



from

# All Creatures Veterinary Hospital



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DOCTOR'S EDITORIAL ...

FALL 2002

## ARE WE GETTING OLD?

Why is it that the time between our birthdays seems to be decreasing? Why do we mentally feel the same as we did when we were much younger but our bodies don't feel the same? Why do aches and pains seem like a visiting relative - they take longer to leave and are more conspicuous while they're here?

The answer is simple. We are all getting older and they haven't yet found the miracle drug that can reverse the process. Aging is slow but subtle. One day you feel great but pretty soon, friends are afraid to ask you, "How are you doing?" for fear that you'll give them an honest - and lengthy - answer!

But aging gracefully is not impossible. Of all of the suggestions we've heard, staying active is probably the best. People who are active tend to be healthier and seem to always have that twinkle in

their eye that helps maintain their mental and emotional balance as well. Swimming is probably the best activity to stay in shape but walking is undoubtedly the most convenient.

Our suggestion is that when you go for a walk, take your dog with you. You will both benefit from the increased exercise as an aging pet experiences many of the same aches and pains you do. Since lethargy and inactivity are usually the primary causes of many afflictions, exercise is often a wonderful and enjoyable remedy. Use good common sense, however. Take it easy at first and build up your distances. If problems continue, see a medical professional and, if Fido doesn't seem to respond favorably to the increased activity, let us evaluate him to ensure that there are no serious problems. Most likely, you will soon find that you both have more energy and stamina. Sure beats aches and pains!



## CAT CORNER

Answers to some common feline questions.

### Cushing's Disease: What is it?

Cushing's Disease (also called Hyperadrenocorticism) is caused by an excess of cortisol (a natural steroid hormone secreted by the adrenal glands) in the body. It is rarely seen in humans but is commonly seen in dogs rather than cats. It is most prevalent in middle-aged to older dogs and is especially common in terriers, poodles, dachshunds, German Shepherds, boxers and Golden Retrievers.

The usual signs of Cushing's Disease are excessive eating, drinking and urination; lethargy; extended belly; vomiting; diarrhea and losing hair uniformly on both sides of the body. Pets infected with Cushing's Disease may also experience secondary urinary tract infections as well.

Once diagnosed, the treatment for Cushing's Disease is either surgical or medicinal and the results are generally good. However, it is important to remember two things about Cushing's Disease:

1. Two of the most common signs of Cushing's Disease are excessive drinking and urination which are also the common indications of a variety of other diseases such as kidney failure, diabetes and hyperthyroidism (in cats). These possibilities need to be investigated while testing for Cushing's Disease.
2. Other potential medical problems like arthritis and itchy skin may be hidden by excessive cortisol production. These conditions may become noticeable once the Cushing's Disease is treated and will therefore require a separate remedy.

*Please call our office if you have any questions about Cushing's Disease and your pet.*

**Q.** "My cat doesn't seem interested in the food I'm presenting her. I've even tried giving her different brands. Is it best to just leave the food and wait for her to start eating?"

**A.** We all know that cats can be a little finicky but if you detect a change in your cat's appetite that lasts longer than a day, give our office a call immediately. There may well be a medical condition that is causing this loss of appetite.

**Q.** It seems like my older cat is drinking a huge amount of water. Should I be concerned?

**A.** It is critical for a pet owner to know their pet's usual and customary water and food consumption levels since it's easy to spot variations this way. The average 10 to 12 pound cat drinks about 1 to 1 1/2 cups of water a day. If you feed your cat canned food, some of this water intake is presented in the food. There are several causes for increased water consumption such as kidney disease, hyperthyroidism and diabetes. Catching these problems early is vital so please give us a call immediately if you notice any changes in your pet's drinking or eating habits.

**Q.** What effect does the aging process have on my cat's senses?

**A.** An aging cat experiences routine problems with their sense of smell and taste. We often suggest that you be selective in the food you purchase and warming Kitty's food prior to presentation often enhances the food's aroma.

*Please feel free to call us if you have any specific question about your cat's welfare.*



## HEART DISEASE IN PETS

The Heart is the central organ of the circulatory system. Blood arrives at the heart via the veins rich in carbon dioxide and is then pumped to the lungs where the carbon dioxide is exchanged for oxygen. The oxygen rich blood is then returned to the heart and is pumped back to the body via the arteries.

The flow of blood is impaired when animals develop Heart Disease. As a result, it may back up into the heart, lungs or other organs causing blood vessels to constrict and blood pressure to rise. Fluid may also leak out of the lungs and liver causing a fluid buildup in the abdomen or other tissues. The kidneys may have difficulty discharging toxins causing a decline in the animal's appetite.

### Four Types of Heart Disease

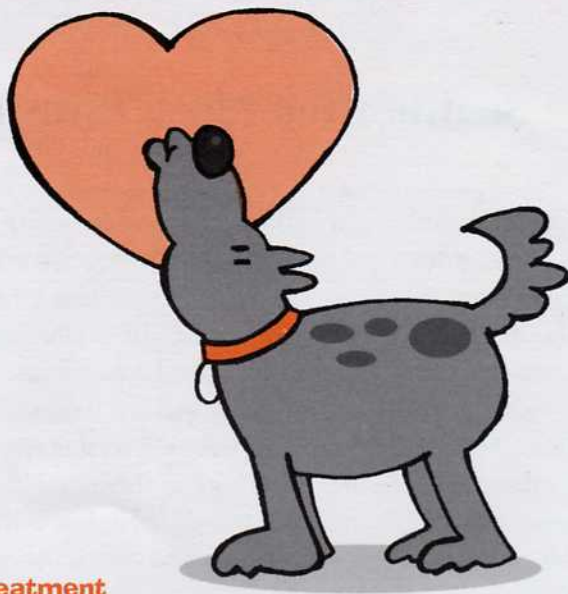
- 1. Chronic Valvular Disease:** Mainly a canine problem, the valves controlling the flow of blood constrict causing blood to backup into the heart.
- 2. Cardiomyopathy:** Mainly a feline problem, the muscular walls of the heart become thin and weak so the blood cannot be pumped with sufficient force.
- 3. Endocarditis:** This is an inflammation of the membrane lining the heart and is usually caused by an infection. A heart murmur often appears as a result.
- 4. Heartworm:** A mosquito borne parasite which grows in the circulatory system and, if left untreated, can greatly restrict the system's operation and efficiency.

### Symptoms

- 1.** A cough is usually the first sign of Heart Disease in dogs.
- 2.** Lack of appetite & weight loss.
- 3.** Difficulty breathing.
- 4.** Cats show few symptoms other than lethargy and difficulty in breathing.

### Prevention

- 1.** The best way to prevent Heart Disease is to have your pet undergo an annual physical examination. This is especially important for older pets. We may want to see some pets twice a year.
- 2.** Proper dental care is exceptionally important as the bacteria in the pet's mouth can enter the bloodstream and grow in the pet's vital organs and around the valves of the heart.



### Treatment

- 1. Change of Diet:** The doctor will recommend a diet that is designed specifically for pets with Heart Disease.
- 2. Medication:** Medications will be prescribed that will strengthen the contractions of the heart and assist in the removal of excess fluid from the lungs. It is exceptionally important that the owner administer the medications as prescribed.

*Please give us a call if you have any specific questions about Heart Disease and your pet.*

## Warning Signs of Illness

If your pet shows you any of the following 10 warning signs, call our office immediately.

- 1.** Stiffness or lameness.
- 2.** Major changes in appetite or weight.
- 3.** Increased water drinking and urination.
- 4.** Unexplainable urination or defecation in the house.
- 5.** Episodes of diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- 6.** Chronic coughing.
- 7.** Lumps or bumps on the body.
- 8.** Bad breath, inflamed gums, tartar build-up.
- 9.** Decreased sense of sight, hearing or smell & smelly ears.
- 10.** Sudden changes in behavior.

## Seattle's Top Pooch Turns Eleven!

Eddie, the Jack Russell star of the hit TV comedy *Frasier*, recently turned eleven. Eddie (whose real name is Moose) is expected to appear in all of the upcoming shows now being scheduled over the next three years. Trainer Mathilde de Cagny loves Moose but is the first to tell you that Moose had quite a troubled childhood. Moose lost his first home because he tormented the family horse, dug holes in a bathroom wall and tracked cow manure all over the house. At his second home, he turned several horses loose, ran off the family cat and started a fire - all in his first three days!!!! Luck was shinning on Moose because a Florida based trainer fell in love with him and adopted the dog. Moose later won the role of Eddie and went to live with de Cagny, a Hollywood animal trainer.

Moose still chases the occasional squirrel but, with his older age has come a certain maturity. Moose stays in shape by having plenty of walks every day and his diet is regulated. He doesn't appear to have any of the problems many Jack Russells have at his age - epilepsy, eye problems and hip problems. He learns his tricks for the show just as quickly as he used to but he has gotten a little more impatient if his treats for a good job are not delivered quickly. de Cagny is confident that Moose will be part of the cast until the show ends. "He wants to work," she says. "And his mother lived till she was 16." Good luck Moose!

(Source: Paramount Pictures)

## HEALTHIEST CITIES FOR PETS

The "Healthy Pets 21 Consortium" recently listed the top cities for pets. The criteria was developed by Bert Sperlberg who handles the data for "Best Places to Live" for Money Magazine.



### The top ten cities are:

1. Denver, CO
2. Minneapolis, MN
3. Columbus, OH
4. Philadelphia, PA
5. Seattle, WA
6. Portland, OR
7. Washington, DC
8. San Francisco, CA
9. Phoenix, AZ
10. Hartford, CT

## Beware of purchasing veterinary medications over the internet

Articles in newspapers and magazines tell us that record numbers of people are purchasing items over the internet. However, the purchasing of veterinary medications over the internet is not without peril and a practice that we strongly discourage! Animals can occasionally have adverse reactions to medications and there is no internet source with a veterinarian on staff to help you through a crisis involving your pet's medications. Furthermore, when you add the dispensing fees, shipping, handling, taxes and other miscellaneous charges, there is usually

no difference in price. Often they may actually be more expensive! Additionally, you have to worry about your medications getting lost in the mail or receiving the wrong medication or dosage.

Dealing with an unknown source on the internet may be fine when buying a book or a CD but it is definitely not the place to purchase vital medications for your beloved pet. It is just not worth the potential problems!