly with fever and other symptoms. Leptospirosis may occur in two phases; after the first phase, with fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, vomiting, or diarrhea, the patient may recover for a time but become ill again. If a second phase occurs, it is more severe; the person may have kidney or liver failure or meningitis. This phase is also called Weil's disease.

The illness lasts from a few days to 3 weeks or longer. Without treatment, recovery may take several months.

Where is leptospirosis found?

Leptospirosis occurs worldwide but is most common in temperate or tropical climates. It is an occupational hazard for many people who work outdoors or with animals, for example, farmers, sewer workers, veterinarians, fish workers, dairy farmers, or military personnel. It is a recreational hazard for campers or those who participate in outdoor sports in contaminated areas and has been associated with swimming, wading, and whitewater rafting in contaminated lakes and rivers. The incidence is also increasing among urban children.

Frequently Asked Questions - Leptospirosis

(continued from previous page)

How is leptospirosis treated?

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics, such as doxycycline or penicillin, which should be given early in the course of the disease. Intravenous antibiotics may be required for persons with more severe symptoms. Persons with symptoms suggestive of leptospirosis should contact a health care provider.

Can leptospirosis be prevented?

The risk of acquiring leptospirosis can be greatly reduced by not swimming or wading in water that might be contaminated with animal urine. Protective clothing or footwear should be worn by those exposed to contaminated water or soil because of their job or recreational activities.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_q.htm, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY).

LEPTOSPIROSIS

What Every Dog Owner Should Know
From
The College of Veterinary Medicine
Michigan State University

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by infection with one of the more than 250 types of bacteria called *Leptospira*. These bacteria can infect any mammal, including humans. *Leptospira* live in warm, wet environments like damp grass, standing water, mud, and lakes. Under ideal conditions, the bacteria can survive more than three months outside the body.

How is Leptospirosis Transmitted?

Leptospirosis is most often transmitted to dogs through mucous-membrane (mouth, nose, eye) contact with the urine of infected animals. Raccoons, skunks, opossums, rats, cows, and pigs are all known carriers of the infection. Dogs can also become infected from close contact with another infected dog. Because of the broad range of carrier species, any dog—even one briefly outdoors in an urban backyard—is vulnerable to the disease.

How Can Leptospirosis Affect My Dog?

Leptospirosis can cause a broad range of clinical signs in any combination. The most common early indicators of *Leptospira* infection are: loss of appetite, increased or decrease in urine production, uncharacteristic inactivity, vomiting, diarrhea. Even with prompt exhaustive medical care, 10 to 15 percent of infected dogs may die. Left untreated, many infected dogs die of kidney or liver failure.

How Do I Prevent Leptospirosis?

For most dogs, limiting exposure to the outdoors is neither practical nor desirable. Vaccination is the best way to prevent Leptospirosis. There are a number of vaccine options and vaccination schedules. Discuss the benefits and risks of Leptospirosis vaccination with your dog's veterinary medical provider.

What Do I Do if I Suspect Leptospirosis?

If you suspect your dog may have Leptospirosis, **CONTACT YOUR VETERINARY MEDICAL PROVIDER**. Your veterinarian can assess your dog's condition and order any necessary diagnostic tests. Early diagnosis, treatment, and supportive care are essential to giving your dog the best chance for survival. Humans are also vulnerable to Leptospirosis. If your dog is diagnosed with leptospirosis, consider medical assessment for anyone in close contact with the animal.

This fact sheet is provided by the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health as a public service. It is not intended to diagnose any disease. Please contact your veterinary medical provider if you have questions regarding this or any other medical issue.

NUTRITION AND YOUR PET

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

The science of nutrition has expanded greatly over the recent years and never before have we had available the high quality, research-based foods that we have today. It is very important to match the lifestage and lifestyle with the diet that we feed. Too much or too little of certain nutrients (such as vitamins, calcium, and protein) can be harmful. Over time, these nutritional imbalances can lead to disorders and diseases such as improper growth, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and other ailments.

Our Health Center strongly encourages the following practices regarding your pet's diet:

- **Dry food** is preferable over canned or moistened food. Dry food can be left out for your pet to eat later without becoming spoiled, it is better for the health of the teeth, and it is more economical (canned food is about 75% water).
- **Puppy or kitten food** should be fed for the first year of life. It is higher in calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals for bone and muscle development.
- **Adult dog and cat food** should be fed from 1 year of age to about 6 or 7 years of age with some variations. Adult food is lower in calories, protein, etc. The ideal dog food is low fat and high-fiber.
- For the average dog, it is not necessary to feed dog foods higher than 20-25% in protein (dry food). The protein in food is used to replace that which the body has lost in day to day living. Protein above what the body needs is used as energy and more waste material is produced that the liver and kidneys must process.
- Consider feeding **senior foods** for animals over 6 or 7 years of age. These foods are formulated to have lower levels of calories for less active animals and are more restricted in minerals, proteins, etc.
- Cats should be fed cat food only since they contain a specific amino acid important for eyesight and they have a higher concentration of calories. Dogs that eat cat food become overweight quickly, therefore dog foods are healthier.
- There are a number of foods available for certain situations such as weight loss, stomach and intestinal problems, control of hairballs, urinary tract health, etc. Please feel free to consult our office if you are considering a special diet for your friend.
- For adult cats, we strongly recommend a diet that is low in magnesium and produces urine with a low pH (acidic urine). Such a diet aids in the prevention of struvite crystals, bladder infections, and obstructions of the urinary tract.
- We strongly discourage feeding table food to pets. It is unbalanced and will make the pet selective for only those foods in the future. In addition it encourages begging, obesity, and a shortened life. *Meat bones of any type should not be fed* as they can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea, and death. "Large" bones are not safer than small bones due to small bone fragments that can be removed by powerful jaws.
- Cat and dog treats can be fed but *in moderation*. If we snack too much, we will become overweight. The same is true of pet treats so please use them carefully. (over)

Dogs seem to have an endless capacity to overeat. Not surprising, since their ancestors had to gorge themselves whenever they encountered food. As a result, a dog's meal plan must be regulated closely. A good rule is to feed your dog limited amounts of food once or twice a day. Many containers of dog food have recommendations on the amount of food to feed your pet. These should be viewed as starting points as some animals will need more or less food than on the label based on their exercise levels, etc.

Puppies play hard and nap frequently. From birth to 12 months of age, they require more nutrition than older dogs. Feed a puppy two to three times a day at consistent times. This method will not only benefit a puppy's diet but it will establish eating patterns that create a more dependable schedule for housetraining. As an adult, it is only necessary to feed your friend once or twice a day at most.

As pets move through life, it is essential to recognize that how they are fed is as important as what they are fed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PARASITES, DISEASES AND YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Pets are important members of the American family and an integral part of society. Dogs and cats are found more often in homes with young children who experience close physical contact with these animals. In addition, wild animals are very common in urban and suburban areas and the opportunity for contact between these animals and people has increased significantly.

Unfortunately, dogs, cats, and wild animals are commonly infected with intestinal parasites or diseases, several which can cause mild to life threatening illnesses in people, especially children. The main source of human exposure to these parasites is through fecal contamination of the environment by dogs, cats, and wild animals such as raccoons. Consequently long term sources of exposure to people, in particular children, can occur. It should be noted that dogs and cats are *not* a source of human pinworms.

ASCARIDS (roundworms)

The dog roundworm is one of the most common parasites acquired by people and less frequently, people can become infected by the cat roundworm. People, especially children, can become infected by consuming infective eggs from contaminated areas or articles such as soil, hands, food, toys, etc. Additional sources of infection can include parks, playgrounds, schoolyards, and other public places contaminated by dogs or cats. Puppies especially are infected by roundworms and in several surveys 90 to 100% of puppies under 3 months of age were found to be infected. Infections can also occur in adult dogs.

Puppies can acquire roundworms before birth and it is generally accepted that nearly all puppies are born infected with the parasite. Some additional parasites are acquired during nursing as they are passed in the mother's milk. Puppies consequently shed tremendous numbers of eggs in their feces beginning as early as 2 ½ to 3 weeks of age.

An adult female roundworm can produce more than 100,000 eggs per day. At Purdue University, a study showed that two puppies with *low* worm burdens, in a single week could pass over 20 million eggs in a yard. At suitable temperatures, eggs become infective in two to four weeks and they can remain viable in the soil for several years. The eggs are very resistant to dying and heat is by far the best method for killing them. Commonly used methods are boiling water, a propane flame gun, steam cleaner, etc. The eggs are very sticky and will adhere to various objects such as toys, fingers, food, and furniture.

will our pets be protected but our families will be protected also. Parents should monitor young children to prevent ingestion of materials in the yard and stress the importance of handwashing, especially after contact with outdoor areas and animals.

HOOKWORMS

Hookworms are very common intestinal parasites of dogs and cats. Larvae can penetrate and migrate in the human skin causing a condition known as cutaneous larval migrans or "creeping eruption". Migration tracks in the skin occur and they are very itchy. Fortunately this is a self-limiting condition that resolves in several weeks to months but it needs to be diagnosed and treated by a physician. During the past decade the dog hookworm has been found to cause human intestinal disease. Symptoms may include acute or chronic abdominal pain and treatment is straightforward and simple.

Dogs should be on a monthly heartworm preventative year round that also contains medicine to treat hookworms and roundworms and cats should be on monthly Revolution.

TAPEWORMS

One of the most common tapeworms is carried by the flea. Nearly all human cases have involved children who became infected by ingesting fleas containing larvae. Symptoms include mild stomach and intestinal upsets, loss of appetite, and scratching of the anal area due to migrating tapeworm segments. The infection is easily treated and preventative measures include treating and controlling tapeworms and fleas in dogs and cats and teaching children proper hygienic behavior.

Other tapeworms that can infect people are much more serious. When an egg is consumed, it hatches, penetrates the intestine and migrates to the liver or other location where it develops into a slow growing, fluid filled cysts. As they enlarge, they interfere with the normal function of the organ they inhabit. The cysts may rupture or leak fluid in the patient's abdomen, releasing many more tapeworms of the same stage that will develop into new cysts.

Using an effective monthly flea treatment year round such as Frontline Plus in dogs and Revolution in cats will also greatly decrease the exposure to tapeworms.

STRATEGIC DEWORMING

The goal of strategic deworming is to prevent environmental contamination with eggs, and thus future transmission and reinfection. The current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, the National Center for Infectious Diseases, and the American Association of Veterinary Pathologists are:

- Deworm all puppies for roundworms and hookworms beginning at 2 weeks of age and again at 4, 6, and 8 weeks of age.
- Since cats do not acquire the round and hookworms before birth, it is recommended that they be dewormed at 6, 8, and 10 weeks of age.
- Nursing females should be treated at the same time because they often have adult worm infections.
- Newly acquired, weaned puppies and kittens should be dewormed immediately with at least 2 more treatments at two week intervals to ensure elimination of all developing worms. Any worms that are passed should be collected and destroyed by putting in trash, flushing down a toilet or destroy by burning.
- After 8-10 weeks of age, puppies and kittens should be treated monthly until they are at least 6 months of age.
- Have a stool sample from your pet(s) checked at least once a year or more frequently if indicated by your veterinarian.
- **Monthly heartworm preventatives that also contain medicine to kill roundworms and hookworms should also be used: Heartgard Plus and Interceptor for dogs and Revolution for cats.**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Strategic deworming should be combined with a comprehensive environmental control program. **Fresh feces containing undeveloped roundworm eggs are not dangerous and removal of dog, raccoon, or other feces at least weekly will remove most eggs before they develop into infective stages.**

Dealing with established environmental contamination is more difficult due to the very resistant and long lived eggs. Environmental contamination of public parks, playgrounds, beaches, and other areas can be decreased by enforcing leash laws, fecal cleanup ordinances, excluding dogs from these areas, and controlling strays. Sandbox areas should be kept covered.

Commonly used disinfectants will not kill roundworm eggs. Heat is the best method as mentioned before and includes boiling water, propane flame gun, steam cleaners, etc. Also, identifying and locating raccoon latrines, removing the feces and any material in the area if possible, burning the area, and instructing children to avoid known bathroom areas and using good hygiene are very important foundations to help prevent infection.

If you have any questions about any personal health problems, we strongly encourage you to contact your family physician and discuss your concerns. If you need additional

In people, eggs that are accidentally consumed will hatch in the intestine, penetrate through the wall and enter the circulation and are eventually distributed throughout the body and enter a variety of tissues. The larva do not grow larger but they cause damage to tissues including the liver, lungs, heart, brain and eyes. A person may experience fever, pain in the abdomen, coughing, blindness, etc. Fortunately the most common form of human infection does not have symptoms and infection is not apparent. However, this should not minimize the importance of good and careful hygiene.

RACCOON ROUNDWORMS (*Baylisascaris*)

The raccoon roundworm is much more dangerous than the dog roundworm and prevention of human infection is critical, especially for small children. Because of the high population densities of raccoons in many urban and suburban areas, raccoon fecal contamination is also common in these areas, and the potential for human contact and infection is high.

Raccoons establish communal bathrooms at the base of trees or on horizontal surfaces such as large logs, stumps, rocks, woodpiles, rooftops, decks, and patios. The raccoon roundworm is a common and widespread parasite in the United States with prevalence rates as high as 68% to 82%. Infected raccoons can shed millions of eggs per day leading to extensive environmental contamination. Eggs become infective in 2 to 4 or more weeks and can remain infective in the soil for years. Dogs can become infected by eating raccoon droppings or rodents that carry the larvae.

Infection of people was first recognized in the 1980's. Larvae were found in the brains of children who died of neurological diseases and in the eyes of people. The larvae can enter various internal organs and tissues and undergo aggressive migration. In addition, they can grow considerably which is a key factor in the illness that they cause. Children who survive may have profound neurologic impairment ranging from partial paralysis to a chronic vegetative state.

The primary sources of human infection are raccoons droppings so keeping raccoons as pets obviously would increase the likelihood of exposure (there have been several reported cases). Keeping raccoons or any wild animal is illegal without a special permit from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Because of the health aspect and the law, keeping or aiding raccoons is strongly discouraged.

Raccoons should also not be encouraged to visit our yards. This requires being sure that garbage is properly stored, food is not left out after a backyard party or barbecue, removing bird feeders if raccoons are attracted by them, etc. Young children should be taught to recognize and avoid raccoon latrines and these sites should be cleaned up and decontaminated if possible (see Environmental Control). Nuisance raccoons may need to be trapped and removed. Because dogs can also become infected, they should undergo periodic fecal exams and be on a strategic deworming program. **Dogs should be on a monthly heartworm preventative year round that also contains medicine to treat hookworms and roundworms and cats should be on monthly Revolution.** Not only

information regarding parasites and your pets, we strongly encourage you to contact our office.

Specific references regarding the above information are available upon request.

The above information was excerpted from "Protecting Children From Helminthic Zoonoses" written by Kevin R. Kazacos, DVM, PhD, Professor of Veterinary Pathology and Director of the Clinical Parasitology Laboratory in the School of Veterinary Medicine at Purdue University.

PROTECTING YOUR PET AT HOME

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

- Pet proof your home by eliminating unsafe conditions and substances. Remember, your puppy or kitten is much closer to the ground than you and can find small objects which may be swallowed. Most young pets are curious and will chew or taste almost anything they find, so take the same precautions with medications, household products, insecticides, electrical wires, etc. as you would with a toddler.
- Know where your pet is at all times. Pets like to investigate and sometimes hide in or get locked in strange places. Do a pet check before leaving a room, leaving the house, or going to bed. Consider attaching a bell to your pet's collar to keep track of it in the house.
- It is safer and wiser to generally keep your pet indoors. When it is necessary to take your pet outdoors, be sure he/she has a collar with attached identification. Do not leave your pet outdoors alone unless they are in a very secure area and only for short periods of time.
- Provide a bed for your pet in a safe, draft-free spot in your home. Avoid moving the bed once his/her "place" is established.
- Teach basic obedience to your friend as it may save his/her life in the future.
- Keep fresh water in a clean bowl available for your pet. Feed an appropriate food for the life stage of your friend: puppy/kitten, adult, senior.
- Exercise your puppy/dog or kitten/cat daily by walking or playing with them.
- Groom your pet on a regular basis. If you need assistance or tips, please feel free to discuss this with our staff.
- Become familiar with your puppy's or kitten's normal appearance and behavior. The more familiar you are with your pet's appearance and personality, the easier it will be for you to see the signs of illness or injury. Examine the various areas of your pet's body frequently. This will help alert you to a developing problem and make treatment easier.
- Give your friend plenty of attention each day!

Excerpted from the brochure "SummerPet Care Tips" produced by the Ralston Purina Company, 1999.

TEN TIPS FOR PREVENTING PET BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

1. Set rules immediately and stick to them.
2. Avoid situations that you know will promote inappropriate behavior in your pet. For example, leaving clothing on the floor that your pet may chew, feeding human food which may lead to begging, etc.
3. Observe your pet and provide what it needs in terms of attention, etc.
4. Supervise your new pet diligently through individual attention and training, and restrict its access to a limited area of the house until training is complete.
5. Encourage good behavior with praise and attention.
6. Correct bad behaviors by providing positive alternatives (substitute a toy for pets instead of a slipper, a scratching post instead of the sofa, etc.)
7. Do *not* physically punish or force a pet to comply to commands. This may lead to fear biting or aggression. If you have a puppy, see **"Disciplining a Puppy"**.
8. Do not play rough or encourage aggression or play biting. Do not allow your puppy/kitten to place their mouth on any body part.
9. Expose pets to different people, animals, and environments to desensitize them to new situations.
10. Please call our office if serious or unresolved behavior problems exist.



SAFETY AROUND PETS for CHILDREN

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Proper behavior with dogs and cats includes...

- Treating them with kindness.
- Approaching them from the front and not startling them
- Asking their owner's permission before petting.
- Letting them sniff you before you begin petting.
- Standing still and being quiet when they approach you.
- Letting them know you are nearby by talking softly and not startling them.

If threatened by a dog...

- Remain calm and quiet.
- Most dogs will only sniff you, decide you are not a threat, and then walk away. Try to remain motionless until the dog moves away, and then back up slowly until he or she is out of sight.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your face and head and remain motionless. Try not to scream or roll around.

Dogs and cats **do not** like it when you...

- Run past them or turn your back on them and run away. (A dog's instinct is to chase and catch fleeing prey).
- Approach them when they are confined or restrained, especially dogs that do not know you.
- Disturb them when they are sleeping, eating, or guarding something. (Dogs naturally guard their food, puppies, and toys. Dogs also protect their owners and the property that belongs to owners such as homes, yards, or cars). Cats may also be protective of their food, toys, etc.
- Put your hands between them and another dog.
- Put your face too close to theirs.
- Pull anything out of their mouth, such as a chew bone, toy, food, or stick.
- Pick them up and carry them especially if they are not yours.
- Chase or tease them.
- Approach them if they are injured or sick. Tell an adult about an injured dog or cat so it can be helped.

BRINGING A NEW PUPPY HOME

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

A puppy needs a quiet, safe place to stay when unsupervised. This can be a small room or a crate. A comfortable crate can minimize destruction, maximize house-training efforts, and protect a puppy from injury. The crate should be large enough to accommodate the puppy as an adult. For large breeds, it may be necessary to place a partition made of wood in the crate to initially create a small, cozy space. As the puppy grows, the wall can be moved and eventually removed.

When introducing a puppy to a crate, you should first use the crate as a resting and feeding spot and you should always associate pleasant experiences with the crate. If the puppy cries at first, it should be kept in the crate until it is quiet and then removed. You should not leave the puppy in the crate for so long that it must eliminate in it. In addition, water and food should not be left in it overnight. Keep in mind that the puppy must have plenty of opportunity to exercise and to eliminate outdoors. A crate is not an excuse to ignore a puppy. If you are gone from the house 8 to 10 hours at a time, the puppy should not be left in a crate all day long. For further information regarding crates, please refer to "Using a Dog Crate".

Puppies are impressionable at this young age and are willing to bond with people. What is needed for bonding is calm, patient, consistent attention. As an owner you will need to become familiar with the routine for eating, voiding, and playing, and you will need to strive for positive interactions, not negative. You should spend a large amount of time with a new puppy. One method is to leash the puppy in the room that you are in. This allows the puppy to be with you yet avoid getting into trouble. The puppy should see you as a source of affection, interaction, and comfort. Puppies deprived of human interaction for long periods of time will often resort to attention getting behaviors such as jumping upon people, running, and play biting.

Supervision is important when introducing a puppy to other dogs already in a family. The puppy and the other dog(s) should be on leashes and you should allow short, supervised interactions between the animals and separate them before they get uncomfortable. You should gradually increase the time the dogs are together and reward them for their good behavior.



HOW TO HOUSEBREAK YOUR NEW PUPPY

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Start at an ideal age.

The best time to begin housebreaking a puppy is when it is 7 to 8 ½ weeks old. At this age, you can teach the puppy where to eliminate before it has established its own preferences. But don't worry if your puppy is older when you start housebreaking – it will still learn though it may take a little longer.

Six to eight times a day, take your puppy outdoors to eliminate.

Choose an appropriate spot to take the puppy immediately after it wakes up, after play sessions, and 15-30 minutes after meals. If you take your puppy to the same spot every day, previous odors will stimulate it to urinate and defecate. Many puppies need 15 to 20 minutes of moving around and sniffing before they eliminate. Stay with the puppy the whole time. Housebreaking problems can result if you are unsure whether the puppy actually eliminated and you let it return to the house too soon. And remember, the puppy needs to focus on the job at hand, so do not play with it until it has eliminated.

Use a key phrase while your puppy eliminates.

If you repeat the same phrase (ex. "go potty" or "take care of business") every time your puppy eliminates outdoors, it will learn that this phrase means that it's the right time and place to eliminate.

Once the puppy eliminates outdoors, reward it immediately.

Reward the puppy by praising it, giving a treat, or playing with it. But remember to reward it right away. The puppy will not learn to eliminate outdoors if the reward comes when it returns to the house. Instead, the puppy will think that it's being rewarded for coming inside.

Supervise the puppy indoors as well as outdoors.

Find a room in your house that allows you to watch your puppy as much as possible. This will help you catch the puppy if it starts to eliminate indoors. You can also leash the puppy or place a bell on its collar to keep track of it.

When you leave home, put the puppy in a crate.

When you can't supervise your puppy, leave it in a small puppy-proof area such as a crate. If the crate is large enough to accommodate the puppy as an adult, partition it to avoid having the puppy eliminate at one end and sleep in the other. Remember also that the young puppies' bladder and bowel capacities are limited, so let the puppy out at least every 4 hours.

(Over)

Don't punish after the fact.

If your puppy has an accident in the house, don't go get the puppy and rub its nose in it. This does not help because the misbehavior has already occurred. Instead, try to *catch the puppy in the act*. If you see the puppy getting ready to housesoil, don't swat it, but stomp your foot, shake a can filled with pennies, or startle the puppy by yelling "outside". The puppy will likely stop what it is doing and you can take it outdoors to eliminate.

Don't leave food out all day.

Feed your puppy 2 or 3 times a day, at set times every day, and remove the food bowl after 20 minutes. This will create regular intervals at which the puppy will need to eliminate.

Thoroughly clean areas where the puppy has eliminated in the house.

We can recommend a safe, effective product that removes both stain and odors. It is important to clean a soiled area completely, otherwise your puppy may return to it and housesoil again. A product that kills or neutralizes odors is very important and such a claim must be on the label. Please read all directions of the product before using.

Stick with the training program.

Most puppies can be successfully housebroken by 14 to 20 weeks of age. But a pet may take longer to housebreak for several reasons. If you're having difficulty, feel free to consult our office



TRAINING A PUPPY

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

In the first few months, you can teach a puppy simple commands that will aid in controlling your dog and establish your leadership.

1. You should teach your puppy to tolerate being handled. You will often need to groom or bathe your puppy, clean their ears, clip their toenails, or give them medication. If a puppy is taught early on to tolerate and enjoy these interactions, caring for your pet will be easier. As an owner you should handle your puppy daily. By using praise and food treats with the routine, you will help keep the procedure non-threatening and enjoyable for your puppy. We can also show you how to open your pet's mouth, handle its feet, look under the tail, and examine its skin. We also recommend that all family members participate in this exercise. The best time to handle the puppy in this way is when it is calm and relaxed. Always end the session before the puppy becomes excited or tired.
2. As an owner, you should accustom your puppy to having its food and possessions touched. Dogs in the wild must guard their food to prevent its loss, but this is not necessary in the home. Petting the puppy and handling its food bowl while the dog eats helps it learn not to feel threatened by these intrusions. The puppy will not be startled and react aggressively if something unexpected happens while it is eating.

To accustom a puppy to having its possessions handled, you should gently take toys from your puppy, say "thank you", and return the toys. A similar technique is to take away a toy or rawhide bone and in return offer a food treat to help the puppy learn that when you take something, it need not be negative. These techniques send the puppy the message that it is all right for people to handle its possessions and it may make it easier for you to take things from your dog's mouth in the future.

3. Puppies *must* learn bite inhibition. Puppies chew on everything, including each other and people. One of the things they are trying to learn is how much pressure from their jaws causes pain. Without this feedback, a puppy does not learn to inhibit the force of its bite. Because all dogs can and will bite at some time, this lesson is vital for human safety.

Puppies start to learn bite inhibition while they are with their littermates. If Puppy A bites on Puppy B too hard, Puppy B will yelp. If that doesn't work, Puppy B will leave. This sends the message to Puppy A that its bites were too hard and if it wishes to continue to play, it needs to be gentle. In the beginning owners often allow their puppies to chew on them without reprimands and the puppies assume that the behavior is acceptable. Instead, the message owners should send is that mouthing and chewing on hands is painful. To do this, usually all that is needed is for all family members to emit a sharp "yip" or "no". This sends the message to the puppy that the

bites are painful. At times, the "yip" or "no" may need to be reinforced by walking away from the puppy. When constantly used, this technique will often stop playful biting.

4. By using positive reinforcement, young puppies can be taught simple obedience commands such as sitting, lying down, and standing. Puppies have short attention spans, so training sessions should be brief but frequent (several 5 to 10 minute sessions throughout the day). For example, you can teach a puppy to sit before feeding or going outside by using a method called *lure-reward training*. To teach a puppy to sit, hold a food treat over the puppy's nose and slowly move it up and back over the puppy's head. As the puppy follows the food with its head, it will sit. As the puppy sits, say "sit" and reward the puppy with the treat. If the puppy lifts its front legs during this exercise, the food treat is too high. Repeat these steps until the puppy learns the meaning of "sit".

To get a puppy to lie down, lower the treat between its front paws and say "down". The puppy will usually follow the treat and lie down. If the puppy doesn't lie down all the way down, slowly push the treat backward between its paws. When the puppy lies down, give it the treat and say "good dog". If the puppy stands up, start over.

Teach a puppy to stand on command by moving the food treat forward and away from the pup and saying "stand". When teaching these commands, always use praise and gradually phase out food rewards.

A good puppy class will teach these commands and others. Early training helps get the puppy off to a good start of listening to and obeying you. By continuing training throughout the first year of ownership, you will establish good behavior in your puppy.



DISCIPLINING A PUPPY

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

Young puppies are easily intimidated and this needs to be kept in mind when disciplining them. *Using harsh physical punishment is unnecessary* and may frighten a puppy and make it hand-shy, a fear biter, avoid humans, or urinate out of fear. Proper training minimizes the need for disciplining and establishes you, the owner, as the leader.

When discipline is required, puppies are easily corrected with a distraction or a change in your voice such as saying "no" loudly, or using a water pistol, shaking a pop can with a few coins in it with tape over the opening, or a puff of air from your mouth. The punishment *must* be given during the behavior and *every* time the behavior occurs, and should be intense enough to stop the behavior without causing significant anxiety and should stop when the behavior stops. The whole family needs to agree upon which behaviors are acceptable and those that are not. If a family or individual is inconsistent, your pet will become confused, learning will be delayed, and anxiety may result in a serious behavior problem. Submissive or greeting urination should *never* be punished.

PROMOTING SOCIALIZATION

Socialization in dogs takes place between 4 and 12 weeks of age. During this period, puppies easily make social attachments and learn how to interact with other dogs and species. What happens during this early period can be crucial. At this age, you should expose a puppy to many new people (delivery people, people wearing uniforms, children, infants, teenagers, elderly people, etc.). These meetings should be pleasant. For example, the people could offer the puppy a small treat. The message given to the puppy is "These people are nice, they feed me". It is also important to expose your puppy to new situations: stairs, elevators, umbrellas, different types of vehicles, bicycles, and any number of settings. By being introduced to people and things in a calm, reassuring setting, the puppy learns to handle new situations without fear. In addition, the puppy learns to trust its owner.

It is also important to handle your puppy's feet and ears frequently, open its mouth, and touch it in several areas on the body so it becomes accustomed to handling as it may at your veterinarian's office. You may give verbal praise or a small treat for acceptable behavior.

During the socialization period, you should continue allowing the puppy to interact with adult dogs and other puppies. One good way is to enroll it in a puppy class once vaccinations have been started. The minimum age for puppies to start a puppy class is usually 8 to 10 weeks old. We can help direct you to qualified trainers for classes and would be happy to do so.

Excerpted from an article by DEBRA HORWITZ, DVM, Veterinary Behavior Consultations, 12462G Natural Bridge Rd, Bridgeton, MO 63044

HOW TO MANAGE PLAY NIPPING IN PUPPIES

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

If a puppy's behavior includes nipping and biting, the pet needs to be taught the limits of such mouthing. Mouthing is usually motivated by inappropriate social play. If the puppy was raised in a pack, its mother and the other adult dogs would not permit such behavior – and neither should people. To prevent or eliminate play nipping, as a family you should avoid using your hands in play unless you are petting your dog or tossing a toy to be fetched. It is also important to avoid rough play. Such activity can excite the puppy and therefore prompt mouthing you instead of chewing on a toy. Instead, use toys such as balls, rope toys meant for dogs, rawhide bones, etc. that keep your hands at a distance.

Puppy bites require a firm “no” or “yip” and a quick withdrawal of your hand from the puppy's reach. When your hand is withdrawn, the puppy's game no longer works. If the puppy still insists on biting in play, some careful discipline is required. For example, you might quickly grasp the puppy's mouth, hold it firmly closed until the puppy relaxes or whimpers for a few seconds. If the puppy interprets that response as play, becomes defensive, overly fearful, or challenges you, all direct punishment must cease. In many cases, leaving the room to socially isolate the puppy for ½ to 2 minutes is enough for the puppy to learn that mouthing is unacceptable.

Owners may also need to put a bitter tasting substance on their hands. This tells the puppy that hand chewing is unpleasant. Other forms of acceptable puppy discipline include using a squirt bottle or water gun, a pop can filled with some coins and tape over the opening, or loud, hand operated horns. These techniques work only if they are handy when needed. It is best to have several options in place wherever you and the puppy spend time together. When the puppy's play gets too rough, a deep, firm “no” needs to be followed by effective intervention. This combination gives the puppy the vocal cue that it has overstepped acceptable bounds and reinforces that its actions will have consequences.



*Information provided by PATRICK MELESE, DVM, Tierrasanta Veterinary Hospital and Veterinary Behavior Consultants,
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CHEWING AND DIGGING

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Most puppies have a strong, natural desire to investigate but this curiosity can lead to problems when your puppy digs up roses or destroys your new shoes. Many owners rely solely on punishment to correct problem behavior, but you will find that *reinforcing good behavior works better and keeps your dog happier.*

Chew Toys

- Begin with a variety of toys that are meant for pets and determine which type your puppy prefers.
- Rotate different toys to keep them "new" and interesting. Reward your dog when it chews it toys.
- Never give items to the puppy to chew that are similar to household items you do not want destroyed (for example your puppy can not determine the difference between new and old shoes).
- To help deter puppies from chewing items, you may use anti-chew sprays (found in pet stores and pet departments of larger stores), citronella oil, or a small amount of cayenne pepper mixed with water and sprayed on the item.

Chewing and Anxiety

Destructive behavior is often a direct response to anxiety. Lessen the problem by teaching the dog that it cannot receive attention on demand. Train it to rest in its own bed or crate rather than constantly lying near you. Exercise your dog before you leave home and try to leave without being noticed. Practice short departures and then gradually increase the length of time your dog is alone.

Digging

Dogs dig for a number of reasons: to cool off, chase rodents, bury and retrieve bones, escape confinement, or just for the fun of it.

Digging commonly occurs when pets are left alone with insufficient stimulation. Provide your dog with stimulating chew toys, increased play and exercise, and perhaps even a second pet. Of course, give some thought to the addition of second pet, since you could end up with two diggers instead of one.

Try these methods to discourage digging: remote punishment (turning on a sprinkler, pulling on an extended leash, tossing a tin can containing a few pebbles near the pet), changing or covering the surface (by placing rocks over the area or covering with concrete). For some dogs the most practical solution is to provide a digging area and to reinforce appropriate digging.

From www.healthypet.com, Wayne L. Hunthausen, DVM and Gary M Landsberg, DVM

DOGS WHO ARE AFRAID OF NOISES

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Summer is generally the time during the year when thunderstorms and celebrations with fireworks are common. Many dogs are afraid of the associated noises and this can cause substantial stress both for your pet and you.

There are three ways to approach the fear of noise in your dog. But first you have to avoid mistakes that will make the problem worse. With very good intentions you may tell your pet when they are afraid that you love them and that everything is OK, but this is not appropriate. *You are actually reinforcing the fear behavior in your pet.* All your dog understands is that its particular behavior gets your positive attention.



The first option for correcting the problem is to help your pet overcome its fear through extensive reconditioning. This means that you expose your pet in a controlled situation to the noise. It may be as simple as going to your public library or finding on the internet sounds of the noise in question and playing it over and over starting out very softly and gradually increasing the volume. This process must be carried out over several weeks and the volume should only be slightly increased once your pet is comfortable at the existing level.

The second option is to cover the offensive sound with other noises. For example, during a loud storm, you may put your pet into an interior room or in the basement with a loud radio or other music playing.

The third option is medication to try and ease your pet's anxiety. Our Health Center believes that drugs are the last option when trying to help an animal cope with its phobias. There are a few medications available that may benefit your pet and we would be pleased to discuss your options with you.

BARKING PROBLEMS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Most dogs get noisy when exposed to anything new or unusual. The responses may be barking, whining, growling, or howling.

Many situations can lead to barking:

- Strangers or other animals entering the dog's property
- Sight of prey, such as a squirrel
- Separation from their pack, mother, or human family members
- New sounds such as smoke alarms
- A need for attention, food, or affection
- Other anxieties or high states of arousal

Growling is associated with fearful or assertive displays. Whenever growling or barking is successful at achieving the pet's goals, the dog feels rewarded. Subsequently, the growling will likely become more frequent or intense.

Medical problems can contribute to vocalization and senile changes may lead to barking problems in older pets. Pets with medical, geriatric, and compulsive disorders may benefit from treatment with medications along with behavioral retraining techniques.

Prevention Starts Early

Socializing puppies to a variety of new people, animals, environments, and noises can reduce anxieties as the dog grows up. Owner control, training, and leadership are also essential. While young, the dog should learn to spend time playing or relaxing by itself so that it's not too distressed when it must be left alone.

Correcting Bad Habits

Correcting a barking problem requires an understanding of the situations and stimuli that initiate barking. Until effective control and leadership is established, training programs are unlikely to be successful. Once you have effective control over your dog, you can begin to train it to quiet down when barking begins. Training the dog to stop barking on command can be accomplished with lure reward techniques, disruption techniques, or head halter and leash training.

Begin training sessions with situations that are easily controlled (a family member knocking at the door) before proceeding to more difficult situations (a stranger coming to the door). Training a dog to be quiet on command allows it to continue to bark at stimuli but stop at your request. Rewards are then given for quiet behavior. At each subsequent training session the dog should remain a quiet a little longer before the reward is given.

(over)

Teaching a dog to stop all barking in the presence of the stimulus is much more difficult. To be successful, barking must be interrupted immediately as it begins and the process repeated until the dog does not bark at the stimulus (at which time it can be rewarded).

Punishment is generally *ineffective* in the control and correction of barking problems. Excessive punishment can increase the anxiety and further aggravate the problem, while insufficient punishment merely rewards the behavior by providing attention. For punishment to be effective, barking must be disrupted at the instant it begins, using a technique or device that effectively interrupts the barking. When you are not present as barking begins, the only solution might be to use bark-activated products. But unless the dog is also trained to be quiet in the presence of the stimulus, devices will only disrupt, not eliminate barking habits.

Practical Products

There are several products that may successfully interrupt barking. Owner activated devices are often effective at disrupting barking and achieving a quiet response. Devices include ultrasonic trainers, audible alarms, water sprayers, and shake cans (empty pop cans with coins or pebbles sealed inside).

Bark activated products are often the most practical means of deterring inappropriate barking, and may be a better choice than owner activated devices since they ensure immediate and accurate timing. They are also effective in training the dog to stop barking in selected areas. Off collar, bark activated alarms or water sprayers are useful for training the dog to cease barking in specific locations. Bark activated collars are practical when barking does not occur in a single, specific location. Audible and ultrasonic collars are occasionally effective but seldom a reliable deterrent. Citronella spraying collars are effective with most dogs. Electronic shock collars are a final option. Since they have the potential for injury or abuse, feel free to discuss this option with one of the doctors.

As soon as the barking ceases, take the opportunity to direct the dog into an appropriate behavior such as play so the problem will diminish over time.

Supplied by Wayne L. Hunthausen, DVM, and Gary M. Landsberg, DVM from the web site www.healthypet.com

USING A DOG CRATE

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

When a dog crate is correctly and humanely used, it can have many advantages for both you and your pet. Crates are not cruel and in fact, they are a safe haven, most comparable to a crib or playpen for an infant or toddler. When used properly, most dogs will find security and comfort in the fact that the crate is "their place".

- ◆ You can have peace of mind when leaving your dog home alone, knowing that items will not be soiled or destroyed and that your pet is comfortable, protected, and not developing bad habits.
- ◆ You can housebreak your dog quicker by using the confinement to develop control of urine and feces since dogs will not try to soil their sleeping area. It also helps establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination and to prevent accidents at night or when left alone.
- ◆ You can effectively confine your dog at times when it may be underfoot (during meal times, family activities), too inquisitive (guests, workmen, etc. are in the house), it is overexcited, bothered by too much confusion or too many children, or not feeling well.
- ◆ You can travel with your dog safely without the driver being dangerously distracted or your pet getting loose and lost. She can more easily adapt to strange surroundings as long as she has his familiar "security blanket" (crate) along.

Your dog can:

- ◆ enjoy the privacy and security of a "den" of her own to which she can retreat when tired, stressed, or not feeling well. This is a natural instinct as in the wild dogs search out secluded, covered areas for safety, etc.
- ◆ more easily learn to control her bowels and bladder and to associate elimination only with the outdoors or other designated locations.
- ◆ be spared the loneliness and frustration of having to be isolated in the basement, garage, or outside and from comfortable indoor surroundings.
- ◆ be conveniently included in family outings, visits, and trips instead of being left behind alone at home or in a boarding kennel.

As a pet owner you have the desire to enjoy your pet and be pleased with its behavior and your dog has an innate desire to please you. Using a dog crate can help make this relationship a positive experience.

USING A DOG CRATE

The use of dog crate is *not recommended for a dog to be left alone all day*. If a dog is to spend a large amount of time in a crate during the day, it must be well exercised both *before* and *after* crating, given much personal attention by the owner, and be allowed freedom at night including sleeping near the owner. During the day someone *must* come in to provide a period of attention and exercise for the dog.

In the case of a puppy, the crate must be used only as a “play pen” for general confinement. Although puppies can be housed in crates, limited human contact may result in her being poorly adjusted socially and difficult to housebreak and train in general.

Whether you use a crate or not, any dog constantly denied human companionship will be a lonely pet and more likely to be destructive as it finds ways to relieve boredom, anxiety, depression, and general stress.

It is very important to realize that *a crate should not be used for punishment*. If so, it will become very difficult to convince your pet to enter it as she will associate it with punishment. Please see other handouts regarding disciplining dogs for suggestions.

WHAT KIND OF CRATE IS BEST?

A crate should always be large enough to permit any age dog to stretch out flat on her side without being cramped and to sit up without hitting her head on the top. While the adult size of a purebred puppy is possible to predict, that of a mixed breed must be estimated based on general breed and body type and the puppy's size at a given age. It is always better to use a crate a little too large than one a little too small.

For a fully grown adult dog, measure the distance from the tip of the nose to the base (not the tip) of the tail and select a crate close to but not less than this length. The height and width of most crates are properly proportioned to length including the “slant front” models designed to fit station wagons and hatchbacks.

For a puppy, measure as above and add about 12 inches for anticipated growth. You may acquire a crate for your dog's anticipated adult size and use a moveable/removable partition made of wire, wood, or masonite. The partition is moved based on the animal's growth. Remember that a crate that is too large for a young puppy defeats its purpose of providing security and promoting bowel and bladder control.

WHERE CAN I ACQUIRE A CRATE?

New crates can be purchased in retail pet stores and discount pet food/supply outlets or from dog equipment catalogs. If you need assistance in locating a source of crates, feel free to contact our office. You may also look at garage sales and classified ads or friends or relatives as other possible sources. Prices depend on size, quality, and make. Most brands include a removable metal pan or tray floor and some can be specially ordered with the door on the side instead of on the end. The less expensive brands are usually quite adequate for most family pets. A crate is an investment but it is less costly than repairing or replacing furniture, woodwork, wallpaper, carpeting, etc.

WHERE SHOULD I PUT THE CRATE?

Since one of the main reasons for using a crate is to confine a dog without making it feel isolated or punished, it should be placed in or close as possible to a "people" area – the kitchen, family room, etc. Admittedly a crate is not an item of beauty but it will be a welcome addition as it assists in making your "friend" a welcome addition to the family.

CRATING A PUPPY

A young puppy (8-16 weeks old) should normally have few problems accepting a crate as its own space. Any resistance at first is not caused by the crate but by its reluctance to accept less freedom of movement. Actually the crate will help her to adapt more easily and quickly to her new environment.

◆ How to crate a puppy

Place the crate in a "people area" as above in a spot that is free from drafts and not too near a direct heat source. For bedding, use an old towel or piece of blanket (free of loose strings or threads) which can be washed in case of an accident and a freshly worn unlaundered article of your clothing such as a tee shirt, sweatshirt, etc. Avoid putting newspaper in or under the crate since it may mimic the conditions at the breeders and may encourage elimination. A puppy should not be in a cage long enough to need water and food. They would accidentally tip over the bowls causing further messes to clean up.

Make sure that children understand that the crate is not a playhouse but a special room for the puppy whose area should be recognized and respected. However, you should train a puppy from the start that letting you reach into the crate at any time is acceptable and not threatening. This will help prevent your pet from becoming overprotective of its space.

Establish a crate routine immediately by placing your puppy in it at regular 1 to 2 hour intervals during the day (his own chosen nap times will guide you), when she must be left alone for 3-4 hours, and during any short period when she can not be

closely supervised by a responsible person. ***Be sure to remove all collars and leashes before placing in the crate*** so that they do not become caught in any of the openings. Crying of the puppy will be easier to endure or ignore if you know that the puppy is not uncomfortable and safe. Once adjusted to the crate and as long as she has no intestinal upset, she will soon show greater bowel and bladder control.

Even if the process does not go smoothly at first, don't despair and worry! Be consistent, firm, and aware that you are helping your pet by preventing her from getting into trouble and from being injured while left alone or not being supervised.

Increase the space inside the crate as the puppy grows so that she remains comfortable. If you desire to not use a crate permanently, plan to use it for 5 to 6 months or until the dog is well past the teething phase, then start leaving the crate door open at night, when someone is at home during the day, or when it is briefly left alone. If the process is going well for 2 to 3 weeks and the dog seems reliable when left alone, remove the crate and leave the bedding in the same spot. She may miss the crate however that spot will have become her own place and her habit of good behavior should continue. Even after a long period without a crate, a dog which has been raised in one will generally accept it again should the need arise for travel, illness, behavior problems, etc.

CRATING AN ADULT DOG

Many behavior problems of older puppies (over 6 months old) or adult dogs may stem from the lack of feeling secure when left alone. Although a crate can fulfill this need and solve problems, it must be introduced gradually with every effort made to be sure that the dog's first experience with it is positive and pleasant. It must also be stressed again that a dog crate is not intended for punishment or frequent, lengthy periods of use for the convenience of an absent owner.

◆ How to crate an adult dog

If possible, borrow a crate of adequate size. Place it in a location where the dog will feel a part of the family and still have some privacy. Secure the door so that it is open and will not accidentally shut and frighten the dog and do not put any bedding in the crate. Encourage the dog to investigate this new object thoroughly by tossing special dog treats into the far end, letting her turn around and come back out and praising her enthusiastically i.e. positive reinforcement. When the dog begins to enter the crate on its own confidently, place his bedding and an item of your clothing inside and coax her to lie down and relax, still using food if necessary. Continue this pattern for several days, encouraging her to use the crate as much as possible and shutting the door briefly while you sit beside her or when there are people visible and/or audible nearby. Do not hesitate, however, to meet modest resistance with consistent firmness and authority so that the dog is clearly aware of the behavior you desire. Your goal should be that your pet accept the situation and not total contentment.

As soon as you feel confident that the dog will remain quietly in a closed crate, you may safely leave her alone. Give her a chew toy or rawhide bone to attract her attention and be sure that she has nothing around her neck which might become caught. If you are still uncertain or anxious, leave her at first for only a brief period (1/2 to 1 hour) until she has proved that she will not resist confinement. In due time it may be possible to wean her gradually off the crate without resuming any problem behavior.

DOES A CRATE ALWAYS WORK?

Unfortunately it does not work in all situations. Although a crate can indeed be used successfully by most pet owners, there are always those animals which simply can or will not tolerate this form of confinement. This reaction is not nearly as common with a puppy (but it does happen) as with an adult dog, especially one with an unknown background or one that may have experienced a traumatic and frightening experience while crated. In addition, senior citizen pets may also have problems with adapting to a crate. In some cases, a dog will use a crate readily as long as the door remains open but will object violently the moment it is closed and/or she is left alone. It should be stressed that these reactions represent the exception rather than the rule and the average pet dog can be successfully trained to use a crate.

If you find that despite every effort at positive conditioning and firmness your dog is obviously frantic when confined to a crate, forcing him to use one is inhumane and can result in physical injury if he should attempt to chew his way out.

Even though a crate may not always work, it is always worth a try because it has the potential to prevent or solve behavior problems. A dog is much happier and more secure having his life controlled and structured by humans and would rather be prevented from causing trouble than be punished for it later.

If you have any questions concerning the above information, feel free to call our office at 925-8835 and we will be happy to assist you.

HEARTWORM PREVENTION IN DOGS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

The following is a summary of the current information from veterinary literature and specialists from the American Heartworm Society.

- ◆ Life cycle: mosquitoes start to hatch in significant numbers about mid-April. Each new mosquito does not have heartworms. By chance, the mosquito must take a blood meal from a dog that has microfilaria (baby heartworms) in its blood. The heartworms require at least 2 weeks of development in the mosquito before they can be passed to your dog. Therefore the earliest a dog will be exposed to heartworms in our area of Michigan is early May.
- ◆ In the fall, heartworm infected mosquitoes are sick mosquitoes and will die soon with cool weather (even before the first frost). Generally by November 1 of each year, the threat of heartworms has ended.
- Dogs should be heartworm tested each spring to confirm that prevention was effective and that human error did not occur.
- ◆ *Heartgard Plus, and generic forms of a monthly preventative should be used year round to protect your pet from intestinal hookworms and roundworms that can infect people. These products have a second medication to eliminate these intestinal worms. These are serious parasites that can cause severe and permanent damage in humans such as loss of eyesight and brain damage.*
- ◆ Puppies born after November 1 of the previous year do not require a blood test and should begin the preventative as soon as possible.
- ◆ Prevention is possible by using one of the following medicines:
 - Monthly: **Heartgard Plus or generic form** - tablet form, kills heartworms, roundworms and hookworms
 - Revolution** - liquid that is applied to the skin, kills heartworms, fleas and flea eggs. Revolution *does not* kill hookworms or roundworms.
- ◆ It is very important that the preventatives be given as prescribed. Failure to do so increases the chances of your dog acquiring heartworms. Treatment for heartworm infections is available but it is costly and permanent damage to your friend's health may occur before treatment begins. Without treatment most dogs will not survive.
- ◆ Cats are also at risk for heartworms. Please request the handout "*Heartworm Disease in Cats*" for additional information. **Revolution** for cats is available and experts recommend that it be used monthly.

If you have any questions, please discuss your concerns with one of the doctors.

FLEA CONTROL

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

PREVENTION

(fleas are not present)

- ◆ Keep your pet's environment clean by washing/changing the bedding frequently and keeping kennel areas clean of long grass, vacuum carpets frequently, etc. In suburban areas raccoons and opossums bedding down at night in shrubs and the yard are the primary sources of fleas.
- ◆ Use one of the monthly flea control medications. Over the years we have found that **Frontline Plus** and **Advantix II** to control fleas and ticks **on dogs** and **Revolution** to control fleas, ear mites, heartworms, and intestinal roundworms and hookworm **on cats** are excellent and safe products to use. A description of each can be found on "Monthly Flea Product Comparisons" handout.
- ◆ *Year round use of these products is recommended by the Companion Animal Parasite Council to prevent human exposure to tapeworms via fleas.*

TREATMENT

(fleas are present)

- ◆ Thoroughly clean your pet's environment by washing/changing the bedding frequently, keeping kennel areas clean, vacuuming carpets/floors frequently, etc.
- ◆ Apply the topical monthly medications **Frontline Plus**, **Advantix II**, or **Revolution**. Read and follow all precautions and directions before using.
- ◆ If fleas have severely infested your house it will take 3 months before a dramatic drop off in the flea population occurs. Thousands of eggs will be hatching during this time. The topical treatments will prevent new eggs from hatching. On occasion it is necessary to seek the services of an exterminator that guarantees their work.
- ◆ When treating cats, be sure that the products used are labeled for use in cats.
- ◆ Spraying lawns and kennel areas with pesticides have a limited effect on fleas. Sunlight and water greatly decrease their effectiveness and are not recommended. Outside, flea eggs fall off wild animals where they spend much of their time, usually in the shrubs during the night.

If you have any questions, feel free to consult with any of our staff or call 925-8835. Thank you.



MONTHLY FLEA PRODUCT COMPARISONS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

During the last several years, new and revolutionary monthly flea products have been developed for use in dogs and cats. These products are Frontline Plus, Advantage, Advantix II and Revolution with a brief description of each found below.

FRONTLINE PLUS and ADVANTIX II

Frontline Plus and Advantix II are topical medications that are used once a month on dogs. There is also a form of Frontline Plus for cats. A small amount of liquid is placed on the skin of your pet on the back of the neck or shoulders. These products will kill adult fleas and flea eggs within 24 hours and ticks within 48 hours. They are also water resistant and very safe for your pet and your family. They are the best flea and tick treatments we have found for dogs and it protects 24 hours a day for a month. The manufacturer recommends applying Frontline 48 hours before or after bathing a dog.

Advantix II *cannot* be used on cats and cats should be prevented from licking dogs with Advantix II on their coat/skin. Advanatge can be used on cats but this product does not kill ticks, only fleas and flea eggs.

REVOLUTION

Revolution is another treatment available for dogs and cats. In dogs it is effective against adult fleas, flea eggs, ear mites, sarcoptic mange and it also prevents heartworms. In cats it prevents heartworms and treats ear mites, adult fleas, flea eggs, roundworms and hookworms. Because of all the positive effects, we highly recommend Revolution as the medicine of choice for cats.

Revolution is effective, simple, and safe to use even on puppies and kittens as young as 6 weeks of age, breeding males and females, and pregnant and nursing females. A small amount of liquid in an easy to use, no-drip tube is applied in one spot over the shoulders or on the back of the neck once a month. It is non-greasy and dries quickly. Bathing your pet or allowing it to swim can occur as soon as 2 hours after application.

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the products above, please feel free to discuss them with our staff. Thank you.

TICK TRANSMITTED DISEASES IN PETS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Ticks are small insects but they can pose a great danger to people and our companion animals. They prey on the blood of dogs, horses, deer, birds, rodents, and people. There are hundreds of kinds of ticks including the dog tick and deer tick.

The diseases that ticks can transmit to companion animals include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis (a bacterial infection), and babesiosis (a blood disorder).

Ticks live in cracks and crevices in the home or outside in vegetation such as grassy meadows, woods, brush, and weeds. They cannot fly or jump, but they have a way of finding a host. Often they will wait in wooded or grassy areas and attach themselves to any living creature that brushes them. Ticks can also detect the carbon dioxide given off by warm blooded animals. They can crawl several feet to the carbon dioxide source.

Lyme Disease

The first human outbreak of Lyme disease was identified in Lyme, Connecticut in 1975, when an unusually large number of cases of arthritis resembling rheumatoid disease occurred within a small geographic area. Studies concluded that dogs from the same location also developed arthritis similar to that in human Lyme disease. Although Lyme disease is an illness common to humans and animals, there is no evidence that it can be transmitted from one to the other.

Lyme disease cases have been documented in more than 40 states. The disease is transmitted by the deer tick or black-legged tick.

Signs of Lyme disease in pets include loss of appetite, lameness, lethargy, and fever. Treatment consists primarily of specific antibiotics, with the greatest opportunity of a positive outcome achieved when diagnosed and treated early. Scientists believe the disease can affect humans for a long time, causing problems of the joints, heart, and central nervous system.

Lyme disease vaccinations are available for dogs and it is recommended for at risk dogs. **There has been an increase in the number of dogs that are testing positive in Southwest Michigan. Fortunately many dogs (95%) do not show symptoms of the disease but our office recommends vaccination to decrease the likelihood of health issues.**



Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is primarily found in New England and the West. Dogs that live in wooded or mountainous areas are more susceptible to the disease. Depression, fever, rashes, skin bleeding, and joint disease are typical signs of Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Antibiotics are effective if the disease is caught in the early stages. Improvement in the animal's health is usually seen within the first 12-24 hours. Once an animal has recovered from this disease, it is probably immune for up to 12 months. However, re-infection can occur if the animal is re-exposed.

Tick Paralysis

Female ticks release a toxin while feeding that causes paralysis. The toxin affects the nervous system and can cause weakness and even paralysis that develops 7-9 days after the tick attaches itself. The signs can vary from a mild form of unsteadiness of all four legs to acute, severe weakness of all four legs that leaves the pet completely immobilized.

Tick Removal

At times, ticks can be difficult to find. Common places to find hidden ticks are the head, neck, ears, or feet. The longer the tick is attached to its host, the greater the chance for disease. If you find a tick, remove it immediately with tweezers. It is preferable that you wear gloves and avoid touching the tick. Carefully grasp the tick as close to the pet's skin as possible and pull *gently* until the parasite lets go. Do not try to jerk the tick out of the skin as the head may be left behind and cause additional inflammation. Do not use a hot match tip or apply alcohol, gasoline, or any other irritating material to the tick as these may cause severe inflammation or damage the skin.

To dispose of the tick, wrap it in several tissues and flush it down the toilet. Ticks will not drown in water and do not crush, burn, or try to suffocate ticks as this may spread possibly infectious organisms.

Preventative Care

Before entering areas that may have ticks, there are a number of products that can be applied to the skin to kill ticks. Feel free to call our office for the latest information on these treatments. Using Frontline Plus on dogs and cats along with other steps will greatly decrease exposure to these diseases. Dog owners should inspect their dogs regularly for ticks, especially after trips outside to the woods or mountains. By thoroughly combing your dog within 4-6 hours of exposure to tick-infested areas, you can help prevent ticks from attaching to your dog.



From the web site www.healthypet.com, sponsored by the American Animal Hospital Association

Lyme Disease

from
The American Veterinary Medical Association

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is an infectious disease syndrome spread primarily by a tick no larger than the head of a pin. It is caused by a spiral-shaped bacterium called a spirochete that is transmitted to animals and humans by the bite of a tick. In people, Lyme disease can appear similar to other diseases such as flu or Alzheimer's disease. If untreated, it can lead to joint damage and heart and neurologic complications. In dogs, the disease can mimic flu-like symptoms such as a fever, swollen joints, lameness, decreased energy, etc. It can lead to joint damage, heart complications and kidney problems.

What are the Symptoms?

Lyme disease is not easy to detect because there are a variety of symptoms. Clinical signs may not appear for a long period after the initial infection.

Animals seldom have the rash that commonly occurs in people with Lyme disease. The common clinical signs in animals are fever, lack of appetite, acute onset of lameness with no history of trauma, and joint pain. These can develop within weeks of initial infection. Recurring lameness, swollen lymph nodes, inflammation of kidneys, and inflamed heart tissue can develop weeks to months later.

How is Lyme Disease Diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based primarily on recognition of the typical symptoms of Lyme disease and by blood testing. It should be noted that early in the disease, the blood test can be negative even though the disease is present. Only later in the disease does the test become reliably positive.

What is the Treatment?

Antibiotics – doxycycline, tetracycline, penicillin and erythromycin – have been shown to be effective in treating the disease in both animals and humans in the early stages. If detected early enough, there is almost complete relief of pain and lameness within 24 hours of initial treatment in animals. Chronic cases of the disease respond much slower and require longer periods of treatment.

How can it be Prevented?

Knowledge of where ticks are found, avoiding these areas, and if bitten, prompt removal of the tick are the primary preventative measures. Additional protection comes from a tick pesticide as that found in the monthly topical treatment, Frontline Plus or a tick collar such as Preventic. A vaccine is also available and though not 100% protective, it is recommended as an additional level of protection.

DENTAL CARE

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

DENTAL DISEASE CAN BE AVOIDED

Pets have dental diseases and problems much like people. Many of these problems can be avoided by regular dental checks by you and our office when your pet is in for examination and by practicing preventative dental care at home.

If your pet has reddened gums or a poor smelling breath, it could be from gingivitis. Gingivitis occurs when soft plaque hardens into rough, irritating tartar. Tartar buildup on your pet's teeth can cause damage to the teeth and gums. If left untreated, gingivitis can lead to an infection called *periodontal disease* which can lead to loss of teeth. You can prevent serious dental problems from occurring by checking your pet's teeth from time to time at home and when he/she visits our office for vaccinations, routine checkups, etc.

ORAL HYGIENE EXAMS

Your pet's dental cleaning begins with a physical examination to evaluate your pet's general health. We also strongly believe that pre-anesthetic bloodwork to check the health of major internal organs systems is critical. This helps identify possible major health problems early, start appropriate treatment, and minimizes the risks of anesthesia. Monitoring blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and oxygen in the blood are also very important for the safety of your pet. Anesthesia is administered to completely evaluate the health of the gingiva (gums) and teeth and to provide a painless procedure.

The first part of the dental cleaning requires removal of the tartar with an ultrasonic scaler. This instrument's tip vibrates very quickly to remove the tartar from the tooth surface. This is followed by a probe of the pockets under the gum line around the teeth to look for pathways for infection, diseases of the roots, and breakdown of the structures that anchor the tooth in the socket. If there are questionable teeth, x-rays can be done to evaluate the roots and crown. We can also apply bonded sealants to teeth and treat deep pockets between the root and gum with an antibiotic gel. Both of these procedures give us the opportunity to save a tooth instead of waiting until it diseased to be removed. If a tooth is loose or if it is badly infected, removal is indicated to prevent possible spread of infection in the mouth or into the bloodstream that will affect the liver, kidneys, heart, etc. The Doctors use surgical procedures for removal of teeth using the latest in technology. Your pet's teeth are then polished to create a smooth enamel surface.

HOME PREVENTION

Dental care should continue at home to help prevent serious problems in the future. We recommend that a dry food be fed since moist food (canned or dry with water) or semi-moist foods cause tartar to accumulate faster.

There are a variety of products that have been developed for pets to chew that help scrape off food particles and slow down the tartar collection. Rawhides, based on our experience, are safe and very good for tooth and gum health. Enzyme treated chewies for cats and dogs are also very good. Do not at any time feed any natural meat bones to dogs and cats. The risk of puncturing an intestine and causing death is high and they cause tooth fractures and enamel chipping. Meat bones can also cause severe vomiting and diarrhea that requires hospitalization and aggressive treatment. Pig ears and nylon bones are too hard and veterinary dentists discourage their use as they can cause enamel to be broken off of teeth.

If your pet is cooperative, its teeth can be brushed daily and this is the best means to greatly reduce the development of dental disease. To begin a brushing routine, you may wrap an old, thin washcloth around your finger and use it like a toothbrush. Wipe all the teeth, front and back, with strokes from the gumline to the tip of the tooth. Do this once or twice a day for one to two weeks to familiarize your pet with having the gums and teeth rubbed.

At this time you may try a toothbrush. If your pet puts up a fuss, try dipping the toothbrush in warm water and garlic salt for dogs or tuna water for cats. We recommend a soft infant's toothbrush or one designed for use with dogs and cats. Please use toothpaste formulated for pets only since human toothpaste is too soapy and can cause digestive upsets. Pet toothpastes come in a variety of flavors that appeal to animals. Begin by brushing the front teeth and then brush the large upper and lower teeth in the back. The bristles should be held at a 45-degree angle to the tooth surface and be moved in a circular direction. Try to brush daily or at least every 3 days.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact our office. Thank you.



EAR INFECTIONS

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

Ear infections are very common in dogs and occur less frequently in cats. There are two types of infection most commonly seen: *otitis externa* or infection of the outer ear canal, and *otitis media* which is an infection of the middle ear and may be less obvious. Although any dog or cat can acquire an ear infection, some breeds appear to be more prone than others. Dog with heavy, large ears such as Cocker Spaniels and Basset Hounds, or dogs with hairy ear canals like Poodles and Schnauzers, tend to have a higher incidence of ear infections. In cats, Persians are more prone to infections.

Most ear infections can be easily and successfully treated if caught early in the process. If left untreated, serious and permanent damage can occur.

Causes

Many cases of infected ears are the result of allergies. As the skin becomes irritated, pets will rub and scratch ears leading to a favorable environment for bacteria or yeast to proliferate. Other causes include excess ear wax, thick or matted hair in the ear canal, a foreign body (insect, plant material, etc.), or a growth to name a few. Sometimes infections of the outer ear canal are the result of another bodily infection or ear mites.

Otitis media usually results from the spread of infection from the outer ear canal to the middle ear. Foreign bodies, growths, or improper ear cleaning can rupture the eardrum and allow infection to reach the middle ear.

Symptoms

Ear infections are very uncomfortable for your pet. Your dog or cat will show his discomfort by shaking his head or scratching at the ears. Often the ears will become red and inflamed with a strong, foul odor and perhaps a black, dark brown, or yellowish discharge. If your pet tilts his head constantly, it also could be a sign of an ear infection.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Because of the variety of possible causes, it is important to have your cat or dog examined by a veterinarian to determine the proper medications and treatments. Generally an otoscope (an instrument that provides light and magnification) will be used to determine the extent of the problem. If the procedure is very painful for your pet, sedation or anesthesia may be necessary to completely examine the ears.

Many times the doctor will take a sample of the material from the ear canal and place it on a slide, stain it, and examine it under a microscope. This is called cytology and it allows the doctor to determine the types of organisms causing the infection. If more than one organism is present, multiple or broad-spectrum medications may be necessary.

A middle ear infection can be more difficult to resolve. Diagnosis may include lab tests, x-ray films, and possibly surgery and treatment may take several weeks.

For both types of infection, water should be prevented from entering ears. *Several follow-up examinations are very important to evaluate the success of the treatment.* Halting treatment too early will allow the problem to return as severely as before and cause unnecessary pain and expense.

It is very important to remember that the longer the infection is present, the more difficult it will be to eliminate it. Therefore seek treatment early before the problem is advanced. The longer the problem exists, the more pain your pet will experience. Chronic infections may harm the eardrum and cause swelling of the lining of the ear canals to the point they are completely closed. In some cases, surgery is necessary to improve the situation.

Prognosis

In most cases, with proper detection, diagnosis, and treatment, most infections will be cured or managed. However, if ear infections are chronic or reoccurring, there may be other problems such as thyroid disease, allergies, etc.

Because cats are normally resistant to ear infections, other problems should be considered. Your cat may have an unusually shaped ear canal, or its immune system could be suppressed by the feline leukemia virus or feline immunodeficiency virus. In addition, some diabetic cats are prone to ear infections so a check for diabetes may be indicated.

Prevention

Pet owners can help their pets by frequent ear checks. It can not be over emphasized that *frequent handling and examination of all of your pet's body areas* will achieve two objectives: 1] you will be aware of the normal appearance of the ears/body parts and therefore you will detect a problem early, and 2] your pet will become accustomed to having the ears/body parts handled and treatment will be less difficult. In addition, if you have a pet with hairy ear canals, the hair should be carefully plucked by a groomer or veterinarian.

A final few words about dealing with ears:

1. Never place a Q-tip down into an ear canal as this will only push debris, plant material, insects, etc. deeper. In addition, Q-tips can be very irritating to the skin of the ear canal. A Q-tip can be used to clean the crevices at the opening of the ear canal if you are very careful. Often applying a drop or two of baby oil to the cotton head will help prevent some irritation. If you can not see the head of the Q-tip, then you have inserted it too deeply and it needs to be removed.
2. Never place alcohol in an ear or on other areas of the body for that matter. If there is even a slight irritation of skin, alcohol will make it sting severely (think of alcohol on a hangnail).
3. Avoid powders in the ears as they have little value and can complicate the cleaning and healing process.

4. If you notice a swelling in the flap portion of the ear, a hematoma or a "blood blister" may be present. This needs to be examined by your doctor for drainage and other treatments.
5. Fly bites of the ear in the summer are a major problem for outdoor pets. The solution is to house the dog indoors during the warmer times of the day and/or using a good fly repellent to the areas. *Off!* insect repellent lotion used sparingly once a day on the skin on the ears is very useful. Please call us about repellants before applying them.

Information from www.healthypet.com sponsored by the American Animal Hospital Association

AGE CHART

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

It has been a common misconception that pets age an equivalent of seven years for every one human year. This table more accurately represents the aging process in pets which in turn stresses the importance of veterinary visits. If your pet visits its doctor once a year, this is comparable to a person visiting his/her doctor every 4 to 7 years. Infrequent visits allow health problems to develop, to become more complicated, and make treatment much more difficult. As with people, the sooner a disease is discovered, the possibility of a successful outcome is greater.

Adult Size in Pounds

Age	0 - 20	21 - 50	51 - 90	>90
6 mo	10			
1 yr	15			
2	24			
4	32			
6	40	42	45	49
7	44	47	50	56
8	48	51	55	64
9	52	56	61	71
10	56	60	66	78
11	60	65	72	86
12	64	69	77	93
13	68	74	82	101
14	72	78	88	108
15	76	83	93	115
16	80	87	99	123
17	84	92	104	
18	88	96	109	
19	92	101	115	
20	96	105	120	

Relative Age of Your Pet in Human Years

CARE OF YOUR PET'S SKIN AND COAT

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Whether it is summer or winter, your pet's coat and skin need attention. Below are some suggestions to help keep that healthy glow.

Help for your dog's hair and skin

- Bathe your dog as little as needed to keep its coat clean. We generally recommend a bath about once a month. Bathing will remove the oils that are important for health of the coat so if overdone, the hair and skin may become dry.
- Brush your dog often to remove dead hair and dander.
- If bathing is necessary, use a moisturizing shampoo made for dogs. *Do not* use human shampoo, even baby shampoo, since the pH is different and very harsh for your pet's skin.
- Follow a bath with a moisturizing rinse made for dogs when necessary.
- Don't forget that healthy hair and skin comes from within. Use a good quality, name brand food and feel free to consult our office about the addition of fatty acid supplements which can make healthier, glossier hair.
- Never use chemicals, gasoline, kerosene, etc. to remove grease, tar, oil, etc. as they can severely damage your dog's skin (if you would not put in on your hair, don't put it on your dog's). Please call our office for advice to remove these materials.

Help for your cat's coat

- Comb your cat's hair often to remove dander and loose hair.
- Don't bath your cat unless you need to clean the hair coat of grease, oil, or dirt. Again, use the above advice regarding removing these materials. Remember, cats generally give themselves baths daily.
- Use a conditioning rinse after your cat's bath. Do not use oils and lotions that are designed for people. They usually cause the coat to become sticky and attract dirt.
- Feed quality, name brand foods to provide adequate nutrition for a glossy, healthy coat.

Warning Signs

Pets scratch for many reasons, including allergies, parasites, or infection. All of these conditions may appear to be "dry skin" to the owner but they require treatment by a veterinarian. Attempting home remedies may complicate the problem or delay treatment. You can not assume that chewing and licking causing hair loss is from nerves.

Skin problems and poor hair quality may be symptoms of other conditions such as kidney, liver, adrenal, or thyroid disease.

If you notice any of these conditions, please feel free to consult our office for examination and treatment.

- Skin irritation, including redness, bumps, rashes
- Open sores of any kind
- Excessive hair loss, either in concentrated patches or all over
- Dull, dry hair that pulls out easily
- Constant foot licking or face rubbing (with or without runny eyes or itchy ears)

PET FIRST AID

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Tips and treatment for pet emergencies from The American Animal Hospital Association

In an emergency, first aid is *not* a substitute for veterinary treatment. However, if you are unable to get your pet to a veterinarian immediately, knowing basic first aid could save your pet's life. Always seek veterinary care following first aid attempts.

BITE WOUNDS

Treatment/Action: Approach the pet carefully to avoid getting bitten. Muzzle the animal and clean the wound with large amounts of water. Wrap large open wounds with a clean cloth to keep them clean. Apply pressure to profusely bleeding wounds. Bite wounds often become infected and need professional care.

Call a veterinarian.

BLEEDING

Treatment/Action: Apply firm, direct pressure over the bleeding area.
Avoid bandages that cut off circulation.

Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

BREATHING (pet stops breathing)

Treatment/Action: Check to see if the animal is choking on a foreign object
(see CHOKING).

If an object is removed from the throat and the animal still is not breathing, place the animal with its right side down. Close the animal's mouth and exhale directly into the nose, not the mouth, until the chest expands. Cover the nose with a handkerchief or a thin cloth if you find this more acceptable. Exhale 12 to 15 times a minute. At the same time, apply heart massage with the other hand. The heart is located in the lower half of the chest behind the elbow of the front leg. Place the palm of your hand over the chest and push down (in a pumping action) 1 to 2 inches for large animals and 1 inch for small animals. Apply heart massage 70 to 90 times a minute.

Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

BURNS (chemical, electrical, and heat)

Signs: Singed hair, blistering, swelling of skin and other tissues, redness of skin.

Treatment/Action: Flush burn area immediately with large amounts of cold water. Apply an ice pack for 15-20 minutes.

Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

CHOKING

Signs: Difficulty breathing, excessive pawing at mouth, blue lips and tongue.

Treatment/Action: Look into the mouth to see if a foreign object is visible in the throat. Clear the airway by removing the object with pliers or tweezers, being careful not to push it farther down the throat. If the object remains lodged, place your hands on both sides of the animal's rib cage and apply firm, quick pressure. Or place the animal on its side and strike the side of the rib cage firmly with the palm of your hand 3 or 4 times. Repeat this procedure until the object is dislodged.

Call a veterinarian **immediately**. Also see BREATHING.

DIARRHEA

Treatment/Action: Feed a bland diet of boiled hamburger/cooked rice or cottage cheese/cooked rice in small amounts frequently. Be sure plenty of fresh water is available. Plan on obtaining a sample of stool in baggie closed with a twist tie for examination by our office.

Call a veterinarian. If vomiting is present, dehydration must be avoided.

PORCUPINE QUILLS

Treatment/Action: Removal of the quills requires anesthesia so do not attempt to do so. Call a veterinarian.



FOXTAILS

- Signs: A barbed seed sometimes visible in the eye, nose, mouth, throat or skin causing severe irritation.
- Treatment/Action: Foxtails are usually too deep to remove without a general anesthetic. Please call a veterinarian.

FRACTURES

- Signs: Pain, swelling, inability to bear any weight on a leg
- Treatment/Action: Muzzle animal and control any bleeding. Watch for any signs of shock (white/blue gums, dilated eyes, etc.) **DO NOT TRY TO RESET A FRACTURE.** Transport the animal to a veterinarian **immediately** using a stretcher.

HEAT STROKE

- Signs: Rapid or difficulty breathing, vomiting, high body temperature (determined by a thermometer), collapse.
- Treatment/Action: Place animal in a tub of cold water or gently soak the body especially the head and neck with a garden hose, and apply cold, wet towels to the head.
- Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

INSECT BITES

- Signs: Swelling, itching, and pain within one hour of bite.
- Treatment/Action: Remove stinger and apply cold packs. If not near veterinary care, a topical cortisone or other anti-inflammatory ointment can be rubbed on the bite area.
- Call a veterinarian.



POISONING

- Signs: Vomiting, convulsions, diarrhea, salivation, weakness, depression, pain
- Treatment/Action: Write down what the pet ingested if known and how much. *Immediately* call a veterinarian. Do not induce vomiting or attempt treatment without direction from a doctor. In case of poison on the fur or skin, wash the animal with a mild soap and rinse thoroughly.
- Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

SEIZURES

- Signs: Salivation, loss of control of urine and/or stool, violent muscle twitching, Loss of consciousness
- Treatment/Action: Move the pet away from any objects that could be harmful. Use a blanket for padding and protection. Do not put yourself at risk by restraining the animal during the seizure. Do not put your fingers in the mouth of your pet as severe injuries may occur. After the seizure, keep your pet calm, quiet, and cool.
- Call a veterinarian.

SHOCK

- Signs: Irregular breathing, white/blue gums, dilated pupils
- Treatment/Action: Shock may occur due a serious injury or fright. Keep your pet gently restrained, quiet, and warm with the head elevated.
- Call a veterinarian **immediately**.

VOMITING

- Treatment/Action: Please call a veterinarian to discuss your pet's condition. There are many possible causes and it may take an examination, bloodwork, and/or radiographs to achieve a diagnosis.

EQUIPMENT

◆ MUZZLE

Use a strip of cloth, rope, necktie, or nylon stocking. Wrap it around the nose, under the chin, and tie behind the ears. Care must be taken when handling weak or injured animals. Even normally docile animals will bite when in pain. Allow animals to pant after handling by loosening or removing the muzzle. Do not use a muzzle in case of vomiting. Cats and small

pets may be difficult to muzzle. A towel placed around the head will help control small animals.

◆ **STRETCHER**

A door, board, blanket, or floor mat can be used as a stretcher to transport injured or weak animals.

Remember, it is very important for you to remain calm at all times. Being upset and showing extreme anxiety will alarm your friend more and interfere with your ability to think clearly and administer critical medical help.



POISONOUS PLANT LIST

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

Help keep your pet safe from hazardous plant consumption during the year, especially during the summer months. Keep in mind that plants are often sprayed with insecticides and are treated with fertilizers. These products may mask or alter the adverse clinical signs observed in animals exposed to a hazardous plant. Even non-toxic plants may cause physical irritation and produce a mild stomach upset.

The following is a list of potentially hazardous plants and is in *no way complete*. It does represent the most commonly kept plants. Accurate identification of the plant in question is very important. Knowing the name of the plants in your house and yard is critical to help Poison Control or our office in assisting you.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| I. Alocasia
Caladium
Calla lily
Dumbcane
Elephant's ear
Green dragon,
Oregon root
Jack in the pulpit
Indian turnip
Malanga
Philodendron
Skunk cabbage | IV. Bird of paradise
Buckthorn
Candlenut
Christmas candle
Clusia
Common box
English holly
Euonymus
Honeysuckle
Pointsettia
Privet | VIII. Angel's trumpet
Belladonna, deadly nightshade
Henbane
Jimsonweed, thorn apple
Matrimony vine |
| II. Amaryllis
Daffodil
Wisteria | V. Black locust
Castor bean
Coral plant
Rosary pea,
Precatory bean
Sandbox tree,
money pistol
Bittersweet nightshade
Chalice vine
Ground cherry
Jerusalem cherry
Jessamine
Potato | IX. Chinaberry
Coriaria
Moonseed
Nux vomica
Water hemlock |
| III. Balsam pear
English ivy
Hose chestnut,
Buckeye
Mock orange
Pongam
Rain tree,
Monkey pot
Soapberry
Yam bean

Bloodberry,
Baby-pepper
Daphne,
Spurge laurel
Iris, flag
Lords and ladies
Pokeweed

American yew
English yew
Japanese yew
Western yew
Baneberry
Clematis | VI. Foxglove
Lily of the valley
Oleander
Yellow oleander
Aconite, monkshood
Larkspur
Western monkshood

VII. Cardinal flower, indian tobacco
Goldenchain
Kentucky coffee-tree
Mescal bean
Poison hemlock
Tobacco | X. Marijauna
Morning glory
Periwinkle
Nutmeg
Peyote, mescal

XI. Apricot, almond, peach, cherry,
chokecherry, wild cherry
Hydrangea
Japanese plum

XII. Nettle
Nettle spurge
Stinging nettle, bull nettle
Burdock
Blackberry
Cacti
Carolina nightshade
Foxtail
Goathead
Honey locust
Needlegrass
Sandbur
Tripleawn
Wild barleys
Wild bromes |

From the *Handbook of Veterinary Procedures and Emergency Treatment* by Kirk-Bistner

SUMMER PET TIPS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Summer and vacation season can pose special problems for pets. Help keep your pet healthy and safe by following these simple steps.

HEAT STRESS

Any pet can suffer from heat stress, however the following animals are particularly susceptible:

- Very young or older pets
- Pets with a previous history of heat stress
- Short nosed breeds
- Overweight pets
- Pets with heart or respiratory disorders

Help prevent heat stress by:

- Providing plenty of clean, fresh water for your pet at all times
- Providing adequate ventilation and air circulation when pets are kept in kennels or pens.
- Providing shade cover with plenty of ventilation when your pet is outdoors
- Avoid exercising pets during hot weather and during the hottest portions of the day
- Never leave pets in parked vehicles even if the window is open a small or large amount. Your pet will die of a heat stroke or may escape in a very short period.

Signs of heat stress are:

- Profuse panting and salivation
- Staring or an anxious expression
- Failure to respond to commands
- Warm dry skin
- High fever
- Rapid heartbeat
- Fatigue
- Muscular weakness
- Collapse

If your pet has heat stress, try to reduce his/her temperature by gradually immersing your pet in cool water, spraying him with cool water, or applying ice packs to his head and neck. Then call our office **immediately**.

HEARTWORM DISEASE

This mosquito transmitted disease can be fatal to your dog and cat. Have your dog tested for heartworms yearly and if the test is negative, begin giving a monthly preventative medicine year round. Year round treatment with Heartgard Plus or a generic form prevents hookworms and roundworms in pets and possible exposure to people. Please see "Important Information Regarding Heartworms". We currently do not test cats for heartworms (see "Heartworm Disease in Cats") but we recommend that they be placed on a preventative such as Revolution. Heartworm preventatives in dogs are given year round to prevent an infection of the intestinal system with roundworms or hookworms since both are transmittable to people. Please refer to the handout "Important Information Regarding Parasites".

FLEAS AND TICKS

Watch for signs of these parasites that are mainly prevalent during warm weather months. There are a number of revolutionary, safe, and very effective monthly treatments now available for dogs and cats. We *do not* recommend using flea collars, powders, sprays, and dips in most situations.

Some ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease and any tick that found on your pet should be removed promptly and completely. Using a tissue or tweezers placed as close to the skin as possible, gently and slowly pull the tick from your pet's skin, making sure that the head and mouth parts are removed. *Do not* remove the tick with a quick jerk or use chemicals or matches on the tick as you may cause harm to your pet. If you have any questions, please feel free to discuss this with our office. A Lyme vaccine is available for dogs and we recommend its use.

VACATIONING

When planning your vacation it is necessary to decide on your pet's care and whether to leave your pet behind or take him along. Your pet's personality and length and distance of your trip are important considerations in making this decision.

LEAVING YOUR PET BEHIND

Boarding your pet or hiring a pet sitter are options if you decide to leave your pet behind. In either case, here are some general tips:

- If boarding, visit the facility to meet the people and to check the safety and cleanliness of the operation. If hiring a pet sitter, meet the sitter in your home to see how he/she and your pet interact.

- Make reservations well in advance of your trip. Many facilities fill up early, especially over holiday periods.
- Be sure your pet is current on all vaccinations required.
- If your pet is on medication, be sure to leave an ample supply and clear, complete instructions.
- Leave explicit instructions on feeding and a supply of your pet's regular food. If you are leaving your pet with a sitter, discuss your pet's exercise routine.
- Be sure your pet wears a collar with identification tags as well as a permanent microchip. Cats should have safety collars as well.
- Leave information regarding how to reach our office and where you can be reached in the case of an emergency.

TAKING YOUR PET ALONG

- Call ahead to be sure your pet will be welcome at the hotels, motels, homes, or parks where you will be staying. If leaving the state or country, we can help you check on requirements for entry into the particular state or Canada. If visiting any other country, we recommend contacting the consulate or embassy of the country in either Chicago or Detroit or going on-line and checking the Internet.
- If traveling by plane, we recommend contacting the airline you will be flying and request written requirements for flying your pet. Obviously this must be done well in advance of your expected departure date.
- Be sure your pet has all required vaccinations and a current health certificate. Also it is very important to take along your pet's medical records. We will be happy to supply you with a copy. Please allow about a week before your expected departure date to generate a copy for you.
- Take along your pet's regular food, any special diets or medications, a supply of water, and if space is available, his bedding and favorite toys.
- Be sure your pet has a collar with an identification tag with your name and telephone number including area code. A photo of our pet is important in case he is lost while vacationing. For extra protection we recommend that a microchip be placed under your pet's skin. This is a permanent identification and increases the chances of your pet being returned to you. Keep your pet confined in a cage/crate or on a leash at all times.
- Traveling in a vehicle with your pet is safest for you and your pet if he is confined to a carrier. Never let your pet ride with his head out the window or in the back of a truck.



ADVICE FOR WINTER MONTHS AND THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Nickerson Animal Health Center 925-8835

HOUSING

Be sure to provide proper shelter for your pets. If yours is an indoor pet, the bed or crate should be kept in a warm, draft free area. We strongly discourage housing your pet outside whether it is summer or winter. If your pet *must* be outdoors, provide a warm, insulated pet house or shelter. The house should be elevated enough so that moisture cannot accumulate inside. If possible, provide a "door" (perhaps of canvas) to keep out the wind. If your pet is in a pen, you should block the wind and weather with bales of straw and stretch canvas or a tarp over the top of the pen to protect your pet from moisture and direct sun. If the wind chill or other weather conditions become severe, it is very important to bring your pet inside.

FROSTBITE

Remove ice and snow from your pet's paws and coat at once. Frostbitten skin may turn reddish, white, or gray, and it may be scaly or sloughing. If you suspect frostbite, please call our office immediately. Frostbitten areas should be thawed out slowly by applying warm, moist towels that are changed frequently. Continue until the affected areas become flushed. Examination and further treatment are usually necessary.

SALT

Some substances that are produced to melt ice and snow have low to moderate toxicity, depending on the ingredients and amount ingested. Read the labels and take necessary precautions. Keep these products stored in tight containers out of your pet's and children's reach and be sure to remove salt from your pet's paws immediately.

ANTIFREEZE

Even very small amounts of antifreeze can be fatal. Precautions are necessary with all antifreeze products on the market. Read labels and warnings carefully. Thoroughly clean up spills at once. Keep containers closed tightly and store them where pets and children cannot get to them.

NAPPING CATS

Cats sometimes climb onto vehicle engines for warmth. Before starting your vehicle, knock on the hood and honk the horn. Even if your own cat does not have access to your vehicle, a neighbor's cat might have taken shelter there. Very serious injuries and death occur when the engine starts.

FOOD

Staying warm requires extra calories so feed your pet accordingly when the temperature drops. If your pet is overweight, increasing the amount fed is not necessary. If you need further advice, please feel free to call our office.

WATER

Always have fresh, clean water available for your pet. If your pet must be kept outdoors, be sure to check the water frequently since it may freeze.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY TIPS

The holidays can create special concerns for your pets. Here are a few tips to help keep your pets safe during this special time of year.

- ◆ Increased activity and visitors during the holiday season can upset your pet's routine. Try to keep your pet on his regular schedule for feeding and exercise and be sure he gets plenty of attention.
- ◆ If you are planning to take your pet with you when visiting friends and relatives during the holiday season, be sure to contact them in advance to find out if your pet is welcome. Because of the excitement during the season, it might be best for you and your pet to board him or her or hire a reputable pet sitter.
- ◆ Alcoholic beverages, holiday treats such as chocolate, rich, fatty food scraps, and bones can be harmful or toxic to pets. Keep your pet on its regular diet and caution visitors against giving your pet "special" treats.
- ◆ Never put ribbons or yarn around your pet's neck and do not allow your pet to play with plastic or foil wrappings or six pack beverage holders.
- ◆ Cover or tack down electrical cords to prevent chewing.

ADDITIONAL POSSIBLE DANGERS

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

- ◆ *Bubbling lights*: moderate to lethal toxicity, depending on the amount of fluid (methylene chloride) inhaled or ingested.
- ◆ *Fireplace color salts*: moderate toxicity, symptoms are irritation of intestines with vomiting and other signs including convulsions.
- ◆ *Angel hair (spun glass)*: can cause irritation of eyes, skin, and stomach, may also cause obstruction of intestines and fatal infection of the abdomen.
- ◆ *Christmas tree preservative solution*: low toxicity depending on formulation and quantity ingested.
- ◆ *Snow sprays and flock*: low toxicity, dry particles are not harmful however toxicity from inhalation can occur.
- ◆ *Styrofoam*: low toxicity, can cause choking or intestinal obstruction.
- ◆ *Christmas tree ornaments*: non-toxic however intestinal obstruction and choking are potential problems.
- ◆ *Icicles (tinsel)*: non-toxic however intestinal obstruction or a fatal infection of the abdomen may occur.
- ◆ *Snow scenes in globes*: toxicity may come from organisms in the water, most notably Salmonella.

Read all label warnings on all decorations and take the necessary precautions to protect your pet.

GIFTS AND MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- ◆ *Button batteries (disc batteries):* caustic, potential high toxicity, may cause obstruction in intestinal tract as well.
- ◆ *After-shave, colognes, perfumes, and alcoholic beverages:* ethanol in various concentrations is moderately toxic depending upon the amount ingested. The high concentrations of essential oils in true perfumes are especially toxic.
- ◆ *Plastic model cement:* moderate toxicity.
- ◆ *Epoxy adhesive:* uncured hardener – moderate to high toxicity. Uncured resin – low toxicity, primarily irritation.
- ◆ *Adhesives and super glues:* low toxicity, most difficulty occurs when eyelids become bonded together or in the eyes.
- ◆ *Crayons, felt tip markers, pencils, water-based paints:* low toxicity however may cause more than a mild irritation of the mouth or stomach.
- ◆ *Petroleum based paints:* low toxicity, primary concern is paint aspirated into the lungs.
- ◆ *Toys:* avoid toys with parts small enough to be pulled off and swallowed. Prevent chewing on toys as obstructions may occur or the parts may be toxic.

