

**NICKERSON
ANIMAL HEALTH
CENTER**

**921 Nickerson
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49022**

**269-925-8835
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INTRODUCTION

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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



FELINE HEALTH RECORD

Pet name _____

Date of birth _____

Sex _____

Breed _____

Owner _____

Nickerson Animal Health Center
921 Nickerson Ave.
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Date							
Weight							
ENT/FVR (distemper & two respiratory viruses)							
Feline leukemia vaccine (for at risk cats)							
Rabies vaccine (recommended for all cats)							
Intestinal parasite check							
Cat "AIDS" tests ☐ Feline leukemia ☐ Feline immunodeficiency virus							
Heartworm preventative							

We feed and recommend Hill's Science Diet food for the specific stages of your pet's life.

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.

HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR CATS

6 TO 8 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • Feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency test (“AIDS” viruses of cats) • First vaccine (protects against “distemper” virus and respiratory or “cold” viruses), called ENT/FVR • Feline leukemia vaccine for <i>at risk cats</i> • Laboratory examination of stool for parasites • Start a monthly, topical flea preventative
11 TO 12 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • Second ENT/FVR and feline leukemia virus vaccine (if leukemia given before) • Recheck stool if positive at first visit
15 TO 16 WEEKS OF AGE	• Comprehensive physical examination • Third ENT/FVR vaccine • Recheck stool if positive at second visit • Rabies vaccine <i>for all cats</i>
4 - 6 MONTHS OLD	• Spay (before the first “heat”) or castrate
1 YR 4 MOS. OLD (approximately)	• Comprehensive physical examination • Update the ENT/FVR vaccine and the feline leukemia vaccine if given previously • Update the rabies vaccine
YEARLY THEREAFTER	• Comprehensive physical examination • Booster appropriate vaccines • Laboratory exam of stool for parasites
IF YOUR CAT BOARDS OR IS GROOMED	• We strongly recommend that your friend have a current ENT/FVR and rabies vaccine

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.



FELINE RESPIRATORY DISEASE COMPLEX OR "COLDS"

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The major causes of upper respiratory disease or "colds" in cats are two highly contagious viruses: feline herpesvirus and feline calicivirus. The symptoms of these two viruses are very similar and are often indistinguishable from each other.

TRANSMISSION

Young kittens, unvaccinated cats, and cats confined in spaces with other cats are at the greatest risk of infection. Direct contact with discharges from the eyes, nose, and mouth are infective as well as with contaminated cages, food and water dishes, clothing, etc. Many times the viruses are spread through the air by sneezing and coughing as well. The incubation period ranges from 1 to 5 days before symptoms are noticed. The herpes virus is susceptible to drying and most disinfectants and survives only 18-24 hours outside of the cat. The calicivirus however, is very resistant and can live outside the cat for 8-10 days and requires a dilute solution of bleach to kill it. More importantly, most cats that recover from the respiratory viruses can remain carriers for months to years and can serve as a source of infection for other cats.

SYMPTOMS

Typical signs include loss of appetite, sneezing, gagging, depression, fever, and nose and eye discharge. The symptoms can appear quickly and are more severe in kittens where a serious bacterial pneumonia may develop. Ulcers of the eyes and the mouth are other possibilities.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis is usually based on clinical signs and likelihood of exposure. A definitive diagnosis can be made with identification of the specific viruses, however due to the expense and limited availability, testing to this extent is not done routinely.

Cats that often develop persistent or recurrent signs of an upper respiratory infection may have underlying feline leukemia virus or feline immunodeficiency virus infections. Testing for these two "AIDS" type of viruses would be indicated (please see "Feline Leukemia Virus" and "Feline Immunodeficiency Virus" handouts).

(over)

TREATMENT

The viral "colds" are usually self-limiting in most cats and will improve within 5 to 7 days. Treatment is mainly supportive since medications to effectively kill the viruses are not available. This may include: cleaning the eyes and nose, using flavorful foods, vitamins, appetite stimulants, antibiotics orally and in the eyes. If the symptoms are severe, hospitalization may be required. Outcomes may include a carrier state mentioned above, long term snuffling, or chronic eye discharge.

PREVENTION

To prevent respiratory diseases in individual cats, vaccination is available for both viruses and cats should be vaccinated routinely. Avoid adopting or purchasing cats from infected sources. Vaccinate and quarantine all incoming cats for 3 weeks and prevent possible spread by disinfecting cages with a weak bleach solution (1 cup of bleach to 32 cups of water).

If you have any questions regarding the "cold" viruses in cats, please feel free to call our office.



FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS

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925-8835

The feline leukemia virus (FeLV) causes a high rate of disease and death in members of the cat family. The virus is transmitted primarily through saliva and enters a cat via the nasal passages, the mouth, or bite wounds. Kittens may acquire the virus before being born or after birth via the milk when nursing. Once the virus increases in numbers in the body, it may overwhelm the cat's immune system and enter the bone marrow. From this point, the virus establishes itself in the blood and is shed primarily in the saliva and is thus contagious to other cats. Outside of the body the virus lives only for a few minutes and can be easily killed with bleach and water (1 part bleach mixed with 9 parts of water) or most detergents and disinfectants. Anywhere from 1 to 13% of all cats are estimated to be positive for the virus.

If a cat is exposed to the virus, three outcomes are possible:

- ◆ About 28% of exposed cats do not become infected.
- ◆ About 30% of exposed cats develop an infection and a virus related disease (see below). Approximately 80% of these cats will pass away within 3.5 years.
- ◆ About 42% of exposed cats develop immunity and reject the virus.

SYMPTOMS

A large number of symptoms are possible including cancer of the lymph system, the chest, kidneys, eyes, nervous system, skin, heart, etc. In addition, when the virus invades the bone marrow, loss of appetite, depression, weight loss, leukemia, and anemia may also occur. Because the virus suppresses the immune system, the cat may be susceptible to all types of infections that become long term and may be fatal. Some of the infections would normally be overcome by the cat's body but the virus prevents this outcome. In feline leukemia infected female cats, infertility, miscarriage, stillborn kittens, and newborn kittens that become weak quickly and die for no apparent reason may occur.

DIAGNOSIS

There are a number of in-hospital screening tests that are available and they are very sensitive. Our hospital recommends testing any at-risk kittens or cats:

- ◆ kittens born to cats that spend any time outside
- ◆ kittens from a house with multiple cats
- ◆ adult cats that spend any time outdoors and are not vaccinated
- ◆ adult cats or kittens with an unknown history
- ◆ any new cat or kitten to be introduced into a home with known negative cats

- ◆ any cat or kitten that is not feeling well as recommended by the American Feline Practitioners

TREATMENT

There is as yet no proven effective treatment for the feline leukemia virus but research continues. Supportive care such as antibiotics for secondary bacterial infections, fluids, and nutritional support may prolong survival in selected patients.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Because of the devastating consequences of the feline leukemia virus infection and its prevalence in the cat population, prevention is of vital importance. Preventative measures include:

- ◆ Consider vaccinating *only* those cats that are risk. This includes cats that are around others at cat shows, in breeding catteries, outdoors cats, etc. (we recommend that all cats should be kept indoors but in those rare instances where this is not possible, vaccination for feline leukemia should be completed).
- ◆ Since a vaccine that offers 100% protection does not exist, prevention must also include reducing the risk of exposure.
- ◆ Preventing cats from roaming outside or having contact with cats of unknown health status.
- ◆ Test all cats in a home and remove or isolate all positive cats.
- ◆ Test all new cats coming into a home before they have contact with known negative cats.

If you have further questions or concerns, please feel to speak with one of the doctors. Thank you.

Please note: The presence of the feline leukemia virus has been known for years and has been studied extensively. There is *no* evidence that this virus can be transmitted to people.



FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

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925-8835

The feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) causes a syndrome characterized by chronic and recurrent infections. The infection is lifelong and is eventually fatal. The virus was first isolated in 1986 however retrospective studies show that it has been present since the 1960's worldwide.

High-risk situations include:

- Free-roaming family, outdoor cats
- Stray cats
- Cats exposed to outdoor cats
- Cats living in multi-cat households that frequently introduce new cats

Low risk situations include:

- Indoor pet cats in single-cat households
- Cats in closed, well controlled catteries

Biting is the principal mode of transmission of the virus and even a single puncture wound from an infected cat can infect a healthy cat. Transmission from day to day contact is unlikely but not impossible. Symptoms of disease can include progressive weight loss, fever of unknown origin, anemia, chronic and recurrent bacterial infections of the mouth, lungs, nasal passages, intestines, skin, and urinary tract. In addition, infected cats have a higher than expected rate of cancer.

Diagnosis is made by a blood test along with the animal's history and findings with the physical exam. Even though an infection with the feline immunodeficiency virus is incurable, cats without symptoms can live for years before developing signs of disease. Cats with symptoms of disease can often be sustained for months with antibiotics and supportive care. A vaccine is available but any subsequent tests for FIV will be positive and protection is less than desired.

Repeated checks of the blood from cat owners, veterinarians, animal health technicians, and researchers in contact with infected cats or materials have been negative for the virus. Consequently, there is no evidence that people can become infected with this virus.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with one of our staff members. Thank you.

FELINE NUTRITION

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925-8835

Cats love their meat. In fact, these furry creatures must eat animal tissue to maintain their long-term health. Cats require higher amounts of amino acids found in meat to help form the "building blocks" that help prevent disease. Vegetarian diets, therefore, should not be fed to cats. Kittens (cats less than a year old) need kitten foods that have increased levels of proteins and minerals for growing muscles and bones.

Many cats enjoy raiding a dog's food bowl but cats are not small dogs and they do not receive proper nutrition from dog food products. Therefore, meal swapping should not be allowed and cats should eat only cat food. Extra vitamin and mineral supplements are not only unnecessary but they may be harmful. Supplements can unbalance a complete and balanced cat food.

Cats are efficient eaters. They eat to satisfy their need for energy and then generally stop eating when that energy demand is met. Cats therefore tend to eat small but frequent meals. Owners usually leave food out and do not worry about a cat overeating. But while most cats naturally regulate their eating habits, some do over-indulge. Since obesity is the most common feline nutritional problem, your friend needs to be monitored closely for becoming overweight. Before starting any weight loss program for your cat, however, please call our office for guidelines.

Many cats eat in cycles, a trait that has been passed down from their wild ancestors who ate depending on the success of a hunt. Do not mistake the peaks and valleys of interest in food for dissatisfaction with their food. Switching brands frequently can reinforce bad habits and create finicky eaters.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns.

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 drying 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.

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

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

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.

LITTERBOX INFORMATION

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

1. Have your cat spayed or neutered around 6 months of age. Sexually mature, intact cats frequently use urine and fecal material to mark and indicate their territory. Neutering will help prevent about 90% of elimination problems.
2. The rule of thumb for the number of litterboxes is **one per cat plus one**. Extra litterboxes are necessary because some cats like to defecate in one and urinate in another. Others will not use a box that has already been soiled or used by another cat. The litterboxes should be distributed at several locations in the house since some cats do not wander the whole house.
3. Clean the litter boxes **daily**. The single most common reason for a cat's refusal to use a litterbox is because the box is dirty. Non-clumping litter and clumping litter should be scooped daily and the litterbox emptied and washed every other day. As an alternative, consider one of the electric self-cleaning boxes that do a very good job of keeping the box clean.
4. Choose a litter that appeals to the cat. Most cats prefer the texture of the sand-like scooping litters. Be sure that you choose a brand that clumps into a firm ball, making scooping easier and cleaner. As a health precaution for young kittens that might be prone to ingest litter, use a non-clumping form until the kitten is 4 months old.
5. Avoid scented litter. Perfumed and chemical scents may repel cats. When you wash the litterbox, use a *mild* dishwashing liquid and do not use harsh chemicals that could leave an odor.
6. Do not use litterbox liners since they can be irritating to some cats. Also covered or hooded litterboxes may be offensive to some cats. Be sure the litterbox is not too small for your cat. The minimum size for a litterbox is 22 inches by 16 inches.
7. Place litterboxes in quiet, private places that are easily accessible to the cat and where it will not be disturbed by children or interrupted by other pets. Noisy areas near washing machines, furnaces, or under stairs may frighten the cat away from the litterbox. A house with several stories should have a litterbox on each floor. **Never** place litterboxes near food and water dishes.
8. Kittens have an instinct to use loose material as their litter, but they may choose other locations other than the litterbox. You should limit their ability to move around the house until they learn that the litterbox is the only acceptable place for elimination. Praise and rewards will speed up the learning process. Like small children, they should not be expected to travel very far to find their toilet areas.
9. When introducing a new cat into the home, confine the cat to one room with its litterbox, bed, food, and water until the cat has used the litterbox several times and shows an interest in exploring the rest of the house.
10. Help your cat feel comfortable in his own home and territory. Play games with him, talk to him frequently, and give him positive and affectionate attention. A confident, secure, contented, and relaxed cat does not need to relieve anxiety and stress by such extremes measures such as urine and fecal marking.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CAT IS NOT CONSISTENTLY USING THE LITTERBOX

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

1. First have your cat examined for possible medical problems. Be sure to mention the cat's urination and defecation habits. If a cat's elimination is painful, it may associate the litterbox with pain and choose to eliminate elsewhere. When the cat is healthy again, a careful introduction to the box may be necessary.
2. Carefully check the handout "Litterbox Information" for preventing litterbox problems. Are you following all of the steps? Perhaps the solution is as easy as adding more litterboxes, cleaning more frequently, or changing the brand of litter. Try to accommodate your cat's preferences for location and litter material whenever possible.
3. Never punish the cat for eliminating outside of the litterbox. Housesoiling occurs when the litterbox, its contents, or its location is offensive to the cat or when the cat is stressed by the environment. Punishment only increases the cat's stress. *Housesoiling is never done to spite the owner.*
4. If problems related to the litterbox can be ruled out, consider that the problem could be anxiety related. Has there been a change in the household? Any intrusion on the cat's territory, whether human, animal, or even a new piece of furniture, can cause a cat to feel threatened, insecure, and stressed. This results in his need to remind himself and the world of his territory. Territorial marking is usually accomplished by spraying urine on vertical surfaces, or less frequently, by squatting and urinating or defecating on horizontal surfaces. The more cats in a household, the more likely one or more of them will spray.
5. Try to relieve or eliminate the source of the cat's anxiety. (For example, close the curtains so you cat can not see the cat next door, etc.) If the environmental cause that triggers the territorial behavior can not be identified or eliminated, a consultation with an experienced feline behavior counselor may be necessary. Please feel free to contact our office as we have several resource contacts to handle behavior problems.
6. Whatever the cause for the inappropriate elimination, a brief confinement period may be necessary in order to clean the soiled areas. Place deterrents in these spots and purchase more litterboxes or new litter. The confinement room should be a comfortable room and should contain two litterboxes, fresh food and water, a bed and toys. Remember not to place the litterboxes near the food and water. Visit the cat regularly but do not let him out until the home environment has been cleaned and the litterbox situation has improved. Please note that extended periods of confinement may be detrimental to the retraining process. When the kitty is let out, it is important to praise the appropriate behavior.

7. To thoroughly clean the urine soaked areas, a black light may be used to identify the problem spots and a strong enzymatic cleaner should be used to saturate and neutralize them. Equalizer and similar products available through our office have proven to be highly effective. To repel a cat from previously soiled areas, cover them with vinyl carpet runner placed upside down, a solid air freshener, preferably a citrus scent, or bowls of dry cat food (cats do not wish to eliminate where food is located).

Solving housesoiling problems may be possible – with patience, persistence, and a systematic plan for retraining.

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Cat Club

PREVENTING FURNITURE SCRATCHING IN CATS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Scratching is a normal cat behavior and is done in part to remove old layers of nail from their claws. Because this is often the primary reason cats begin to scratch in inappropriate areas, it is important that as a kitten they become accustomed to having their nails trimmed at this early age. Cats that have nails trimmed on a regular basis are easier to handle and experience fewer inappropriate scratching behaviors.

Cats also scratch objects to mark a territory. They have glands between their toes and by vigorously scratching they leave visual markers as well as scent markers. Studies have shown that outdoor cats use one or two trees for scratching and that this behavior increases if other cats are present.

WAYS TO CONTROL SCRATCHING

- ◆ Provide a scratching post and positive reinforcement

If your cat does not have a scratching problem, it is important to learn how to clip the claws. We will be happy to assist you with this procedure. You can also teach a cat to keep its claws retracted by discouraging jumping on dragged clothing, shoelaces, skirts, or pant legs. Consistency is very important and if a cat is not allowed to use its claws on any of these fabrics, it may not develop inappropriate scratching.

Next, teach your cat to use a scratching post. This requires directing and rewarding appropriate behaviors with praise or treats and immediately correcting the cat if it scratches an inappropriate surface. Some cats use a scratching post immediately and others don't. Scratching posts with different surfaces should be tried until your cat finds one it likes. You may use a specific type of fabric, rope, sandpaper, or a fireplace log attached upright on a square piece of heavy plywood.

To direct scratching behavior, place your cat next to the scratching post and allow it to sniff and explore the area. Gently pull your cat's paws over the surface so that it knows this is an acceptable activity. As you are pulling your cat's paws over the post, you should praise it and provide a food treat. This does not teach a cat to scratch but rewards your cat for a behavior in a correct and specific area.

If your cat has already expressed a preference for a scratching object, note the type of material that is preferred. If it is a specific type of fabric, cover the scratching post with that fabric. If the cat prefers a rough surface, consider rope on the post or a log as above. At this point in time evidence does not exist that if a scratching post is covered with a fabric the cat likes, it will scratch anywhere in the house the fabric is found.

Also identify the location and other physical characteristics of your cat's preferred scratching area. These may include whether the surface is vertical or horizontal, dark or light in color, secluded or in an open area. Provide a scratching post that mimics these characteristics. With an appealing post and proper reinforcement, a cat should switch to the appropriate scratching area.

If your cat still returns to the inappropriate area to scratch, you may need to use startle techniques to correct the behavior. A bell can be placed on your cat's collar to monitor its location and movements. As soon as you hear the bell jingling in an area associated with inappropriate scratching, you should startle it by speaking sharply. Startling should occur within a few seconds after scratching begins or within 60 seconds of the onset of behaviors that lead to scratching (for example, lowering the head, sniffing, rubbing).

If your cat does not react to your voice, you may use a water pistol, squirt bottle, or coins in a pop can with the opening taped shut and shaken. It is important to use the mildest stimulus that obtains the desired response. The appropriate response is for your cat to stop the behavior and leave the environment but still be receptive to another behavior. It is critical that your cat not associate you with the punishment, otherwise your cat will become more secretive and avoid you.

If your cat is scratching inappropriately when you are away from home, restrict it from the area that it prefers to scratch. The other option is to place inflated balloons to the surface so that when a balloon is punctured, your cat is startled sufficiently to stop the behavior. These procedures are successful only if they are used consistently. We recommend not using double-sided tape as small cats or kittens can become entangled in it and become injured.

After a cat is startled, you should wait to trim its nails, otherwise it may associate nail trimming with punishment. You should wait until the cat is calm or looking for attention. At that point, trim the nails while praising and petting it and offer food treats. Cats usually are receptive to such handling, especially if they have been handled like this since they were kittens. Be very careful in handling any cat that shows aggression as you could become severely injured when handling them.

Other options include:

◆ Applying plastic nail sheaths

Nail sheaths are plastic caps that are applied with a permanent glue to each claw every 6 to 12 weeks as your cat's nails grow. Treated cats still scratch but unless the fabric is very fine, the nails cannot cause damage. They come in a variety of colors

and we would be happy to order them for you and demonstrate how they are applied. Nail sheaths are not an option for aggressive cats.

◆ Consider declawing

If a scratching post and behavior modification techniques are unsuccessful, declawing is the *last* option. We believe that it is a justifiable procedure in cats that use their claws destructively and cannot be trained otherwise. If scratching is a serious problem and cannot be controlled, it is more preferable to declaw than to euthanize a cat. At our hospital, we remove the last bone in each toe and close the wound with surgical glue. This procedure is more comfortable in the long run and prevents nail regrowth (which can be very painful, cause severe infections, and require additional anesthesia and surgery). We strongly recommend that only the front claws be removed.

Another destructive behavior of cats is chewing on plants. This can be corrected by misting the plants with water and sprinkling cayenne pepper on the damp leaves. It is advisable to test a leaf first in an inconspicuous area to be sure that the leaf does not change color or is damaged by contact with the pepper.

With time and consistency, many cats can be trained to use a scratching post and avoid costly damage to indoor materials. If you have any questions, feel free to call our office and we will be glad to assist you and if necessary refer you to experts if needed.



Gathered from an article by Karen L Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, Dipl. ACVB, Department of Clinical Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19104-6010

INAPPROPRIATE PLAY BEHAVIOR IN CATS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

Inappropriate play behavior is most commonly found in kittens that were orphaned early in life. Many of these kittens were bottle-fed and never learned to control the intensity of their play (normally, mother cats will bat and swat at kittens that play too roughly). As an owner, physically disciplining a kitten may injure your friend. However, a kitten that greets you with flying leaps and attaches itself to your body is a menace and inappropriate play behavior can develop into play aggression if left untreated.

Kittens can also be taught to play aggressively by their owners. Play aggression is usually directed toward people but it can also be directed toward other, generally older animals in the house.

Cat bites and scratches can cause diseases such as cat-scratch fever, tetanus, and others and are particularly dangerous to someone who is already ill or has poor circulation. If *anyone* is injured by a cat, they should immediately seek medical help. Any injury that is ignored can lead to a severe infection that may require hospitalization and possibly surgery. Always consult your family doctor or local emergency room in the event of an injury. (One of the doctors on our staff received a minor bite wound on a finger. Despite washing the area well and starting antibiotics, he was in the emergency room within 24 hours because of an infection progressing up his arm).

You are not being mean by controlling your cat's aggression since a cat that is under control has a better relationship with their owners.

To control play aggression, you should focus on three main strategies:

1. Avoid situations that encourage a cat to play aggressively.
2. Be aware of behaviors associated with play aggression and correct them.
3. Give your cat a more appropriate outlet for play and to expend energy.

STEPS TO PREVENT OR CONTROL INAPPROPRIATE PLAY

- ◆ Learn to recognize the early signs of play aggression in your cat. A cat that plays inappropriately will hide behind doors or around banisters and crouch and wait for any movement. It will then spring out, displaying both teeth and claws before fleeing quickly. Expect the cat to hide in these locations and be ready. At the first signs of inappropriate play, clap or use a device to deter your cat from its exuberant behavior (for example, use a water pistol, spray bottle with water, air horn, or a pop can with a few coins and tape over the opening). Some cats will be startled by a loud noise such

as a clap; others will need a stronger stimulus such as a water pistol. If water is used, the point is not to drench the cat but to startle it so the aggressive attack is aborted. The earlier the correction of behavior starts in the sequence of events, the more effective it is.

- ◆ Owners have a tendency to react negatively to the undesirable behavior but fail to reinforce desirable ones. When your cat acts appropriately, reward it by gently stroking it. In addition, any time your cat plays appropriately with claws retracted and teeth unexposed, reward it with praise, attention, appropriate play, and treats.
- ◆ Do not physically punish your cat. This teaches a cat that you will ply back roughly and it will respond with intensified violence. In addition, you could seriously injure a kitten or small cat.
- ◆ Put a bell on your cat's collar which should be a breakaway collar. This is important for cats that play with your moving body parts or clothing or for cats that hide and wait for you to pass by. Many of these cats will hide under furniture and then attack your feet when you sit down. The bell lets you know where the cat is and allows you to carry out Step One above easier.
- ◆ Do not play roughly with a cat using your hands! Do not wrestle with a cat, do not grab a cat by the head and shake it, do not move your hands back and forth so that a cat chases them, and do not pull on a cat's tail. Every time you play with your cat, use a toy. If you do not use a toy, your cat will no learn to distinguish your body parts from items of play. If the cat misses the toy and grabs or scratches your hand or arm, stop playing and act mortally wounded. If you cannot make a sound that will startle your cat or if this is not your style, quickly blow in the cat's face. The objective is to startle the cat so that it stops the aggressive event and learns from that experience. If done correctly, this action will decrease the probability of the cats from exhibiting the inappropriate behavior agains.
- ◆ You may use stuffed kitty toys or make some from stuffed socks. Cats like to drag toys and chew on them with their back teeth. They also like toys that can be batted and moved in unpredictable directions (ping pong balls or walnuts on a smooth floor). Make sure that the toys that you choose do not have loose threads or parts that can be chewed off. These can easily cause an obstruction of the intestines or cause a fatal infection of the belly. Frequently check your cat's toys for wear and replace them if they are damaged.
- ◆ Increase the amount of exercise that your cat gets. Toss it a wad of tin foil or paper to bat around a room or ping pong balls on a smooth floor. Rig a scratching post so that a treat will fall of it when the cat scratches the post. Using cat nip "mice", attach them to a long elastic rope tied to your waist so that wherever you walk, you cat will be able to chase the moving toy.

- ◆ Make sure that your cat's claws are kept short by trimming or by using a scratching post.
- ◆ If your cat persists in aggressive play, stop playing with it and consider putting it in another room. If the cat is agitated, cover it with a blanket so you can safely carry it to the other room. Let the cat out of the other room when it is calm.
- ◆ If all else fails, and your cat is young, consider getting a second cat. Cats are more social and generally enjoy other cats. Caring for more than one cat is not much more difficult and the extra company may provide your cat with an additional outlet for play. Select a second cat that is also outgoing. Do not select a young kitten that could be injured by your cat's rough play. If the second cat plays appropriately, it may be able to correct your aggressive cat's behavior.

In order to introduce a new cat to a resident cat, it is important to have a week of isolation of the new family member for behavioral and medical reasons. After the first week, the resident cat and the new cat should alternately be confined and allowed free run of the house at different times. Additional feeding and litter boxes should be provided in areas where a cat will not be trapped while using them. The first introduction of the two cats should be at opposite ends of the largest room in the house. If nothing more than a little hissing and posturing occurs, their relationship will probably develop without more help from you. As a precaution, you should supervise your cats when you are home and separate them when you are not home for at least another 2 weeks. If chasing or fighting occurs, the cats should be separated and reintroduced at a later date, approximately 7 to 10 days later.

If you have further concerns, please feel free to contact our office. We will assist you further or refer you to an expert to help you with your concerns.



Excerpted from an article by Karen L Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, Dipl. ACVB, Department of Clinical Studies, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 190104-6010 and Wayne Hunthausen, DVM, Animal Behavior Consultations, Westwood, KS 66205, 913-677-0203.

HEARTWORM DISEASE IN CATS

Nickerson Animal Health Center
925-8835

For many years cats were thought to be only an occasional host for heartworms. Recent research however has shown that cats can become infected at a significantly higher rate than previously known. Symptoms range from vomiting, heart, lung, and nervous system disorders to sudden death.

- ◆ Like dogs, cats are bitten by a mosquito that contains microscopic forms of heartworms. The heartworms migrate through the tissues and eventually end up in the heart.
- ◆ Indoor and outdoor cats are at risk for heartworm infection. Surprisingly, research has shown that indoor cats have a higher rate of heartworm infection than outdoor cats. It is suspected that outdoor cats have had more frequent exposure to heartworms and therefore possibly a higher level of immunity.
- ◆ Blood tests to detect heartworms in cats are not reliable at this time. Consequently diagnosis is difficult and testing prior to starting preventative medication is not helpful.
- ◆ If extensive testing is suggestive of a heartworm infection, treatment is not available at this time. Medications that are approved for treating dogs with heartworms are toxic to cats.
- ◆ Fortunately preventative medication is available. We recommend that **Revolution** for cats should be given *monthly* year round. Unlike dogs, the risk of serious side effects of giving a preventative medication to an already infected cat is minimal.

Revolution is a tube containing a small amount of fluid that when applied to the skin of a cat monthly, will kill heartworms, fleas, flea eggs, roundworms and hookworms (that can also infect people), and ear mites.

If you have any further concerns or questions, please feel free to speak with one of the doctors or staff members. Thank you.



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. Advantix 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.



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 repellant to the areas. *Off!* insect repellant 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.healthypeet.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 it 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.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>I. Alocasia
Caladium
Calla lily
Dumbcane
Elephant's ear
Green dragon,
Oregon root
Jack in the pulpit
Indian turnip
Malanga
Philodendron
Skunk cabbage</p> | <p>IV. Bird of paradise
Buckthorn
Candlenut
Christmas candle
Clusia
Common box
English holly
Euonymus
Honeysuckle
Pointsettia
Privet</p> | <p>VIII. Angel's trumpet
Belladonna, deadly nightshade
Henbane
Jimsonweed, thorn apple
Matrimony vine</p> |
| <p>II. Amaryllis
Daffodil
Wisteria</p> | <p>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</p> | <p>IX. Chinaberry
Coriaria
Moonseed
Nux vomica
Water hemlock</p> |
| <p>III. Balsam pear
English ivy
Hose chestnut,
Buckeye
Mock orange
Pongam
Rain tree,
Monkey pot
Soapberry
Yam bean</p> | <p>VI. Foxglove
Lily of the valley
Oleander
Yellow oleander
Aconite, monkshood
Larkspur
Western monkshood</p> | <p>X. Marijauna
Morning glory
Periwinkle
Nutmeg
Peyote, mescal</p> |
| <p>Bloodberry,
Baby-pepper
Daphne,
Spurge laurel
Iris, flag
Lords and ladies
Pokeweed</p> | <p>VII. Cardinal flower, indian tobacco
Goldenchain
Kentucky coffee-tree
Mescal bean
Poison hemlock
Tobacco</p> | <p>XI. Apricot, almond, peach, cherry,
chokecherry, wild cherry
Hydrangea
Japanese plum</p> |
| <p>American yew
English yew
Japanese yew
Western yew
Baneberry
Clematis</p> | | <p>XII. Nettle
Nettle spurge
Stinging nettle, bull nettle
Burdock
Blackberry
Cacti
Carolina nightshade
Foxtail
Goathead
Honey locust
Needlegrass
Sandbur
Tripleawn
Wild barleys
Wild bromes</p> |

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.

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.