



On behalf of the staff of CountrySide Veterinary Service, we would like to welcome you to our veterinary clinic. We are pleased you have chosen us to provide veterinary care for your companion. Our goal is to provide high-quality veterinary care tailored to your pet's lifestyle and environment. We are committed to educate and inform our clients while striving to meet our motto, "We treat your pets like family". It is also our goal to provide you and your companion with outstanding service. We would like to review a few of our office policies with you. We believe this will improve your understanding of how our office works, to enable you to receive the maximum benefits of our services.

Staff

Our veterinary team is comprised of compassionate individuals that strive to build a lasting relationship with you and your pet by emphasizing high-quality veterinary care and effective communication. We encourage you to find a veterinarian that best fits your family. You may request the veterinarian of your choice, and we will do our best to accommodate your needs. Occasionally, due to scheduling, it may be necessary to see another veterinary care provider. Please visit our website to meet our veterinarians. Our veterinary staff includes:

Kelly Peters DVM	Brian Darkow DVM
Denise Stempa DVM	Katie Ahnen DVM
Sara Popp DVM	Renee Palmer DVM
Katie Sielaff DVM	Sarah Diederich DVM
Angela Braun DVM	Jenny Wellens DVM
Zach Hofacker DVM	Meg Hietpas DVM
Michaela Sumnicht DVM	Andrea Lohr DVM
Stephanie Winske DVM	Leah Nehila DVM
Macie Peters DVM	

Respect for our staff- We take immense pride in our staff. Our expectation is that our staff is treated with respect. We will not tolerate abusive language or demeaning conversations. We employ individuals that have a great compassion for others and their pets and they deserve to be treated kindly as they do their job as they look out for the best interest of the patient's in their care.

Locations and Services

CountrySide Veterinary Service of the Fox Valley, S.C.

W3022 Edgewood Trail, Appleton, WI 54913

(920) 968-3322 www.countrysidevets.net

Our main location opened in 2008 and serves as the primary location for preventative care programs, surgical and dental services, and diagnostic testing and veterinary medical treatment services.

- Wellness/Preventative Care Programs
- Laser Therapy
- Diagnostic Testing
- Surgical Services

Appointments at the Main Location are available
Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Saturday 8:00 am to 11:00 am

2101 E Evergreen Dr Appleton, WI 54913
(920) 968-3322 www.countrysidevets.net

Our Veterinary Health location opened in April 2022, and we strive for this location to be a low stress environment for our veterinary patients and their families.

- Wellness/Preventative Care Programs
- Rehabilitation Therapy
- Acupuncture/Spinal Manipulation Therapy
- Urgent Care
- Diagnostic Testing
- Surgical Services
- Laser Therapy

Appointments at the Health Location are available

Monday 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

Tuesday and Thursday 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Wednesday and Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Patient Records

Welcome!! If you have previous records from another Veterinary Clinic, we require those be sent to us by email or fax prior to your appointment. We take great pride in caring for your pet, and to ensure we have that opportunity the staff needs review their records in advance to provide the best care to your pet. If we do not receive your pet's records in advance, we may need to schedule an additional appointment or reschedule your appointment once we receive the information.

Appointments

To arrange an appointment time, contact us by phone 920.968.3322 or access your ***Pet Portal*** through our website.

The ***Pet Portal*** is a secure online method to access and manage your pet's veterinary health care needs. Clients can schedule appointments from the convenience of home or their mobile device via the ***Pet Portal***. Our ***Pet Portal*** requires 36 hour notice for your appointment. You will be given the choice of veterinarian, location, and time. ***However, if your pet is ill, we advise you to contact the office directly at 920.968.3322.***

Email and text messaging are excellent methods to communicate. We recognize the importance of providing reminder information and confirming appointments. A reminder email will be sent three days prior to your appointment. You can confirm the appointment quickly via email as well. Clients can opt out of email reminders if they prefer. Alternatively, a text message can be sent to confirm the appointment. If we do not receive confirmation, we will personally call to remind you of the appointment.

Late Arrivals- Please contact if you will be arriving late for your appointment. If you are 15 minutes late, we will be asking you to reschedule your appointment.

Missing your scheduled appointment - If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call us to reschedule. We have a long waiting list and out of courtesy for those clients, we would schedule appointments in the time you are no longer available. If you do not show up or call us to let us know you will not be making your appointment, you will be required to give a \$50 deposit for all subsequent appointments. If you make all future appointments, the \$50 will be used towards your services. If you do not call or show for any appointments, the \$50 fee will be charged to you as a late cancellation fee. If you do not contact us or repeatedly miss your scheduled appointment, we will ask that you find alternative veterinary care.

Urgent Care is offered at our Health Location. ***Urgent Care*** is scheduled to allow us to see your pet in emergent/urgent situations. Examples include acute illness or lameness or other emergency situations that require urgent attention during

regular business hours. Given the circumstances of the pet's urgent condition, our *Urgent Care Veterinarian* will triage the needs of the patient and determine the best course of action. We intend to do our best to care for your pet's urgent needs, without affecting previously scheduled appointments. If you have any questions regarding our **Urgent Care Program**, please do not hesitate to ask.

Communication

Accurate email and preferred phone numbers are essential in effective communication. Please update our database with any changes. Reminder information for wellness evaluations, vaccinations, and diagnostic lab work will ideally be sent via email. If email isn't an option, we will send your reminder information on a postcard. We encourage you to use the Pet Portal, accessed through our website, <http://www.countrysidevets.net>. Here, you can have access to your pet's veterinary medical record, request prescription refills and schedule appointments. Additionally, we will inform you of changes to business hours and other pertinent veterinary issues through email.

Vet's First Choice Online Store & Pharmacy

Our online store and pharmacy is accessible through our website 24/7 and is a convenient and easy way to purchase food, medication, supplies, supplements, treats, toys and more. With features such as e-mail re-order reminders and our auto-ship service, you don't have to worry about running out of food or medication.

Financial Policy

An important part of the mission is making the cost of optimal care as easy and manageable for our clients as possible, by offering several payment options. CountrySide Veterinary Services requires payment in full at the end of your pet's examination or time of discharge.

Payment Options

Payment options include:

- Cash, Check, Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover
We charge 1.5% interest on all outstanding account balances over 30 days with a \$2.00 minimum late charge. If you have an account 90 days past due, with no payments made in those 90 days, CountrySide Veterinary Services will relinquish your balance owed to our collection agency.
- Convenient monthly plans from Care Credit
Allow you to begin treatment today and pay over time
Available for any treatment amount
Can be used repeatedly- for your entire family-without having to reapply
To receive interest-free financing – transaction must be over \$200.00

Additional Policy Information

CountrySide Veterinary Services charges \$52.00 for returned checks (a service fee of \$40.00 and a bank charge of \$12.00).

It is our policy to follow all Federal and State laws and reporting requirements regarding identity theft. Therefore, we will be following those regulations by doing the following:

- When a new patient arrives for an appointment, the owner will be asked to produce proof of identity (Driver's License)
- When paying with credit card, if there is not a signature on the back of the credit card (i.e., "See ID"), your driver's license will be required.
- With a check payment, a driver's license will be requested if the driver's license is not on the check.

When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us either to use the information from the check to make a one-time electronic fund transfer from your account or to process the payment as a check transaction. For inquiries, please call 920.968.3322. When we use the information from your check to make an electronic fund transfer, funds must be withdrawn from your account as soon as the same day you make your payment, and you will not receive your check back from your financial institution. For clients with pet insurance, we are happy to provide you with the necessary documentation for you to submit a claim to your insurance carrier.

Animals Enrich Our Lives

People who own pets live longer, happier, fuller lives. Our pets remind us of what it is to be wild, to be gentle, to be loyal, to trust, to flourish, to slow with age, to die. They connect us to something fundamental in our beings, and we are the caretakers of that connection. For all that our pets teach us, for all the love and joy they bring to our lives, they deserve good care- and they rely on us to give it.

Why Lifetime Veterinary Care Matters

The average lifespan of dogs and cats in the United States is eight years for dogs and twelve years for cats. The **potential** lifespan of the average dog or cat in the United States is fifteen years. Comprehensive medical care, good nutrition, and proper training to allow pets to live up to their potential as long-term family members. In other words, the care you give your pet will help extend their life and make a happier, healthier member of your family.

Our goal is to maximize the lifespan and health of your dog or cat through preventative medical care and nutrition and behavior counseling. We are advocates for your pet. Our job is to advise you as to the best care options available to you and your pet.

Working together as a team we hope to help our patients and their families spend many happy years together.



Care Recommendations for Your Pet

These suggestions will enable you to provide the best healthcare, allowing your pet to live as long as possible.

- Annual Physical Exam- A year between physical examinations for your pet is like four to seven years between annual examinations for us
- Nutrition-Feed the highest quality food you can afford. Premium pet foods such as Royal Canin are much more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. **Do not feed table scraps and snacks.**

Parasite Prevention

Ninety-five percent of puppies are born with intestinal worms! These parasites can cause vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, stunted growth and even death. Some kinds of parasites, especially roundworms and Giardia, are also transmissible to humans. **There are 10,000 reported cases of animal parasites causing disease in children every year in the United States,** and the real incidence is thought to be many times higher than that.

Internal parasites are diagnosed by having a fresh stool sample examined under a microscope by someone at the veterinary laboratory. This should be done as part of a health exam when you obtain a new puppy or dog and on a yearly basis as part of your pet's annual health exam and vaccinations. Stool samples should be collected when they are fresh and stored in the refrigerator until they can be brought to the hospital. DO NOT freeze them. A teaspoon or two is all that is necessary.

If a stool sample from your puppy or dog is found to be positive for worms, the veterinarian will prescribe an effective

dewormer. To ensure that your dog is not being reinfested by his or her environment, a stool sample should be checked again four and eight weeks after the final deworming,

So that you may better understand the problems internal parasites can cause and what signs to look for, we have included a short table of the most common parasites.

Parasite	Transmission	Effects on Dog	Prevention
Heartworms	The parasite is carried in the blood. When a mosquito bites an infected animal and then bites a non-affected animal, they transfer the parasite through the blood.	The larvae develop in the tissue and work their way to the heart and lungs. Signs you will see at home include coughing, weight loss, fatigue, and fainting.	<p>Any dog over the age of six months requires a blood test to ensure they are negative for infection before starting preventative medication. If an infected dog starts preventative, it could cause a life-threatening reaction.</p> <p>Once a negative test is obtained, it is recommended that a preventative is used year round.</p> <p>There are multiple options for preventatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Heartgard</u>: A monthly treat that your dog takes orally. • <u>ProHeart6</u>: An injection that will protect your dog for six months. <p>***Many of the heartworm preventatives also prevent the intestinal parasites listed on the next page. ***</p>
Parasite	Transmission	Effects on Dog	Prevention
Roundworms	<p>These worms are transferred in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the mother while still in the womb • Mother's milk • Eating feces • Eating tissue of small animals 	<p>The worms live in the pet's intestines and cause the following signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhea • Vomiting • Weight loss • Dull hair coat • Potbelly appearance 	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your pet's environment clean of fecal material. • Prevent them from eating wild animals. • Puppies and kittens should be dewormed multiple times. <p>Caution:</p> <p>***Roundworms can be transferred to people. In adults, they do not pose much of a threat, but young children are at higher risk of infection. ***</p>

Tapeworms	The worms are transferred through the ingestion of animals called intermediate hosts (fleas, small rodents, rabbits).	These worms live in the intestines of your pet, but do not cause obvious clinical signs of illness. The most common sign that will be noted, is segments of the tapeworm, (they look like grains of rice) and can be seen on the pet's rectal area.	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most common source pets get tapeworms from is fleas. So the best prevention is preventing your pet from getting fleas. • The other preventative measure is keeping your pet from eating wild animals.
Hookworms	Larvae that hatch from hookworm eggs live in the soil. These larvae can infect your pet simply through contact, penetration of the skin, and through the pet eating the larvae when they ingest dirt or during their routine licking or cleaning.	<p>These worms also live in the intestines of your pet. They attach to the intestinal lining and feed off of your pet's blood. In young puppies and kittens, this blood loss can be life-threatening. Overall, they cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anemia (low red blood cells) • Weight loss • Diarrhea 	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the environment clean • Puppies and kittens are at higher risk; they should have multiple dewormings in the first eight weeks of life <p>Caution:</p> <p>***Hookworms from your pet can penetrate your skin and cause infection. This commonly happens if walking barefoot where your pet has gone to the bathroom.</p>
Whipworms	These worms are transmitted when your pet eats soil or feces contaminated with whipworm eggs.	The worms live in your pet's intestines. In large amounts, they can cause bloody diarrhea and serious illness.	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most effective way of preventing whipworm infections is to keep your pet's environment clean and free of fecal material.
Parasite	Transmission	Effects on Dogs	Prevention
Fleas	Your pet can get fleas from other dogs, cats, and even wild animals. The fleas will jump off one animal and onto another. Most commonly we see flea infestations in warm months, but they can also occur in cooler months, as the	Fleas will cause your pet to continuously scratch and chew themselves. The scratching and chewing often lead to red and irritated skin. You may be able to see little brown fleas moving on your pet's skin, or you will notice little specks of brown "dirt" on the	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best way to prevent fleas is to use a monthly preventative. Depending on the preventative, protection can be achieved for one to six months at a time. • Fleas like to live on or near their host, your pet. So when trying to eliminate them, focus on areas where your pet likes to be. Vacuuming carpets, washing bedding and furniture and even using an insecticide spray if needed.

	flea is capable of continuing its life cycle indoors.	skin/hair. If you place the pieces of “dirt” under water, they will turn red. The red will differentiate between regular dirt and flea “dirt”.	
Ticks	The area you are in and the time of the year will determine how at risk your pet is for picking up ticks. Pets spending a lot of time out in tall grasses and brush will be more at risk, but even pets spending small amounts of time outdoors can have ticks from their backyard.	Ticks attach to your pet and begin feeding on their blood. There are a variety of diseases that ticks can cause through their feeding process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tick paralysis • Lyme disease • Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips: • The best way of preventing ticks from attaching to your pet is the use of tick control products. These products vary in the duration of protection, from 1 to 6 months. • Check your pet daily for ticks if they are in high-risk areas.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations are an important aspect of your pet's health year round. They protect your pet from various life-threatening illnesses. The vaccine introduces a modified version of the virus or bacteria into your pet's body, allowing their immune system to mount a response against it. This reaction builds the pet's immunity against these illnesses. That way, if they ever encounter the actual virus in the environment, their body will have a strong immunity and will be able to fight it off. There are three categories of vaccines: Core, Non-Core, and Respiratory Vaccines. The core vaccines are those that the American Animal Hospital Association has deemed highly recommended due to the life-threatening potential of the virus. The non-core and respiratory vaccines cover diseases that are serious, but the need to vaccinate against them should be determined based on the pet's lifestyle, geographical location, and age.

Canine Core Vaccines	Puppy Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Canine Distemper Virus, Adenovirus, Type 2 Parainfluenza, and Parvovirus (DA2PP)	Start series around 6-8 weeks of age, with a booster given every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks of age.	Annual booster is given one year following puppy series, then every three years after that	<p><u>Distemper</u>: Highly infectious virus spread through respiration. It affects the lungs, gastrointestinal tract, and brain.</p> <p><u>Adenovirus</u>: Transferred through bodily secretions. Affects the lungs and liver.</p> <p><u>Parainfluenza</u>: a respiratory virus that is highly infectious.</p> <p><u>Parvovirus</u>: an extremely contagious virus that affects the gastrointestinal tract. Is very serious and can be life-threatening in young puppies.</p>

Rabies Virus	One vaccination is given at 16 weeks of age	Annual booster is given one year following the puppy vaccine, then every three years after that	Rabies is a virus that attacks the central nervous system. It is spread through saliva and is almost always fatal. Due to its zoonotic (ability to be transmitted to humans) capability, it is required by law to have your pet vaccinated for this virus.
--------------	---	---	--

Canine Non-Core Vaccines	Puppy Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Leptospirosis	<p>The initial vaccine may be given any time after 12 weeks of age.</p> <p>2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart.</p>	<p>2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart.</p> <p>An annual booster after initial series.</p>	<p><i>It affects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidneys • Liver <p><i>Transmission:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the urine of mammals <p><i>Risk factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent swimming • Playing in the water • Drinking from outdoor water sources • Dogs that live in large cities <p>Caution:</p> <p><i>Zoonotic Risk:</i> People can contract this disease. It can be spread from your dog to you by having contact with your dog's infected urine or body fluids</p>
Canine Non-Core Vaccines	Puppy Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Lyme Disease	<p>The initial vaccine may be given any time after 12 weeks of age.</p> <p>2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart.</p>	<p>2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart.</p> <p>An annual booster after initial series.</p>	<p><i>What it affects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidneys • Joints • Liver • Nervous System <p><i>Transmission:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the bite of deer ticks <p><i>Risk factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunting dogs • Frequently visiting heavily wooded areas

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending a large amount of time near where wild animals frequent
Canine Respiratory Vaccines	Puppy Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Bordetella	<p><u>Good:</u> Oral vaccine after six weeks of age</p> <p><u>Better:</u> Oral vaccine after six weeks of age, plus injectable vaccine two weeks later</p> <p><u>Best:</u> Oral vaccine after six weeks of age + Injectable vaccine two weeks later + 2nd injectable vaccine 2-4 weeks following 1st injectable</p>	<p>Can follow same "Good, Better, Best" protocol as written in the puppy column.</p> <p>If "Better" or "Best" option is chosen, then annually after that it will be one oral dose and one injectable dose.</p> <p>If "Good" protocol is chosen, then it is only one oral dose every year.</p>	<p>This is a highly contagious bacteria transmitted through respiratory secretions. It causes inflammation of the large airways and in young or immunocompromised dogs can lead to pneumonia. This vaccine is required by most boarding and grooming facilities.</p> <p>"Good, Better, Best" should be chosen based on the amount of exposure your dog has to potential infection.</p>
Canine Influenza Strains H3N8 and H3N2	<p>Two vaccines, one for each strain.</p> <p>Each requires two doses given 2-4 weeks apart.</p>	<p>Two vaccines, one for each strain.</p> <p>Each requires two doses given 2-4 weeks apart.</p> <p>Annual booster, of each strain, after initial series.</p>	<p>This virus is transmitted through respiratory secretions, direct contact, and off of contaminated surfaces. The symptoms are very similar to the human flu.</p> <p>Should be considered for your dog if they frequently are in contact with multiple other dogs. High-risk dogs include ones visiting doggy daycares, grooming, and boarding facilities.</p>
Feline Core Vaccines	Kitten Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Rabies Vaccine	One vaccine is given after 16 weeks of age.	<p>Booster one year after kitten vaccine.</p> <p>Continue with one-year boosters, after that with the annual vaccine.</p> <p>Vs.</p> <p>Booster every three years with the three-year vaccine.</p>	Rabies is a virus that attacks the central nervous system. It is spread through saliva and is almost always fatal. Due to its zoonotic (ability to be transmitted to humans) capability, it is required by law to have your pet vaccinated for this virus.

FVCRP (Feline Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia virus)	Start series around 6-8 weeks of age, with a booster given every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks of age.	Annual booster is given one year following kitten series, then every three years after that. If no history of kitten series, then adult receives two doses, 3-4 weeks apart. A booster is given one year after the initial series, then every three years.	<u><i>Feline Rhinotracheitis</i></u> : This is a virus that induces severe upper respiratory infection (URI). Clinical signs include rhinitis, sneezing, and conjunctivitis; these signs may become chronic. Kittens and immunocompromised cats are at highest risk. <u><i>Feline Calicivirus</i></u> : This virus induces upper respiratory disease, along with oral ulceration. Clinical signs are typical of a URI, but can be more severe and include hair loss, crusting of the skin, and facial edema. <u><i>Panleukopenia virus</i></u> : This is a highly infectious disease, with a high mortality rate. Clinical signs include anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever.
---	---	---	---

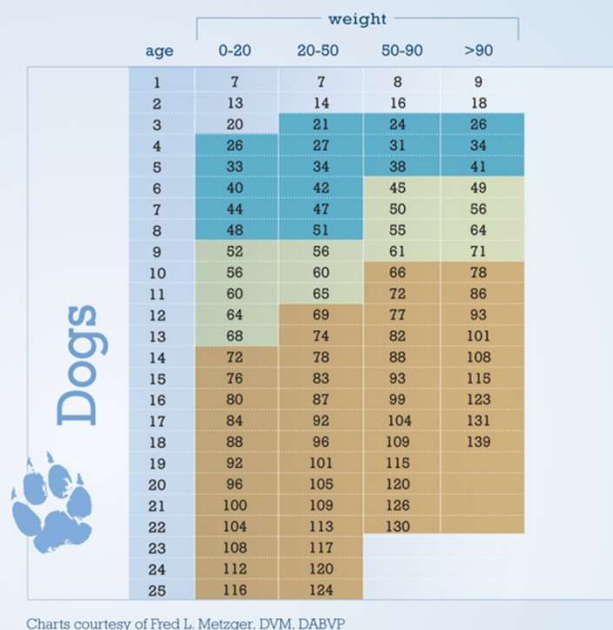
Feline Non-Core Vaccines	Kitten Vaccination	Adult Vaccination	Reason for Vaccine
Feline Leukemia Virus	First dose after 12 weeks of age, with a booster 3-4 weeks later.	Annual boosters following initial series. Your cat's lifestyle should be taken into consideration when deciding how often to vaccinate. For Example: If the cat is going outdoors or lives in a house with other cats of unknown status, then the cat should be vaccinated yearly, lifelong.	This virus compromises your cat's immune system and can lead to diseases such as lymphoma, anemia, and opportunistic infections due to low immunity. The virus is spread through saliva in situations such as mutual grooming, shared food, and water dishes, or fighting. Young cats are at highest risk of contracting the virus.

Continued care recommendations

- Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water.
- Keep your pet under control. Don't let your pet run loose. Purchase an ID tag to place on your pet's collar and keep it on at all times. It is your pet's ticket home.
- Consider a microchip for permanent identification.
- **FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus) /FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) testing** for your cat is highly recommended.
- **Dental Care** is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average lifespan of a pet that receives timely dental care is 10-20% longer than one that doesn't. Infected teeth and gums are very painful for your pet, and can also spread to the kidneys, heart, liver and elsewhere. Dental cleanings are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your pet.
- **Prevent Obesity because** the extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, joints, and muscles, and pre-dispose the path to diabetes, decreasing life expectancy by 30-50%.

- **Exercise is important** as most dogs don't get nearly enough exercise. Poor health, obesity, and boredom-related behavior problems often result.
- **Groom coat and trim nails as needed.** Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores, lumps or bald spots. Report any skin problems to your veterinarian.
- **Never give human medications to your pet without checking with a veterinarian. Most have severe side effects for your pet**
- **Report any changes** or problems in your pet's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavior problems usually are more successfully treated the earlier they are addressed.
- **As your pet ages;** Senior wellness screening helps detect many of the problems caused by aging such as kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, and dental concerns. Early detection can lengthen your pet's life, and proper treatment will help improve your pet's quality of life.

How old is your pet in people years?



Home Checklist for Pet Health



Please use this checklist on a regular basis. You can discover many problems before they become serious and cause undue pain and expense.

My Pet....

.....is acting normal, active and in good spirits

.....has a normal appetite with no chewing or swallowing difficulty.

.....breathes normally, without straining or coughing.

..... urinates the usual amounts and frequency.

.....walks without stiffness, pain or difficulty.

.....has healthy looking feet and short nails.

.....has a full, glossy coat in good condition.

.....has skin that is free of dry flakes and not greasy.

.....is free from fleas, ticks, lice or mites.

.....has eyes that are bright, clear and free of matter.

.....has ears that are clean and free of debris and odor

.....has a moist nose, free of discharge.

.....has clean, white teeth, free of plaque and calculus.

.....has gums that are pink with no redness and non-offensive breath odor.

....has a body that is free from lumps/bumps as I run my hand over its entire body.

Call us if you answer NO to any of these statements!



Further information about common preventative care....

Canine Heartworm Disease

This is a serious, deadly disease wherever mosquitoes are present. Each year, thousands of dogs become permanently debilitated or die from lung, heart, or circulatory problems caused by heartworms. Your dog can have heartworms for several months before symptoms are obvious. By then the disease may be difficult or impossible to treat successfully.

Symptoms

An infected dog becomes less active and tires easily. Coughing, weight loss, chronic fatigue, and fainting may appear in advanced disease stages. Adult heartworms are found in the heart, lungs, and major blood vessels. Secondary liver and kidney disease may result. Heartworms can grow from 5 to 14 inches long. In advanced cases, a hundred or more worms have been found in a single heart.

Prevention

A simple blood test is required before starting your pet on effective, easy-to-use preventative medication. A life-threatening reaction can occur if this medication is administered to an infected pet. Annual testing is recommended even with year-round use of the medication. Make sure your pet is tested and protected. Don't gamble with your pet's life!

Treatment

Successful treatment depends on early detection and close veterinary supervision. If permanent damage has occurred, the prognosis is very poor. We are happy to say that most of our clients who own dogs do have them tested for heartworms and put them on preventive medication every year. It is easy and inexpensive to test for and prevent heartworm disease. The blood test requires only a brief office visit. The preventative medications usually cost from \$3 to \$10 per month, depending on the size of the dog.

Not only are heartworm medications reasonably priced, but many of them now prevent roundworms, whipworms, and hookworms as well. These parasites live in the intestines. Ninety-five percent of puppies are born with one or another of these parasites. They are common in adult dogs as well, especially those that spend a lot of time outdoors. Roundworms and hookworms can also cause problems for people, especially children who may be out barefoot in the yard or toddlers who may put soiled fingers in their mouths. **There are 10,000 cases of animal parasites causing disease in children every year in the United States.**

Why risk problems for your pet or your family?

We recommend having a stool sample checked for intestinal parasites at the time the heartworm test is done. If the stool sample is positive for intestinal parasites, your pet will need deworming to kill adult intestinal worms. The heartworm preventatives given after that will prevent your dog from becoming reinfested with the intestinal parasites. Eggs of intestinal parasites survive on grass for long periods of time, so without the heartworm medication, it is very common for dogs to pick up intestinal parasites repeatedly from their yard.

Heartworm preventatives come in both chewable beef-flavored form or in non-chewable. They also come in pills that are given either once a day or once monthly. Which kind you choose depends on what is easier for you to remember to give.

Knowing how long to medicate is critical to successful prevention!

Preventative medications should be started as soon as you acquire your pet, regardless of age. At a minimum, heartworm prevention should be given from March to December. We recommend giving it every month of the year, as additional dewormer added to the heartworm prevention also prevents the most common types of intestinal parasites. The Center for Disease Control also backs this recommendation, as some of the intestinal parasites are contagious to people.

Untreated animals spread disease. Please don't let yours be one!

Unfortunately, heartworm disease is here to stay as there will always be dog owners who do not choose to put their pets on a heartworm prevention program. These unprotected animals serve as a reservoir, spreading the disease to other dogs. Please don't let your dog become a victim of this deadly disease. Call for an appointment to get your pet started on a parasite prevention program today.

FACT... all dogs, regardless of age, sex, size, or breed, are at risk wherever mosquitoes are present. It takes only ONE infected mosquito to infect your dog.

FACT... heartworm disease can kill your dog.

FACT... effective, easy-to-use preventative medication can save your dog's life!

Kennel Cough

Kennel Cough is the common name for a group of diseases similar to the human cold or flu. Symptoms are fever, swollen tonsils or lymph nodes, and a deep “honking” cough that takes weeks to go away. Although rarely fatal, it can lead to pneumonia in puppies, senior pets or those already ill with another disease.

There are several different bacteria and viruses that can cause Kennel Cough. All are very contagious, especially when multiple dogs are in the same room together. When a sick dog coughs or sneezes, it sprays the infectious virus or bacteria particles into the air, where they float around and are inhaled by another dog across the room or in the cage next door. It can also be spread by touching noses, sharing food or water bowls, or sniffing around where a sick dog has been.

The most common cause of Kennel Cough is a bacteria named **Bordetella bronchiseptica**. The vaccine for Bordetella may be either nose drops or an injection. Vaccination gives quick and effective immunity for 6-12 months. Parainfluenza is a viral cause of Kennel Cough. There are two strains of parainfluenza vaccine contained in the DHLPP vaccine that most dogs receive annually. Some Bordetella vaccines contain extra parainfluenza vaccine as well.

There are also some less common viral causes of Kennel Cough for which we have no vaccine, so even a vaccinated dog can occasionally contract the disease.

There have been numerous studies reported recently in the veterinary literature about Bordetella infection causing upper respiratory disease in cats as well as dogs. Unlike the cough seen in canines, cats develop sneezing and sinusitis.

All boarding kennels require that dogs be vaccinated against Kennel Cough. Some require Bordetella vaccination be given within the previous six months to keep immunity high. Many veterinary clinics require vaccination before elective surgeries to prevent the spread of disease in the hospital. The last thing your pet needs after major surgery is a fever and a cough.

Most groomers do not require Bordetella vaccination, but they should. Multiple dogs in and out of one room are the ideal breeding ground for infection. Your pet should also be vaccinated if you go to a dog park, obedience training, hunting or hiking with other dogs, or if you encounter other pets while walking your dog. Even sitting in the waiting room of the veterinary clinic, or entering the clinic for dentistry, x-rays or other procedures, puts the pet at risk of contracting this annoying disease. Only pets confined to their own house or yard have no risk of catching Kennel Cough.

As with most diseases, prevention is easy and cost-effective. Be sure your pet is vaccinated!

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called a spirochete. Although originally discovered in Lyme, Connecticut, Lyme disease has now been reported in most states. The disease is more properly called Borreliosis, after the bacteria species that causes it – *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

Lyme disease is a serious and life-threatening disease. It can cause an array of symptoms, including kidney, heart, skin and neurological disease, abortion, and infertility. The most common signs of dogs are low-grade fever (103-104 degrees Fahrenheit), weight loss, and lameness or joint pain, which may shift from leg to leg. Symptoms in cats are similar, although cats are less susceptible than dogs. Symptoms may occur as soon as four days after exposure to an infected tick, or as long as one year later. The average incubation period is one month.

How is it spread?

The deer tick is the most common carrier of Lyme disease in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the eastern coastal states.

Recently, other species of ticks such as the lone star tick, the wood tick, and insects such as deer flies, horse flies, and mosquitoes have been found to carry the disease. Currently, these insects are not felt to be important carriers of the disease.

Deer are not the only animals that harbor deer ticks, so pets can pick up Lyme disease whether or not they are in deer-populated areas. The larval deer ticks prefer to feed on small rodents that live in grassy or brushy areas, often around the fringes of woods or fields.

The deer tick lives a rather complex life cycle. It develops from an egg to larvae, larva to a nymph, and finally from nymph to an adult. The deer ticks are among the first ticks to become active in the spring, and they remain active in various stages until the first snows in the fall. All three are very small and difficult to find. They are active almost all year-round.

Can Lyme Disease Be Treated?

Yes. The bacterium that causes the disease is sensitive to several antibiotics. Tetracycline is the one most commonly used to treat the disease in animals. The length of time needed to treat the disease varies, but two weeks is usually the minimum amount. Prolonged treatment may be necessary, and relapses and re-infection are common. The earlier the diagnosis of the disease is made, the more successful treatment is likely to be. Even with prompt treatment, however, there can be permanent damage, especially if the infection involved the brain, kidneys or heart. Preventing the disease altogether is a much better alternative than waiting for your pet to pick up the disease.

Should I vaccinate?

We recommend vaccination for Lyme disease if you take your dog hunting, hiking, camping or running in fields or woods. We also recommend it if you can see deer from your house or yard. If you live in a town, city or suburb with no woods or fields nearby, and you don't travel with your dog, vaccination is probably not necessary.

We also advise the use of tick control products on your pet if he or she has tick exposure. Even if you vaccinate your dog, ticks carry other diseases besides Lyme disease, and their bites can become irritated or infected as well. Prompt removal of any ticks you do find on your dog is also recommended to help prevent exposure to disease.

Lyme Disease Affects People Too!

Conduct thorough tick checks on yourself, your children and your pets after spending time outdoors. This includes time in your backyard or garden, as well as when camping or hiking in wooded areas. Avoid grassy and marshy woodland areas, and don't walk barefoot in grassy areas. Wear light-colored clothing. This makes ticks easier to find. Tuck pants into boots or socks and wear long-sleeved shirts, buttoned at the cuffs.

Ticks do not fly or jump onto their hosts. They wait atop grasses and other vegetation until an animal brushes against them. Then they cling to skin, fur or clothing and will crawl for a time on their host before they embed and feed.

Ticks must be embedded and engorged (not flat) for 24 hours before they transmit the Lyme disease bacteria. Therefore, it is important to look for and remove any ticks as soon as possible to prevent infection.

Protect yourself and your pets with insect/tick repellents. Products containing 30% or more DEET or 0.58 permethrin are almost 100% effective in repelling deer ticks. We have several good, long-lasting products available to help you to safely protect your dog or cat from Lyme disease.

Can I Get Lyme disease from my Pet?

It is not known at this time whether Lyme disease can be spread directly from animals to humans. *Borrelia burgdorferi* organisms have been found in the urine of infected animals, however, and it is speculated that urine and feces from

birds and rodents may be contributing to the spread of the disease. Certainly, infected ticks can carry the disease from animals to people nearby. At this time we don't believe that animal-human transmission is a significant factor in the disease, but caution is advised if you are exposed to an animal which has the disease. Use insect repellants conscientiously, and wash your hands or wear gloves when handling animal wastes or deer carcasses.

Preventing Fleas and Ticks

Fleas

Fleas are among the most common health problems of dogs and cats. In the long run, it is much easier and more cost-effective to prevent fleas on your pets than to have to treat a major infestation of fleas in your house. Regular use of flea products will take care of the occasional flea your pets may encounter in the yard and should prevent you from having to spend large sums of money on foggers and exterminators. Treating a bad flea infestation in your house usually costs upwards of \$200-\$300.

Fleas will bite your pets, causing an itchy allergic reaction, which can become quite severe. They carry viral and bacterial diseases. In small animals, especially puppies and kittens, the anemia they cause from feeding on the animal's blood can be fatal. They also carry tapeworms. Tapeworm segments in the stool or around the rectal area look like small grains of rice. If your dog or cat has fleas, chances are good he has tapeworms and vice versa.

Wildlife, as well as other cats and dogs, bring fleas into your yard. Pets and people can then bring the fleas into the house. Birds nesting in the attic or mice seeking shelter can also bring fleas into your home. Fleas also travel on their own, as much as a mile an hour. They will hop inside through an open door or window and are often small enough to come through a window screen. Once inside your home, there is no place a flea cannot get to. Adult fleas spend most of their time on your pet, but the eggs thousands of them are in the pet's environment.

If you've never been lucky enough to see a flea, they are about 1/8 inch long, reddish brown and shaped like a sesame seed with legs. They are usually found on your pet's head, belly or lower back. If you ripple the hair backward and look at the skin, they can be seen scurrying through the base of the hair coat. The droppings they leave behind can be seen in clusters. They look like grains of pepper. If you place some of these on white paper toweling, wet it and mush it around it will turn the toweling red. This is because flea droppings contain digested blood. Plain dirt stays black or gray when wet.

Prevention

Fleas can usually be prevented by treating all pets that go outdoors, so they don't bring reproducing fleas into the house. If you had fleas in previous years, it is wise to spray some insecticide in the house as well, especially on the ground floor near doors and windows. This will kill the occasional flea that hops in on its own.

Several different ointment type products are available for both dogs and cats. These products are applied to a small area of skin and then will spread over the whole pet. Some kill ticks as well as fleas, and they can remain effective for 1-2 months.

Some once a month heartworm preventatives are also flea preventatives, including Sentinel and Revolution. These are a great solution because they take care of many different parasites with one easy dose per month.

Many flea products sold in grocery and discount stores are a waste your time and money. Some are even harmful to pets, especially cats. Veterinary products, on the other hand, are regulated by each state and the EPA. We can give you advice as to how to use and apply them, and we often have discounts and rebates that pet stores don't have. Internet products can be counterfeit and in fact often are. Some internet and catalog companies are not reputable and clever forgeries of common products can be difficult to spot. Since we buy veterinary products sold directly to us from the manufacturer you don't have to worry about these problems with us.

Again, be careful what you buy. Older, look alike, but less effective and less safe medications usually contain chemicals such as permethrin or pyrethrin. Don't buy these products except on the recommendation of your veterinarian. Care is needed when using these products to ensure that toxicity does not develop due to the concurrent use of other drugs, pesticides or chemicals, or because the compound used was not safe for a particular age or type of animal. Newer veterinary products are safer and more effective, well worth the extra money they cost.

Similarly, most flea collars available in stores are not very effective and often cause dermatitis on the pet's neck. They have been linked to mouth cancer (squamous cell carcinoma) in cats because cats lick these toxic chemicals off their fur. However, there is a new and safe collar option now available on the market. It is called Seresto.

Flea shampoos and soaps are great for cleaning a dog or cat with fleas, but they have no residual effect. They only kill fleas present on the pet at the time the bath is given. As soon as the animal dries off, fleas will hop right back on. For long-term control, you need a product that safely stays in or on the body for days or weeks at a time.

New Products on the Market

Some of the newer chemicals on the market, which has changed the way we deal with fleas, are called growth regulators. They don't kill adult fleas, but they break the life cycle by preventing flea eggs or pupae from hatching. Growth regulators are present in the house sprays and foggers we sell to help break the flea life cycle as well as killing the adult fleas. Some of the ointment and oral flea products use these chemicals as well. They tend to be a very non-toxic form of insecticide. Some are used in the drinking water of people in third world countries, to prevent parasitic diseases in humans, so they are very safe. S-methoprene and lufenuron are two names you might see on labels.

Ticks

Many flea products kill or repel ticks as well, but ticks are tougher than fleas. They require higher levels of insecticides to kill them, so flea products sometimes have to be applied more often to control ticks. As with flea products, we can sell you safe, effective products that do a good job at preventing not only ticks but the diseases they transmit as well.

If you are considering beginning a flea or tick control program for your pets, please consult with us. There are so many products on the market that it's tough to decide which ones are right for you. We are more than happy to help!

How to Choose a Pet Food

One of the most common questions we are asked is, "What should I feed my pet?" Since the most important contribution you can make to your pet's health and well-being is his or her daily diet, it's a question that deserves a good answer.

Think Quality

First of all, with pet foods, as with most things, you get what you pay for. Cheap dog and cat foods use cheap ingredients, have poor quality control, are not well digested and may have excesses or deficiencies in vital nutrients, which can harm your pet. When analyzed in a laboratory, many generic and store brand foods do not contain the level of nutrition stated on the label. So, to get the nutrition you are paying for, choose a well-known name brand.

Ask your veterinarian for a recommendation and keep in mind that a fancy pet store brand is not necessarily better. It may just have a higher price and a fancier brochure. The pet food industry is highly competitive. Government inspection of pet foods is not very good. Where the ingredients come from and how they are processed makes as much difference as what the ingredients are. Therefore, it's better to trust your veterinarian for advice on which companies are reputable and which products make the most sense for your pet.

Your pet will usually do best if you pick one complete food that is appropriate for his or her age and activity level and stick with it. For a puppy or kitten, this means a puppy or kitten food. Young, rapidly growing animals need more nutrition than adult food can provide. As the pet ages, gains weight, or develops health problems, nutrition needs may change.

Raw and homemade diets are popular now, but it is extremely difficult to meet the pet's exact nutritional needs with home cooking, and raw diets can lead to Salmonella or E. Coli poisoning in both pets and people. If you are interested in this option, please discuss it carefully with us. Also, be aware that "natural" is a meaningless term as far as pet food labeling regulations. The fact that it says the food is all natural on the bag doesn't mean a thing as far as quality or nutrition, so be wary of hype and advertising.

Switching Foods

Animals do not need variety in their diets if they are eating a good quality food. They are more prone to digestive upsets such as diarrhea on varied diets or table scraps. Both dogs and cats are prone to becoming finicky eaters when fed a varied diet, causing problems for their owners, later on. So, don't switch foods every other week. If you do need to change from one product to another, do so gradually by mixing the two diets for a few days. This will help prevent diarrhea from a sudden change in food.

The exception to this is with kittens. Cats choose their food based on "mouth feel," which is the size and shape of the nugget and how it feels in their mouth when they chew or swallow it. They may get fixated on one size or shape of nugget and refuse to eat anything else. It's a good idea to switch foods several times during a kitten's first year of life so that he or she gets accustomed to a variety of shapes and textures in both canned and dry food. That way, if a special diet is needed later in life, the cat is less likely to refuse to eat the new food. It's very frustrating, for example, if a cat has had teeth extracted or a broken jaw and refuses to eat canned food. Likewise, what happens when a cat could live two years longer on a renal diet, for kidney disease, but they won't touch it with a ten-foot pole.

Don't base your food choices on what you would like to eat, as many pet food manufacturers would like you to do. Dogs and cats are color blind, so they don't care whether their food is red or brown. They also don't care if it looks like beef stew or little pork chops! The fancier the food looks, the more you are paying for unnecessary artificial coloring, flavoring, and preservatives.

Dry food is best for your pet's teeth and gums, so the majority of your dog or cat's nutritional needs should be met with a chow type food unless specific health problems dictate otherwise. Canned foods are much more expensive to feed, as you are paying for a lot of water and extra packaging. Many people like to supplement their pet's diet with some canned food, and this is fine as long as you pick a good one and don't overdo it. Canned foods are more likely to have excesses of protein, which can cause or contribute to kidney disease as your pet ages, as well as being bad for your pet's teeth.

Recommendation

Premium diets are extensively tested and meet rigid standards with no ingredient substitutions. The finest pet foods are formulated with controlled levels of key nutrients like fat, protein, phosphorus, and magnesium to help reduce the risk of such problems as obesity and kidney disease.

That is why even though grocery store brands provide adequate nutrition for many pets, we still recommend that you feed your pet the best you can buy. Not only are you getting better nutrition for your pet, but the daily cost to you is often not any greater than if you were feeding a cheaper brand. Better foods may cost more per bag, but the superior nutrition and better digestibility of these foods mean you feed less per day, you clean up less stool later, and your veterinary bills for nutritionally related diseases will be less as well.

What about treats?

Most dog owners and an increasing number of cat owners, feed treats to their pets, as well as their regular food. Treats are rarely "complete and balanced," and are often loaded with salt, fat, artificial colorings and preservatives – all of which comprise "junk food" for animals. For example, pig ears contain an average of 800 calories, with almost all of it from fat! A daily vitamin and some biscuits every day will not harm your pet unless it has a diet-related disease, but it's best to give these items in moderation. No more than 10% of a pet's calorie intake should come from treats and snacks.

Stick with a crunchy biscuit type of treat for your dog, and your cat too, if they'll eat them. Grocery store brands are often high in both fat and salt, even when they look like a healthy, dry biscuit. Read labels before you buy. Also, these treats help slow the buildup of dental tartar, but they cannot remove tartar once it is present. Your pet will still need dental care even if you feed him this type of snack. Some dogs like carrots, cherry tomatoes, green beans or other vegetables, and these are great low-calorie snacks. Fruit is OK in moderation too. Many cats seem to like cantaloupe!

Check rawhide treat labels and stay away from brands not made in the USA. Foreign manufacturers are allowed to use formalin as a preservative in these chews, which is harmful to pets. Grapes, raisins, and chocolate can cause serious toxicity in both dogs and cats. Xylitol, an artificial sweetener found in gums, candles, and baked goods, is also extremely poisonous to cats and dogs. In short, be careful what you feed your pet and ask us if you aren't sure!

Supplements & Calories

Do not give any vitamin or mineral supplements to your dog or cat without your veterinarian's advice. These types of supplements can easily cause harmful nutrient excesses, especially calcium and the fat-soluble vitamins: A, D, E, and K.

Puppies and kittens need lots of calories to grow and plenty of fresh water. Until they are four months old, feed at least three meals a day, giving as much as the animal will consume in a ten to fifteen-minute feeding. Kitten food may be left out all the time, but it's much easier to housebreak a puppy if you feed him or her at set times every day. Puppies will then have a regular, predictable potty schedule.

Senior pets often benefit from glucosamine supplementation, but this nutrient has always been present in pet food. The fact that it says "contains glucosamine" on the label doesn't mean that the food has enough of it to have a beneficial or therapeutic effect.

Frequency

Once your young dog is six months old, you can cut back to two meals per day. We recommend delaying a little longer in large breeds of dogs, which may still be growing rapidly at six months of age. Cats are nibblers and need at least two meals a day throughout their lives. Continue to feed a diet made for puppies or kittens until your dog or cat is one year old, again, go longer for large breed dogs, who won't be mature until 15-18 months of age.

Weight Control and Exercise for Pets

Over half the pets we see every year are overweight, many extremely so. Being overweight has some serious consequences for pets, just as it does for people. In fact, the average lifespan of an obese pet is two or more years shorter than that of pets that stay slim and trim.

Weight-related diseases include arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, bladder problems and many types of cancer.

Most house pets are not very active. Not only are many of them overweight, but they also don't get enough exercise. This is bad for their health and contributes to behavior problems. A dog that is bored and inactive is more likely to be destructive or aggressive.

So what should you do to prevent these problems?

Some pets are better at burning calories than others, but for most pets, the recommended feeding amounts on pet food bags are way too generous. If you are feeding a good quality food, your pet can eat much less than the label says and still get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Feed only what your pet needs to maintain a healthy weight.

You should be able to easily feel your pet's ribs and backbone under their skin. If there is a lot of padding over the ribs, your pet is probably overweight. You should be able to see their waist. Their body should curve up behind the ribs if you are looking at them from the side. Looking down from above you should also see a pronounced narrowing of the body behind the ribs. Also look for bulges over the hips, a common place for excess pounds to show up.

On the other hand, if your pet's ribs or backbone are visible, or very pronounced when you run your hand across them, your pet may be too thin.

Choose a good quality pet food that fits your pet's lifestyle. If your dog is very active, look for food made for active dogs. If your pet is a couch potato, they need a low-calorie food. Limit treats, snacks, and table food. A medium Milkbone dog biscuit contains over 100 calories. It doesn't take many extras to tip the scales, especially in small pets.

Avoid processed treats. They are loaded with fat and salt and aren't even good for your pet's teeth. If you must feed treats, give small pieces, or bits of the pet's regular food. Some pets enjoy bits of carrot and other vegetables. These make fine, low-cal snacks.

Make sure your pet gets the exercise they need. If your yard is fenced, let your dog run all they want and if they tend to be lazy, get them up and moving with a game of Frisbee or ball fetching every day. Walks are fine, although most people don't walk fast enough to give a medium or large dog a good workout. Jogging with your pet, or swimming usually results in better fitness levels. How often does your dog really cut loose and RUN? Probably not often enough.

Cats need exercise too. Get your cat off its perch by getting a laser pointer for it to chase, or a fun, interactive mouse game to chase and play with. Cat trees are another good form of exercise, forcing them to use all sorts of muscles to jump up onto the various platforms. One easy trick to get them moving is to place their food somewhere that they have to work a little to get it. Put the food upstairs or downstairs, or up on the top level of their cat tree.

If your pet is already overweight, they will need an exercise program and/or a restricted calorie diet. Most "light" foods available in supermarkets are only about 10-15% less in calories than regular food. If you feed one of these and give the same amount of food as you fed of the regular non-diet food, your pet may stop gaining weight, but they probably won't lose any. To achieve a reasonable amount of weight loss in a reasonable amount of time you need to cut back by 25-30%. The easiest way to achieve this is to feed a prescription weight loss diet. These foods are lower in fat calories, so you can feed an amount large enough to keep your pet feeling full, while still achieving weight loss.

If you decide to increase your dog's exercise level, start slowly. Just as with people, an out of shape pet is in no condition to exercise too strenuously. Avoid heat stroke and sore paws from the hot pavement by staying indoors on hot days, especially when the humidity is high. Panting is an inefficient way to get rid of excess heat, so dogs overheat easily. Also beware of too much running on pavement, as this stresses the joints. Dogs under a year of age, with immature joints, and those with arthritis, should do most of their exercising on grass.

Most pets become less active with age, so their calorie needs often go down as they get older. Decrease their food accordingly. Most geriatric pets benefit from food made for older pets which is lower in fat and salt.

Please let us know what we can do to help you keep your pet healthy. We welcome you to put your pet on our scale or ask our opinion on their current weight or weight loss goals.

Preventing Cancer in Pets

Cancer is the leading cause of death in older dogs. It is the second leading cause of death in older cats, with kidney failure being the first in the feline. Although most cancers are found in older pets, some types frequently affect younger animals, so no matter what your pet's age, knowing a little about cancer in pets is important. It's also important to realize that the care you give your pet now may determine whether he or she gets cancer later on. The good news is, many cancers can be prevented. Here's how:

- 1)** Have your pets spayed and neutered. Seventy-five percent of unsplayed female dogs and cats will develop mammary tumors (breast cancer) as they get older. Spaying a pet before her first heat almost eliminates this risk.

Unneutered male dogs are prone to testicular, perianal and prostate tumors. Two-thirds of older male dogs have prostate disease, often leading to prostate cancer. Neutering your male dog while he is young, or as soon as he is retired from breeding, prevents many problems.

- 2)** Feed your pet a high-quality diet, rich in antioxidants and fatty acids. These chemicals help protect cells from age-related deterioration, thus reducing the risk of cancer arising from damaged cells. You don't get

premium diets in the grocery store. You get them from your veterinarian or a pet store. Pets fed premium diets are healthier and live longer.

3) Don't smoke. Lymphoma is a common cancer of cats and is twice as likely to occur in cats living in a house with a person who smokes. Two smokers in the household mean a fourfold increase in risk for your cat. Smoke is heavier than air, so pets that spend most of their time lower to the ground are more at risk. Cats not only inhale the smoke but when grooming themselves, they lick and swallow ash and particles that settle onto their fur. Lymphoma usually occurs in the respiratory or digestive system where exposures to the toxins in cigarette smoke are the greatest. Although no studies have been done for this yet in dogs, they are probably also at higher risk. Smoking is not only dangerous to you, but to your pets as well!

4) Keep your pet at a healthy weight. Purina's well-known study showing a two year longer life expectancy for dogs that were kept a little lean also showed the diseases the heavier dogs died from. It wasn't heart disease or diabetes or high blood pressure as you would expect, given that's what overweight people are more at risk for. The diseases that the overweight dogs developed as they got older were various cancers.

5) Look for it. Check for lumps and bumps and report any you find to us right away. Call us if you notice blood in the stool or urine, a persistent cough or hoarseness, difficulty swallowing or chewing, or any other change or symptom. Have your pet examined yearly if it is young, twice a year if over age nine. The earlier a tumor is detected, the better the chance of a cure. Don't wait until your pet gets sick.

We recommend regular blood and urine screening for all pets, in part because some types of cancer will cause abnormalities in these tests. Have x-rays taken of the chest and abdomen each year in pets twelve years of age and older, to catch lumps in the lungs, liver, spleen, or other organs.

6) Keep pink-skinned dogs and cats out of the sun. White cats are especially prone to getting skin cancer on their ears or nose from sunburn.

7) Have lumps and bumps checked with a biopsy. This is often as simple as putting a needle into a lump to get a few cells to examine under the microscope. This usually can tell us if a lump needs to be removed. Fifty percent of cancer cases are cured by surgery to remove the lump.

8) Test cats for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). These viruses can cause cancer. If your cat goes outdoors, or if you have three or more cats, you should consider vaccination for FeLV. All cats should be tested upon adoption or if they have any serious illness. Cats that go outdoors should be re-tested annually.

9) Use up-to-date vaccination protocols for cats. The safer vaccines and rotating vaccine schedule we use here were designed to minimize the risk of cancer.

10) Avoid exposing our pets to chemicals. Cats who wear over the counter flea collars are more prone to cancer in the mouth (squamous cell carcinoma) from licking insecticide off their fur.

Pets have higher levels of exposure to toxins than humans in many cases because they don't wear clothes, they spend a lot of time sniffing, and they clean themselves by licking their fur.

Traveling With Your Pet

Traveling with pets can be traumatic for all concerned, especially if preparations are not made beforehand. Here are a few suggestions for a safe and comfortable journey.

If you are flying with your pet...

Contact the airline and us ahead of time. The airlines have special rules and regulations for pets, and you will need health papers filled out ahead of time. If you are traveling or moving overseas, contact us at least six months in advance.

If you are crossing state lines...

Whether you are traveling by air or car, you will need a health certificate from us filled out within ten days of your trip. Health certificates are required by law to help stop the spread of rabies and other diseases from state to state. Different states have different rules about the frequency of rabies vaccine administration, so your pet may need a

booster shot before you leave. You should also carry a copy of your pet's rabies certificate with you. Without these papers, if you are stopped by police during your trip, you can be fined and your animal quarantined for 10 to 14 days at your expense.

Be sure your pet is wearing a collar with ID tags...

An extra tag with the name and phone number of a friend or relative is also a good idea. Remember, you won't be home to take the call if your pet is found again. Consider having a microchip or tattoo applied for permanent identification.

Always leash your pet...

When he is not in the car. Do not let your dog become a pest or a hazard at gas stations or rest stops. Unless you are on private property and have permission to let your dog run loose, leash him at all times.

Take along plastic bags to clean up messes...

Bring some towels as well in case your pet has an accident or illness in the car. Also, bring your pet's bowls and its supply of regular food and drinking water. Sudden changes of food and water, coupled with the stress of traveling, frequently lead to diarrhea. Pack a few favorite toys and a brush, and plenty of kitty litter for cats.

A crate is the best investment you can make...

When traveling safely. Ask us how to accustom your pet to the crate ahead of time if your pet hasn't used one before. If you have recently acquired a puppy or kitten and plan to travel later on, now is the time to introduce traveling in a crate! In a crate, your pet can relax and nap comfortably, and he will be more protected in case of an accident.

You can also keep your pet crated at motels and hotels that allow pets.

Be sure your pet's crate is big enough for them to stand up, turn around, and lay stretched out comfortably. Keeping your dog or cat confined to a tiny cage for hours on end is cruel. Cats need enough room for a litter pan and water bowl, as well as space, to lie comfortably. Bed the cage with towels, so your pet isn't sliding around on the bare plastic. Your pet will need to get out and stretch their legs occasionally. Every 3-4 hours for dogs and every 6-8 hours for cats is recommended. Be sure the leash is on before you open the car door!

Never leave your pet unattended...

Especially when you leave the car for a long time. Heat and cold can kill an animal left alone. Don't park in direct sunlight. If you are traveling in the summer and your car is not air-conditioned, think twice before taking your pet along. Health problems or fear of strangers and unfamiliar things may also be a reason to leave your pet at home. Pug-nosed breeds such as Pekingese, Chow Chows, Boston Terriers, and Persian cats are especially prone to heatstroke and suffocation while traveling.

It's best to feed your pet lightly...

Or not at all, before traveling. Feed your pet once you arrive at your destination or stop for the night. It's better to eat lightly for a day or two than to spend the trip carsick!

Your pet may need vaccines or medications...

On your trip that he doesn't need at home. For instance, fleas and heartworms are year-round problems in the south, not just in the summer! If you will be hiking in the woods with your dog, you may need Lyme disease vaccinations. Some pets also require sedatives or anti-nausea medications to travel comfortably. Check with us well ahead of time about these requirements.

Any more questions about traveling with your pet? Call us!

Care of the Skin, Ears, Nails, and Coat

1.) Skin Care

Skin is the heaviest single organ of the body, accounting for about 16% of the total body weight. The skin has many functions. It prevents water loss, it serves as a sensory organ, protects the body from impact and friction injuries, it is elastic to allow for swelling, protects against ultraviolet rays from the sun. The skin's glands, blood vessels, and fatty tissue participate in thermoregulation, metabolism, and excretion. The skin is also the body's first defense against disease.

Proper care of your pet's skin and coat is very important to his overall health. Skin and ear problems are among the most common reasons for pet owners to seek veterinary care.

Check your pet's skin often and look for sores, lumps, bald spots, reddened areas, and fleas. Call us if you find any abnormalities.

How often you bathe your pet will depend on your lifestyle. Once a month is a good rule of thumb for an indoor dog. When your dog smells or looks dirty, it's probably time for a bath.

Be sure to use shampoos made for pets. Human soaps and shampoos are formulated for human skin pH, which is different from that of dogs. Human shampoos usually cause dry, irritated, itchy skin in dogs.

If you need to bathe the face, place a little bland ophthalmic (eye) ointment in each of your pet's eyes before bathing to avoid irritation from the soap. Use lukewarm water to bathe your pet and be sure to rinse thoroughly with a spray attachment. Soap residue will cause red, itchy skin. Towel dry your dog and then blow dry on low if needed.

If you don't have the facility to bathe your dog yourself, most groomers and veterinary clinics are equipped to do it for you. Owners of poodles, schnauzers, cocker spaniels and other breeds that need regular clipping usually see their groomer every 6 to 12 weeks.

Parasites such as fleas, or skin problems such as seborrhea or allergies, usually require bathing with a special therapeutic shampoo. We can help you choose the product that is best for your situation. Many pets are prone to dry, flaky, irritated skin, especially in the winter when the air is dry. Special shampoos, oil rinses, and vitamin-fatty acid supplements are all used to alleviate this problem. Your pet will also have a thicker, shinier hair coat when he or she is eating a good quality diet.

2.) Ear Care

Regular ear cleaning should also be part of your routine with your dog. Dogs with upright ears, such as German Shepherds, will only need occasional cleaning. Their ears receive plenty of air circulation and resist infections.

Breeds such as Cocker Spaniels and Springer Spaniels often develop serious and chronic ear disease. We recommend regular and thorough cleaning at least once weekly in these breeds. Instill a few drops of an ear cleaning solution made for pets. Massage the base of the ear to squeeze the cleaner down the entire length of the ear canal. Then wipe out any excess with a cotton ball.

If green, yellow, or brown discharge appears on the cotton ball, or if the ear canal seems red, sore, or swollen, contact us right away. Ear infections are very painful to your dog and are most easily treated if caught early.

If your dog swims often, regular use of ear drying solutions will help prevent infection from too much moisture in the ears. It is also a good idea to place cotton balls in your pet's ears before bathing to avoid getting soap in the ears. Don't forget to take the cotton back out again.

3.) Nail Care

Some dogs wear their toenails down on their own from walking on hard surfaces and never need to have them

clipped. Most pets, however, have nails that need regular trimming.

If your pet has white toenails, you will be able to see the pink blood vessel inside the nail. Do not cut back so far as to damage this vessel. It hurts, and your pet will bleed. With dark toenails, it's best to let us show you how to trim the nails. Many people prefer to let us or the groomer trim the toenails.

Toenail trimming will be far easier if a puppy is introduced to it slowly and patiently from a young age. The feet should be handled gently multiple times a day, and the nails clipped here and there or filed short with a nail file. Let the puppy get accustomed to it before you hold him down and make him sit still for all his nails all at once. Whether or not you plan to trim the nails yourself, you should still go through this process. Your veterinarian or groomer will charge you more for nail trimming if your pet has to be muzzled or requires multiple people to hold it down for the procedure. A little training early on makes nail trimming a quick and painless task for all concerned.

4.) Coat

Proper care of your pet's coat is very important to his overall health. Brush your pet regularly to prevent mats and tangles. Start when your puppy is young with short sessions and a soft brush. Reward your puppy with a treat when he sits still. Try to pick a time when he is quiet and sleepy, not when he wants to play!

Dentistry for Your Pet

All of us know about the benefits of routine dental care for ourselves. Daily brushing and flossing and regular visits to the dentist, keep our teeth and gums healthy and comfortable. Unfortunately, routine dental care is still an often neglected item of dog and cat general health care. Your pets, as well as yourselves, deserve regular dental care.

After your pet reaches a few years of age, tartar begins to build up at the junction of his gums and teeth. If this tartar is not removed, it increases until it undermines the tissue and causes receding gums. The area then becomes infected, which is called periodontal disease. Infection leads to foul breath, as well as pain and a constant unsavory taste for the pet. If the situation is not soon remedied, severe gum infections, abscessed teeth, and cheek ulcers will develop. Vaccination is not available to help prevent periodontal disease, and regular dental cleanings are a must for all pets. Periodontal disease is entirely preventable with good oral care.

Chronic infections of the teeth and gums result in problems elsewhere in the body. Bacteria enter the bloodstream from infected teeth and cause infection in organs such as the liver, the kidneys, the heart, and the joints. Good dental care lengthens pets' lives an average of 10-20% through the prevention of these secondary problems.

Miniature and toy breeds of dogs exhibit dental problems more frequently and much earlier in life than do the larger breeds. Cats are especially prone to gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) and feline oral resorptive lesions (FORLs), a type of cavity that occurs at the gum line and eventually destroys the tooth. As a result of mouth pain, cats may stop eating and show weight loss and nutritional disturbances.

You can prevent dental problems in your pets by feeding a dry pet food. Daily, or at least weekly, brushing of your dog or cat's teeth with a toothpaste made for pets will also help prevent tartar buildup. Among other brands, Milk Bones, Greenies, rawhide chews, and some specially designed rubber toys are all on the market to assist with this need.

Just as with people, your pets will still require regular dental exams, and cleaning or extractions as necessary. Under general anesthesia, the teeth are cleaned with an ultrasonic dental scaler much like the one your dentist uses, and then polished. Polishing smooths the surface of the teeth to help discourage future tartar formation. Have your pet's teeth cleaned as soon as mild to moderate tartar is present.

Other more advanced procedures such as root canal work, restorations, and even braces are also available through a specialist, should your dog or cat ever need them. We encourage you to be concerned about your pet's oral health and to keep in mind the availability of effective treatments for dental problems in your dog or cat. Make dentistry a part of

your pet's total health care plan for a longer and happier life.

Anesthesia and Your Pet

Many pet owners worry unnecessarily about anesthesia in their pets. Although anesthesia can never be completely free of risk, today's modern anesthetics make that risk very small.

The same anesthetics that allow complicated surgeries such as heart and kidney transplants to be done on humans are used in pets as well. Even very frail animals can usually be anesthetized safely. In general, the risks of NOT performing a needed procedure, such as a dental cleaning or tumor removal, are much higher than the risk from the anesthesia.

We use preoperative blood tests, ECG screening, and radiographs (X-rays) to help us determine whether a procedure will be safe for your pet before it is performed. We recommend preoperative blood screening for all pets and require it for pets over the age of 8 before anesthesia is administered. Even young and apparently healthy animals can have serious organ dysfunctions that are not evident without such testing. Chest x-rays are taken if there is any suspicion of heart or lung disease, or cancer.

During anesthesia, your pet will be monitored closely throughout the surgery for blood oxygen levels, heart rate, and heartbeat intensity. Blood pressure will be monitored as well. Low blood pressure is the most common side effect of anesthesia. The anesthesia is always administered by certified and licensed veterinary technicians or doctors to ensure safety and proper dosing. IV fluids may also be given, especially if kidney or liver function is compromised, to ensure your pet's full recovery.

With proper care and monitoring, your pet should go home after anesthesia just as perky and healthy as when he arrived at the hospital, whether he or she is 16 months or 16 years of age.

If you have further concerns about anesthesia in your pet, we would be happy to discuss the risks and benefits of any procedure with you and explain the exact protocol that will be used. Please let us know!

First Aid for Dogs

Emergencies often occur when we least expect them, but a little foresight and common sense will help you to deal with whatever occurs. Think ahead and have some simple supplies handy in case you need them. A pet first aid kit for dogs should include:

1) Have these items readily available:

- Phone numbers/business card for emergency veterinary services. (If you are out of town, you'll need to be aware of where the nearest veterinary clinic is located.)
- Thermometer, scissors, bandage material
- Styptic powder, hydrogen peroxide, vomiting and diarrhea medication (Imodium-AD, Pepto-Bismol), Neosporin or similar ointment, diphenhydramine (Benadryl), buffered aspirin or prescription pet pain medication.

2) Poisoning/ate something bad – pills, ant traps, etc.

Call us immediately! Depending on what it is, we may have you make your dog vomit, give another home remedy, call the poison control hotline for pets or rush your dog to the emergency center. The Poison Control Hotline is 800-213-6680.

Far more important than having a first aid kit or home remedies on hand is spending the time to pet-proof your home in the first place. Never leave medication containers where pets can get at them. Bedside tables, dressers, and kitchen cabinets are not good places to leave small items of any kind. We have heard countless times "I never thought he would try to eat that!" Keep cabinets and closets closed, pick up your kids toys and don't give your dog toys that aren't safe.

3) Torn toenail/toenail cut too short

For this common injury, the goal is to get the bleeding to stop. A pet is unlikely to bleed to death from a torn toenail, but it sure can look like a lot of blood and make a big mess in your car or on your rugs or furniture. Apply pressure to the bleeding area for a few minutes, and then apply a bandage if the dog will permit it. Even if it doesn't stay on long, it should still help reduce the bleeding and reduce the mess. If part of the nail is dangling, it may need to be removed, or a bandage may be needed to protect the exposed quick until it heals. If your dog is painful or you cannot get the bleeding to stop, give us a call.

There are two first aid products that work for bleeding toenails, either one of which can be kept in your pet first aid kit. The first is styptic powder, which can usually be found in drug stores. It's what people use when they cut themselves shaving. The veterinary product we stock is called Kwik Stop. The second product is the silver nitrate stick. These are a 6" long Q-tip like device with silver nitrate on one end to press against the bleeding area. Silver nitrate is easier to use than messy powder, but it also can stain your hands dark brown where you touch it, and it stings more when applied. If you don't have these products on hand, you can try cornstarch instead. If you trim your dog's toenails yourself, you should have one of these products handy whenever you do so. It is very easy to trim nails too short and cause bleeding.

To prevent tearing toenails, have dangling dewclaws removed surgically, especially if your dog will spend a lot of time in brush or high weeds. Keep toenails cut to a healthy length. Long nails catch and break. Work with your dog from puppyhood on to get him used to having his feet and toes touched and handled. If you don't cut the toenails yourself, be sure to have it done regularly by us, or by a groomer.

4) Cuts & bite wounds

These run the gamut from superficial scrapes to gaping wounds and deep punctures. They can bleed a little or a lot. In general, if the cut is small and bleeding has stopped, it can probably wait until the next day. If muscle, tendon, or other tissue is exposed, it will probably need sutures. Sometimes we can do this with local anesthesia and a few skin staples. Antibiotics will usually be needed. Pain medication may also be required. Call us, and we will help you decide if the injury requires the pet to be seen, and if so, how urgently. Bleeding that cannot be controlled is always urgent. Wounds that could have punctured the chest, abdomen, or airway are also always critical.

Bite wounds are usually a serious concern as far as an infection risk. There can often be extensive damage to the muscle or other tissue underneath the skin, even if the skin puncture is small. In severe cases, surgery is imperative, and your pet will need drains placed, pain medications and treatment for bruising, infection and swelling.

For small wounds, some first aid cream, or Neosporin, and a bandage may do the trick. Be very careful not to bandage too tightly, and never leave a bandage on more than a few days without taking it off to see what is happening underneath.

5) Diarrhea

Save a sample! Keep it in the refrigerator until you can bring it in. Many times, that's all we need to look at to diagnose the problem. Without it, we can't tell what medication will be needed. If your dog is eating well and acting ok otherwise, we can often examine the stool sample and dispense medication. If your pet is feeling ill, is vomiting, is a puppy, or has other serious health issues, we will probably want to see the pet as well. We also cannot dispense prescription medications without seeing the pet if we haven't examined your pet within the past year. Home care will usually include feeding lightly until the dog is feeling better, and either feeding prescription food for digestive upsets or mixing up a homemade bland diet. This is usually half and half of a carbohydrate source such as rice or noodles (no butter), and a protein source such as low-fat cottage cheese, or boiled ground beef (drain the fat off). Fat is the most difficult nutrient to digest. Just as you would eat some plain rice in broth or dry toast if you were recovering from a stomach ache, bland is best.

Imodium-AD, the human anti-diarrheal medication, works well for dogs too. It is advisable to keep some on hand. The generic equivalent, 2 mg loperamide, is less costly. The dosage is one tablet per 60lb of bodyweight every 8 hours until

the stool is normal again. Usually, this will be in 2-3 days. Do not give loperamide to your dog without calling us if he or she is on other medications or, as above, if your pet is older, younger or has other problems. Imodium-AD does not cure the cause of diarrhea; it simply treats the symptoms, so other medications may be needed as well.

If you know your dog got into the garbage or ate something he shouldn't have, the problem should resolve within a day or two. If you don't have a cause to explain it or the pet does not quickly improve, call us. Dogs often have small amounts of blood or mucous in their stools with diarrhea. This, too, should resolve quickly or we need to take a look.

6) Vomiting

Mild vomiting can be treated with some Pepto Bismol or Pepcid at home. Call us for a dosage. There are over 100 different causes of vomiting and diarrhea in pets, ranging from minor digestive upset to life-threatening stomach torsion or Addison's disease. The sicker the pet seems to feel, the more he or she vomits, or the greater the quantity of vomit produced the more urgently we need to see the dog. Vomiting blood or bile is usually more serious than vomiting foam or food.

If you wait too long and your pet gets dehydrated, treatment will become more expensive. It's usually best to call us for advice or to schedule an exam sooner, rather than later. Same as for diarrhea, a bland diet may be helpful for a few days.

7) Sore back/anal glands/tail

We often get calls when a dog is suddenly acting painful or strange. If the dog is walking a little hunched, can't or won't go upstairs or jump onto the furniture, cries with movement or refuses to move at all. It is often a slipped disc in the neck or lower back. This is extremely painful, as it is for people, and should be looked at as soon as possible.

Acting strangely, keeping the tail tucked, or hiding can also mean painful impacted anal glands. Sometimes the dog will scoot or lick at the rectal area but not always. This, too, needs to be taken care of quickly as the dog is quite uncomfortable. If the anal glands are infected, antibiotics will also be needed. Dogs will also tuck their tails if the tail itself is bruised or broken.

8) Lameness

Mild lameness is not an emergency. Rest and perhaps some pain medication is usually required. Many clients keep a few Rimadyl or other pain medications on hand just in case. Sometimes we can give you a dosage for aspirin over the phone, though aspirin is not always well tolerated by dogs. Many human anti-inflammatory drugs are not safe for pets, including Tylenol, ibuprofen, Aleve and many others. Don't give these to your pets!

Restrict exercise until your pet is no longer lame and then for at least a few extra days. After that, gradually return to normal exercise. For little dogs you may need to restrict access to beds or other furniture – jumping up and down is usually not good for an injured limb.

Severe lameness, inability to use a limb or walk on it, or seeing it dangle or be at a strange angle, signifies an emergency. If you don't think your pet could have hurt itself badly enough to have broken something, it's okay to wait an hour or so before calling us, to see if the pet quickly gets better, but if something could be broken more damage will be done if the limb is not stabilized.

One of the most common injuries in the hind legs is a torn anterior cruciate ligament, which may require surgery. These dogs are usually very lame for the first few weeks and then appear to improve. Unfortunately, without proper treatment arthritis will quickly set in and cause serious damage. As a rule of thumb, any lameness lasting more than a few days should be investigated.

9) Bee Sting

Sudden swelling of the face, a paw, or other area often follows a bee or wasp sting. For larger dogs, human diphenhydramine (Benadryl) may be used. The human tablets or capsules are usually too large for very small dogs. Call us for a dosage. Aspirin or other anti-inflammatories may also help, as may ice packing. Again, do not give non-aspirin

products to dogs and always call us for a dose. There are many different formulations of these products, too many to give a blanket recommendation here.

If swelling or hives are severe or accompanied by vomiting, diarrhea, respiratory difficulty, or other severe signs your dog will need to be seen as soon as possible. Severe allergic reactions can be fatal.

10) Heat Stroke

Prevention again is key here. Don't ever leave pets in the car on warm days. Provide shade if your dog is outside in the sunshine. Panting is not a very efficient way to dissipate excess heat – don't expect your dog to keep up with you on your 4 mile run on a hot day. He should be sleeping at home in the shade. We see more heat stroke in the first few warm days of spring or early summer when pets are not yet accustomed to hot weather, so take it easy as the weather changes.

If your dog becomes lethargic or collapses, is panting heavily, the tongue looks bluish or dark red or he vomits, emergency treatment is vital. Cool your dog down with cool water from a hose or a small pool or bathtub, or use ice packs wrapped in moist towels. You can apply rubbing alcohol to the paws, ear flaps (don't get it in the eyes) and along the back every few minutes to provide evaporative cooling. A small bottle of rubbing alcohol can be carried on a hike or hunt for this purpose.

If you have a rectal thermometer, take the temperature repeatedly. It will usually be 104-106 to start with if the pet has heat stroke. The goal is to continue cooling until the temperatures are down to 103 degrees. It should continue to come down by itself after that. Normal temperature for a dog is 101-102 degrees.

11) Weak/Pale/Down

If your dog staggers, can't get up or seems weak or disoriented, or if the gums look pale, call us or an emergency clinic immediately. Do not wait!

Any time a pet is ill the first place we look is at the gums (except in black-pigmented pets) because they tell us so much about circulation, shock, abnormal bleeding and other problems. If you call us and say your pet isn't feeling well, we may ask you right away to look at the gums. Yellow coloring may indicate a liver or a bleeding disorder. Pale or white gums signify shock or anemia. One of the most common cancers we see in large breed dogs occur in the liver or spleen and can cause bleeding into the abdominal cavity. These dogs will become weak and pale from blood loss, with no bleeding visible from the outside.

Another simple test is called the CRT or capillary refill time. Press your finger on the gum to blanch it, lift your finger, and then count how many seconds it takes the gum to turn pink again. Less than 2 seconds is normal.

12) Seizures

A brief seizure is not a critical emergency. Seizures lasting more than five minutes or occurring in clusters are. Often by the time the owner calls us and we call back, the seizure is over, and the pet looks fine again. In those cases, we usually recommend an exam within the next day or two. If the pet continues to seizure, he or she will need to be seen immediately.

13) Blood in Urine

Usually, this means a simple bladder infection, though it could also mean bladder or kidney stones or bladder cancer. Save a urine sample (1-2 tsp.) in the refrigerator for testing. If your dog is straining, uncomfortable or you aren't sure if he can empty his bladder (possible urinary obstruction from a stone) it's an emergency. Otherwise, it can usually wait until the next day. We usually start by checking a urine sample and then take x-rays of the bladder if stones are suspected.

14) Hot Spots

Sudden itching, redness, and pain on an area of skin may be a hot spot. The hair may be missing or wet and matted in that area. This is a moist, superficial skin infection that can quickly spread and become a major problem. If you catch it

early, you can clip the hair around the area and use antibiotic/cortisone cream. If it gets worse, we need to see the dog ASAP.

15) Head Tilt

If your dog suddenly can't get up and/or is walking with the head tilted to one side, his balance is being affected by a brain or inner ear problem. You might also notice vomiting or the eyes may flick back and forth in a strange manner. The three main causes of this are vestibular disease, which will get better on its own within a few days, a middle ear infection, which requires antibiotics, or a stroke. We should see your pet right away for the best chance of complete recovery. Home care is not appropriate.

16) Eye swollen, held closed, red, bulging or injured:

There are many serious and potentially blinding or painful eye diseases. Call us and describe the symptoms, and we'll decide whether it can wait or needs to be seen immediately.

Emergencies that require immediate care, and for which home first aid is not sufficient include:

- Choking/gagging/retching/drooling/inability to swallow
- Labored or noisy breathing
- Inability to urinate
- Unproductive retching accompanied by distress/abnormal behavior (could mean bloat or twisted stomach)
- Pain/screaming/moaning/inability to sleep comfortably
- Abnormal color of tongue or gums-pale, blue, jaundiced (yellow), dark red
- Bruising of gums or skin
- Distended or swollen abdomen
- Weakness, inability to walk or pale gums
- Burns
- Severe itching or scratching, especially if the skin is bleeding
- A severe cough or a cough accompanied by lethargy or discolored gums
- Injury to the eye or face



Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your beloved pets!