

Tails from the Dog House

The Quarterly Newsletter from the
Sardis Animal Hospital



Fall 2003

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Feature Articles

Pre-anesthetic
testing p5

Halloween p3

Preventing injury p6

Departments

Staff News p 2

Seasonal Issues p 3

Animal Crackers p 4

Doggy Doo Doo p 2

Kitty Capers p 3

Feature Products p7

Questions&Answersp6

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Lost Causes, Saints and Veterinarians

The other day, your editor was engaged in a conversation with animal hospital staff and expressed his frustration with the challenge of staying ahead of his Mastercard bill. (You never have that problem, right?) So I commented that maybe it was time to submit a supplication to the patron saint of lost causes, having tried pretty well every other tactic short of cutting up "The Card". Not being Catholic, I had to ask staff who that patron saint was and if they thought he might help with my plight with "The Card." It seems that St. Jude is the aforementioned saint and the consensus was that as hopeless as my plight seemed, the good saint likely didn't have any "in" with Mastercard. So the next question was whether there was a patron saint for veterinarians. My ignorance of the historical deifying of saints led me to research the issue. I would have thought that St. Francis of Assisi who is known for his love of animals would likely be the vet's patron saint, but the "patron saint index" I found on the web taught me otherwise.

In the interest of being politically correct, my reason for bringing the issue to this forum is in no way an attempt to engage in religious commentary, but rather because my research underscored the importance of animals in the lives of humans throughout history. Even in the darkest of historical times, mankind has had close connections with animals and those individuals who were well known for their love and caring of animals were regarded highly, even in times when man was not known for being particularly kind to other men. There is something in the human spirit which drives us to show compassion and kindness to animals. It is a sign of our humanity and dignity. If only all men could treat each other the same way.

I found three saints listed with a patronage for veterinarians. They were shared with others of animal related vocations from blacksmiths, farriers, farmers, horsemen, and saddlemakers.

The first was James the Greater, who was an apostle and believed by some to be the cousin of Christ. He is most often associated with pilgrims, but the association of pilgrims with horses makes the connection to those involved with animals. The next one I found was St. Eligius who lived in France circa 600 AD. He was a skilful metalsmith, hence the connection to blacksmiths and agricultural workers.

The most interesting was St. Blaise, an Armenian physician who, as legend tells, was a great healer of both men and animals. Sick animals would come to him on their own for help, but would never disturb him at prayer. Blaise lived around 300 AD at a time when Christians were heavily persecuted. Agricola's huntsmen went into the forest to find wild animals for the arena games and found many waiting outside Blaise's cave. (sounds like the animal hospital on Saturday mornings). Discovered in prayer, Blaise was arrested and imprisoned, where he healed fellow prisoners. He was thrown into a lake to drown, but, according to legend, he stood on the surface and invited his persecutors to walk out and prove the power of their gods. They drowned, but when he returned to land, Blaise was tortured and beheaded.

I have long believed that veterinary medicine is more of a "calling" than a vocation. Most veterinarians (as well as their staff), felt "the call" very early in life and wanted to care for animals right from childhood. There is something very special in doing what we do, we take great pride in our work. It's a difficult, yet rewarding job requiring skill, knowledge and patience. Our role is to prevent illness, relieve pain and suffering, heal the sick and injured and to preserve the bond between mankind and his animals. Emulating the great animal lovers like St. Francis and great healers like St. Blaise is something anyone involved in caring for animals can look to, whether we are a pet owner or a veterinarian. But as for walking on water, well, how much can you realistically expect from someone who can't even balance his Mastercard!

Tails from the Dog House

Vol 1, No 3, pg 2

Staff News

Dr Arden Powell,
Veterinarian,
Father, and
Karate Master

Doggy doo- doo and Responsible Pet Owner- ship

Some one in the public works dept of the city of North Vancouver has a sense of humour!!



Dr. Arden Powell, Veterinarian and Karate Master

Ever wonder what your veterinarian does when he is not doctoring pets? Would you ever have thought that the soft spoken gentleman who has dedicated his life to caring for animals is also a Karate Master? Not just him, but his entire family as well. Last summer, Dr Powell, his wife Lana, and their children, 13 yr old Alicia and 10 yr old Thomas all qualified for their black belts together. "Karate not only helps me stay in shape, but also helps to keep me focused and discipline my mind, characteristics which also help at work" says Dr. Powell, who spends his free time working out and instructing at Family Fitness Martial Arts in Sardis. Among his other interests are fly fishing, playing the guitar, and photography.



Arden was born and raised in Quesnel, BC and started his career by studying Animal Health Technology in Fairview, Alberta. He did his pre-vet training at the University of Saskatchewan and earned his DVM from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the U of S as well. His professional interests include Gastroenterology and Orthopedics.



Seasonal Issues: Halloween

For their own
safety keep both
cats and dogs in
on Halloween

Kitty Capers

Why and how cats
purr is still a
mystery.

Halloween, a time to be cautious with your pets

Cats have long been associated with many superstitions. Their mysterious habits, nocturnal lifestyle, and solitary predatory behavior have led to many strange beliefs. In the fourteenth century they symbolized evil and were associated with witchcraft. Many were killed along with those accused of practicing the dark arts. As the number of cats declined, rats and their fleas grew in numbers causing the Black Death (bubonic plague) to ravage Europe. People began to value cats again for their ability to keep rodents in check and cats soon became the treasured family pets they are today.



The linking of cats (especially black cats) with witchcraft persists even today, as a graphic symbol of Halloween.

Halloween is a time to watch out for the safety and comfort of your pets. Pranksters and cruel, thoughtless children have been known to abuse animals with fireworks on Halloween. So keep your cats in! If the sound of fireworks upsets the family pooch, it may help to keep him in a room where you can crank up the TV or stereo so he is not as likely to hear the sounds outside. Also remember that dogs in the yard and little trick-or-treaters don't mix. Keeping the dog inside will avoid any unexpected altercations or incidents. Be sure and keep candies and chocolates away from the dog. Munching on goodies can cause stomach upsets and other medical problems in dogs partying on Halloween candies.

Vocal signals from your cat

Cats learn at an early age that their owners will respond to the vocal signals they make. They are rewarded with attention, affection and most importantly, food. There are individual and breed related differences in the vocal characteristics of cats, the Siamese being notorious for loud, at times piercing wails and meows made at night.

Why and how cats purr is a mystery. The sound originates in the vocal chords that open and close 20 to 30 times per second in response to electrical impulses originating in the brain. Exactly what triggers the impulses is not known, but there is a calming and sedating effect generated by this behavior. Kittens purr in response to attention from their mother and a mother cat may even purr during labour. Cats are even known to purr in the face of pain and aggression.

Sometimes a cat will drool excessively when it goes into a trance like state of purring and relaxing. Excessive salivating may be seen by itself in the absence of purring. Signals from the brain stimulate the salivary glands and strings of clear, thick saliva will hang from the lips creating an image that causes unnecessary concern from an owner.

Mysterious creatures, cats! No wonder there are so many superstitions and associations with the supernatural.





Pre-anesthetic testing, an increased safety margin for your pet

Pre-anesthetic testing

a simple way to increase anesthetic safety

blood can be collected and analyzed either prior to admission or upon admission with results available within minutes.

state of the art equipment and trained technicians assure accurate results.

anesthetic protocol can be customized to a particular patient based on test results

the peace of mind is worth the expense

In the question and answer section of the summer newsletter we indicated that we would elaborate on the concept of pre-anesthetic testing and screening in the fall newsletter.

The concept of pre-anesthetic testing is not a new one. We have been doing it routinely for over 15 years. However, technology has advanced, and knowledgeable pet owners are asking for it in greater detail. The concern is that anesthetic risks can be greatly reduced by gathering detailed biochemical and cellular information on the patient, information that can not be readily obtained on a routine physical examination. Many conditions like anemia, early kidney problems, liver disease, abnormal glucose and electrolyte levels and hidden infection can greatly impact the safety of an anesthetic or surgical procedure. In dealing with patients who cannot talk and tell us how they feel, blood testing may be the only way we can tell how healthy the pet is. It's fair to say that many of the horror stories that we hear about anesthetic complications and "accidents" in both human and veterinary medicine are in fact related to one of the above conditions that are hidden from detection on physical examination. So why not check for them prior to anesthetizing the patient. If the technology is readily available and affordable, why not use it?

Our hospital is uniquely positioned to offer this service on the spot. Our in-house laboratory is capable of doing very detailed biochemical and cellular profiling with results available within minutes.

Information gathered helps us to customize drug and anesthetic protocols according to the chemistry and cellular health of the individual. We can also make judgements about IV therapy and monitoring equipment needed during the procedure.





**Animal
Crackers**

a place to share
animal humour

Animal Crackers



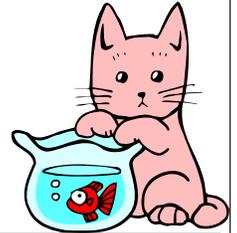
Here is a collection of animal related poems by
Ogden Nash.



Fleas:
Adam had 'em

The Kitten

The trouble with a kitten is THAT
Eventually it becomes a CAT!



An Introduction to Dogs

The dog is man's best friend
He has a tail on one end
Up in front he has teeth
And four legs underneath

Dogs like to bark
They like it best after dark
They not only frighten prowlers away
But also hold the sandman at bay



The Panther

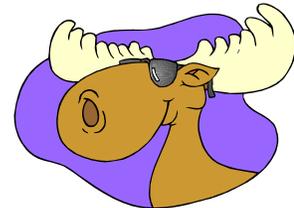
The panther is like a leopard
Except it hasn't been peppered
Should you behold a panther crouch
Prepare to say "Ouch"
Better yet, if called by a panther
Don't anther

The Duck



Behold the duck
It does not cluck
A cluck it lacks.
It quacks.

It is specially fond
Of a puddle or pond
When it dines or sups
It bottom ups



The Wapiti

There goes the Wapiti
Hippity hoppity.

Mixed Breed Dogs

Question: What do you call a cross between a flat-coated
retriever and a labrador retriever?

Answer: A lab coat retriever.





Preventable Injuries

avoid stick chasing

get pet friendly fetch toys at the pet store

Questions and Answers

Preventable Injuries in Dogs: Stick Chasing

Part of the joy of owning a dog is playing with it. What dog doesn't enjoy a good game of chase or fetch? Did you know that there are some common injuries that we see at the animal hospital that are associated with these activities? Injuries that can to a large degree be prevented.

Stick chasing : You're out for a walk on the dyke or at the beach. Rover is bouncing around with a stick he has found. He drops it at your feet and you throw it. Rover takes off like a race horse out of a starting gate and charges after the stick. He catches it on a bounce and he grabs it end-on as the other end catches on the ground and pushes the ragged end of the stick to the back of his mouth, lacerating his throat and depositing slivers and bark in the tissues. A playful encounter ends up with a trip to the vet and some expensive surgery. Sometimes just chewing on a stick drives small slivers into the mouth and throat and end up causing really ugly abscesses in the throat and tongue.

Solution: Check with your pet store for fetch toys that you can carry with you on your walk. There are soft, colourful mouth friendly toys that dogs soon learn to love. There is a 8 inch bone-shaped, bright yellow toy coated with tennis ball covering that I especially like. Its sold under the brand name of "Air Toy" I saw it at a local pet store. There are also canvas covered cylindrical toys that work well, they are relatively inexpensive so there is not a great loss if they float away or are lost in the bush.

Questions and Answers

Question: Why does my dog eat grass?

Answer: Most vets will agree that eating grass is normal canine behavior. Even though some wild members of the dog family are predatory, they are not strict carnivores. Most are in fact omnivorous scavengers. A certain amount of plant matter would be part of the normal wild dog diet. Even decaying vegetable material is readily consumed. If the plant matter is coarse, fibrous, decayed, or if an excessive amount is consumed, vomiting often follows ingestion. The practice does not mean that your dog is malnourished, or sick. Accept it as part of owning a dog but you should discourage ingestion of decaying matter, compost, lawn clippings or excessively coarse plant matter. These can cause problems!

Question: Why does my cat sleep so much?

Answer: Probably because he is a perfectly normal cat! It's normal for cats to sleep a lot. It's an adaptation developed for survival in the wild. Wild cats are hunters and predators. They are generally active only for short periods when food is available. Most cats are nocturnal, resting during the day to conserve their energy by sleeping, eating and just resting.

This is why many cats have only two settings: "high speed" and "off". Laying around in the sun is just as normal feline behavior as racing around the house and attacking everything in sight. If you are worried that your cat is sleeping more than you are used to, particularly if appetite is off, you should make an appointment to have him examined by your veterinarian.





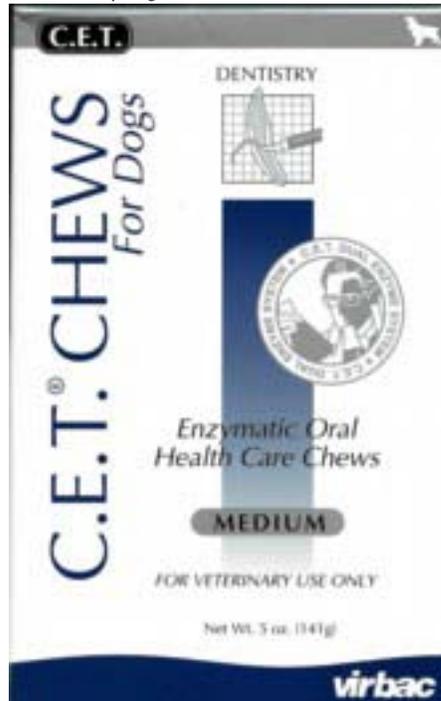
**Feature
Product**

effective dental
hygiene for dogs

When used in
conjunction with
brushing, tooth
friendly diets and
professional
scaling, dental
disease is largely
preventable

Featured Product: C.E.T. Chews for Dogs, Effective Dental Hygiene Preventative.

Dental care is as important for your pet as it is for you. Periodontal disease affects up to 85% of dogs and cats over the age of 4, and can lead to pain, odour and tooth loss. Chronic oral infection can spread bacteria and their breakdown products to the lungs, heart, liver and kidneys. Routine dental care should be a part of every pet's preventive medicine program.



Fortunately, most periodontal disease is preventable through a program of oral hygiene at home combined with regular professional care.

C.E.T. Chews can be fed to complement home dental care programs. They are not a substitute for brushing or feeding dental friendly foods. Nor are they capable of removing heavy deposits of tartar. Only professional scaling under anesthesia will do that.

C.E.T. Chews contain an enzyme system bound to a rawhide-like chew. The enzyme activity helps fight the bacterial action that leads to plaque, and the rubbery chew has a mild abrasive action that helps clean teeth and gums.

We believe this is a useful product that will assist in the difficult job of dental hygiene in a species that is unable to look after their own oral health. No one method is fool proof or totally effective in managing dental health in dogs. A combined approach consisting of using products such as this at home, brushing your pet's teeth with a soft brush and pet toothpaste and having professional scaling done as needed. Your veterinarian will check teeth on annual health visits or whenever needed and assess whether a hospital cleaning under anesthesia is necessary. Good home dental care will lessen the need for a professional cleaning, but may not eliminate the need altogether. This is especially true for toy breeds. One of the big problems that leads to periodontal disease is tartar that forms under the gum line. It may not be as visible as the tartar that forms above the gum line, but is every bit as serious. The only effective method to remove that is by hospital scaling. Regular use of these chews should slow down the rate of tartar formation.

C.E.T. Chews are available at our hospital. If you don't see them on the display shelf, just ask staff, there is usually some at the back.

Mixed Breed Dogs

Question: What do you call a cross between a Bull dog and a Shih-Tzu?

Answer: We'll just leave that one with you!

