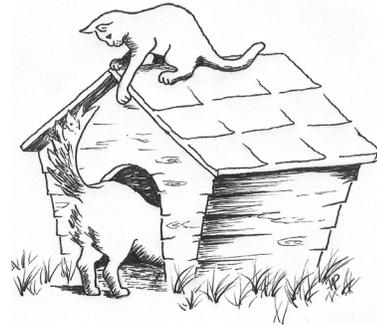


Tails from the Dog House

The Quarterly Newsletter from the
Sardis Animal Hospital



Summer 2007
Vol 5, No 2, pg 1

Pet Food Scandal - Lessons Learned

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ACCREDITED PRACTICE



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The recent pet food recall has given everyone with pets and pet support industries "paws" for thought. The entire issue is unprecedented in its scope and impact. Those of us who were not previously aware of the size and complexity of the pet food industry, now have some insight into the scope and integration of a multibillion dollar industry.

For those of you who missed the underlying cause of this mess, here's what happened in a nutshell. Pet foods of many brands, mostly under the corporate umbrella of Menu Foods and manufactured over a definable period last winter were found to contain toxic substances that resulted in illness and death of predominantly cats. There was some initial confusion as to the nature of the substance, but when the dust settled, the offending agents were melamine, a substance that is used in the manufacture of certain plastics and paints, and cyanuric acid, a chemical that is used as a chlorine stabilizer in swimming pools and hot tubs. Neither of these substances are thought to be particularly toxic by themselves, but when combined in a particular pH environment of cat urine, the chemicals join and form a crystal that damages kidneys.

As the investigation unfolded, it became apparent that a Chinese manufacturer of wheat and rice gluten was spiking his product with melamine and or cyanuric acid for the purpose of fooling the chemical analysis that reads the protein content of the product. Menu foods would buy the product based on its apparent protein content and would have no way of knowing that the protein percentage was falsely elevated by the addition of chemicals. Pretty sneaky eh??

So the questions that we are all asking is what the heck is a North American pet food manufacturer doing importing wheat gluten from China anyway? Don't we grow enough wheat here? I thought we exported boatloads of wheat to China. Are they processing our own wheat into gluten and sending it back to us contaminated?? Or is it their own home grown stuff they are messing with and finding markets for.

Whatever the economics and politics involved that led to this scandalous mess, the pet food industry (and the human food industry) has learned an important lesson in ethics and trust, and will henceforth take steps to monitor sources and quality like never before.

Even though our faith in the pet food industry has been shaken somewhat, I don't believe that we should be making our own home-cooked pet foods or falling for the marketing gimmicks of those who may stretch the use of the terms "natural" and "holistic" purely to profit from people's fears. And let's remember, there were many pet food products made by reputable companies that use just Canadian origin products that were not stained by this mess.

There is an old Vulcan proverb: "Only Nixon could go to China"

-quote from Mr. Spock, Star Trek VI, The Undiscovered Country



Summer Staff Rotations and Holiday Changes

Staff News

new babies and
summer substi-
tutes

plan ahead, sched-
ules could be tight

When summer comes, there is always some staffing issues. This year things have been complicated by having two staff members leave to have babies.

Trischa delivered a boy on May 31 ; Noah Johnathon 8 lbs 14 oz and Dawn also had a boy born on June 7; Isaiah James Mathew 5 lbs 14 oz. All are doing well.

We are fortunate to have Erin Armstrong back with us in reception for the summer. Erin has worked for us in the past, so many of you will recognise her at the front counter. She is on summer break from her studies at UBC and will be with us until the end of August.

Lynn Burks, Animal Health Technologist, who intermittently works for us is also back to help fill the void left by the new moms. We are happy to have her expertise added to our technical staff.

Holiday Schedules and Appointments

Summer is our busy season. Animals and their owners are more active this time of year so there is an increased need for our services. Add to that the need for Doctors to have a breather during the warm weather, there is considerable pressure on time availability for appointments and elective surgery. We appreciate your consideration in this matter. Elective surgeries and routine health checks may have to be put off at times, especially when there is just one doctor on duty. *Please don't wait until the last minute, we may not be able to fit you in or give you the time we otherwise would.*

Practice Growth

We heard recently that Chilliwack is the fastest growing municipality in Canada. This comes as no surprise when you see the amount of construction and the increasing congestion on our roads. We are feeling this at the Sardis Animal Hospital as well. We see an average of 3-4 new clients a day!! We are happy to have the growth and we thank all of our long time clients for the many referrals. We are trying our best to service the increased patient load. However, there are some challenges that you may not be aware of. BC's booming economy and population growth has for the first time outstripped the supply of veterinarians. There is a shortage of vets in BC at the moment. At this time, BC can absorb the entire graduating class of the Western College of Vet Medicine, the school which supplies vets to all four western provinces. The new Vet school in Calgary will not be producing graduates for a couple of more years, so there will be a crunch for a while. We have been trying for several years to attract and retain a full time vet with the skills and experience needed for our style of practice and we have not yet been successful. Stay tuned, we will keep looking.

We beg your patience and understanding if Drs Anvik or Powell look a bit haggard or stressed occasionally. Its not from partying, its from the long hours and large work load they are carrying.



Dr Jack's Wisdom

"I am not a Hamster, and life is not a wheel."



Obesity, the great North American disease affects Dogs as Well as Humans.

Causes of Obesity are
Complex

Obesity is a growing problem not only in people but in pets as well. Most house cats are mildly to seriously overweight and according to recent studies, 40% of dogs are overweight or obese. The cause of obesity is complex, there are behavioral, social, diet, exercise and genetic factors that affect body weight, but the simple explanation is that it boils down to too many calories and not enough exercise.

Free choice feeding and
snacks are largely to
blame

Other factors, is the excess feeding of calorie dense pet foods, especially if they are fed free choice. Dry pet foods are generally more calorie dense than wet, Many semi moist foods in pouches also contain excess sugars and starches. Studies also show that dogs that are in the kitchen when food is being prepared or in the dining room at meal time are also overweight. That's the effect of snacks and treats which add calories very quickly. The effect of spaying and neutering also may decrease energy requirements by as much as 25% for some dogs, so unless you make adjustments in calorie intake after neutering, you will set the stage for an overweight pet.

Obesity is destructive to
many body functions.

Much has been learned about fat metabolism in the last decade. Fat is not just a storage depot as we once thought. Fat tissue has endocrine (hormonal) functions as well. The hormone "Leptin" discovered in 1994 is secreted by fat cells. Leptin causes an increase in food intake, a decrease in caloric burning, increases the stress response, decreases reproductive function and body temperature and decreases immune capacity. In humans and we believe in cats, insulin resistance leading to adult onset or obesity related diabetes may also be linked to the complex chemistry of fat cells.

Lean dogs live longer

Fat cells also produce inflammatory mediators like Tissue Necrosis Factor alpha, Interleukin 6, and C-reactive Protein all of which increase in obesity. . In humans these agents contribute to the destruction of arterial linings and the formation of arterial plaques. So there are lots of reasons to control not only your own weight, but that of your pets. Studies with lean and overweight Labrador retrievers show that the lean dogs lived on the average 2 years longer than the fat dogs. That's a lot more in "Dog-Years"

The key to controlling your pet's weight are as follows:

- 1, decrease caloric intake by avoiding treats, and feeding low calorie weight control diets
2. avoid free choice feeding of dogs in particular, cats can be fed free choice on low cal diets
3. Regular exercise is vital, walks and play time for dogs, play toys for cats.
4. There is a new drug that can help grossly obese dogs, see article next page.



Dr Jack's Wisdom

"If your Dog is overweight, chances are you're not getting enough exercise!"



New drug gives hope for grossly obese dogs

Pfizer Pharmaceuticals has recently received FDA (US) approval for "Slentrol" a new drug that may help obese dogs loose weight. We have not yet received word for when it will be available in Canada. Slentrol is the trade name for Dirlotapide. It is a drug known as a "microsomal triglyceride transfer protein inhibitor." It functions by blocking uptake of fat from the gut. It also decreases appetite and food intake. The most common side effect is occasional vomiting for the first few weeks.

Typically, a dog is on the drug for however long it takes to get to optimum body weight, generally 3-6 months or more. Once at a healthy weight, the dog's feeding and exercise patterns must be changed, or the weight will likely come back on once the drug is withdrawn.

The drug is not safe for cats, as it can induce fatty liver syndrome in cats. Nor can humans take it. The side effects in humans are unbearable and include nausea, vomiting, flatulence, abdominal pain and distension, diarrhea and headaches. The effects on dogs are much milder so it appears to be a useful aid in the management of the grossly obese dog.

Doggy Doo Doo

New drug is soon to be released in Canada

Kitty Capers

Bat Rabies is a concern in BC

Rabies is a fatal disease in humans and pets.

All dogs and cats should be current on Rabies vaccinations

Submit any bat that has been in direct contact with humans or pets

Rabid Cat in Maple Ridge - Family loses Pet 21 people treated for Rabies.

This is the kind of horror show no one likes to see. Losing a family pet is never easy, but when it contracts Rabies, there are few things more frightening. We all saw "Old Yeller" when we were kids, Right? Well here it is. Right in our back yard.

BC has always been considered to be a low risk rabies area, since the number of cases reported are few and far between and the only consistent wildlife reservoir is bats, a species that is somewhat ecologically isolated from ground dwelling mammals. In 1993, three kittens in Delta were found sick with Alberta Skunk strain Rabies. The cats were thought to have been incubating the disease when they were brought here from Alberta and dumped. In the summer of 2004 three skunks in Stanley Park tested positive for bat strain rabies. In June of this year, a family cat was brought to the Alouette Animal Hospital in Maple Ridge, showing signs of Rabies. The cat was destroyed and brain tissue submitted for testing. It is likely that the cat caught a bat and contracted the disease. The family's other cat was euthanized and two dogs placed in quarantine. The vet treating the cat was scratched by it and several of the cat's owners were bitten. All contact humans have been treated with post-exposure Rabies vaccines, preventing the probable tragedy of human death. Rabies is virtually 100% fatal in humans or animals that have not been vaccinated prior to exposure or if post exposure treatment is not started quickly.

For your own peace of mind, be sure and keep your pet's rabies vaccinations current. Even if your cat is a house cat. You never know when a bat may get into your house (believe me, it happens frequently around here!) Dogs can find a dead or sick bat on the ground in your back yard and not tell you.

Any bat that has contacted or bitten a person or pet, or has been in a room with a sleeping person, should be caught and brought to us. We will contact the Federal Government Vet and he will send it to the Lab in Lethbridge for testing. If you need to catch a bat in your house or yard, put on a hat, protective glasses, leather gloves and a long sleeved shirt and pants and use a blanket, fish net, broom, towel or shovel to catch it and flip it into a box. Do all you can to avoid touching it directly or having it flying and flapping around you.



Urban Wildlife: The Raccoon: mysterious prowler or health hazard



Raccoons can harm
your pet and you

They carry a parasite
that is dangerous for
pets and humans

Do not feed raccoons or
encourage their pres-
ence

Watch out for raccoon
droppings, they may be
a health hazard.

If raccoons frequent
areas where your pets
are you may need to
deworm your pets often.

Cover sandboxes when
children are not playing
in them



I just cringe when I hear people tell me they are feeding the neighbourhood Raccoons on their back porch. I have been on a mission for years to get people to stop doing this. Yes Raccoons are cute, but so are Cougars and Bears.

First reason to discourage the little bandits from hanging around your yard: They are scrappy little devils and if your dog or cat has an altercation with one, the masked marvel will likely come out on top and you will have another vet bill to mop up the damage to Fluffy or Fido.

The second and biggest reason to show them the road is that they can be a major health hazard to your pet, to you and your kids. Raccoons can carry an intestinal worm called *Baylisascaris procyonidae*. This parasite is a cousin of the canine roundworm *Toxocara canis* and the human intestinal worm *Ascaris lumbricoides*. **The Raccoon roundworm is a major health hazard to humans, especially children!!!** Human infections are uncommon, but when they occur, are serious, and can result in brain damage and death. Infections are difficult to recognize and most cases go undiagnosed.

People become infected when they accidentally ingest infective eggs in soil, water or on objects contaminated with raccoon feces. The ingested eggs hatch into larvae that migrate throughout body tissues. If the larvae enter the eye, blindness can result. Larvae in the brain can cause severe permanent neurologic damage and death.

Raccoons have a nasty habit of leaving their feces in locations called "Raccoon Latrines." One or several raccoons will return repeatedly to the same site to defecate. They will often use the base of a tree, fork of a tree, a stump, log, a woodpile, deck, roof, attic, garage or hayloft. Their stool is tubular and often contains undigested seeds. There is a case reported where a dried up raccoon stool full of seeds followed some wood brought in from the wood shed and a toddler mistook the dried up stool for a granola bar. The child ingested thousands of *Baylisascaris* eggs that migrated to his brain, causing severe brain damage.

If Raccoons have defecated in your yard, remove the feces while they are fresh. (it takes 2-4 weeks for the parasite's eggs to become infective). Use gloves and a washable tool like a shovel to remove them. They can be burned, buried or bagged and sent to a landfill. Avoid contaminating your clothes, shoes or hands. Treat decks, patios, shovels with boiling water applied repeatedly. Cement or soil surfaces can (with appropriate cautions) be treated with a propane flame.

There is an excellent fact sheet on the Center for Disease Control website www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/dpd/parasites/baylisascaris/factsht_baylisascaris.htm



Trivia Page

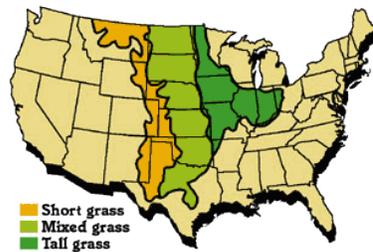
Editor's Note: Those of you who read this publication regularly, know that I occasionally like to address issues related to human disregard for nature and endangered animals and ecosystems. Here are some humbling facts about the animals who made the Great Plains their home.

The "Plain" Truth

The Great Plains of North America were formed 20 million years ago, but 99% has been destroyed in the last 150 years, making it a more endangered ecosystem than our old growth forests or the South American rain forests



Human settlement, fencing, overgrazing, and crops led to the destruction of the Great Plains grasslands. Disregard for the native plants which held the soil together led to erosion and the "Dust Bowl" of the 1930's which destroyed vast tracts of land.



The Great Plains once extended 800 miles east of the rockies and 3000 miles north to south

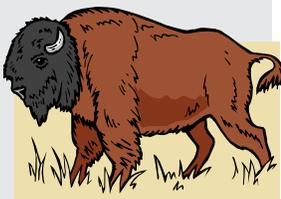
Bison were slaughtered by the millions, often targeted from trains and left to rot. The 60 million that roamed the Great Plains were down to a small wild band of 20 individuals by 1900. Another 500 kept in zoos and private herds were the ancestors of most of the Bison alive today.



Audubon's Bighorn Sheep, the Plains Grizzly, the Plains Wolf and the Eskimo Curlew (a shorebird) were all hunted to extinction. Today there are numerous other plains species that are endangered including the Mexican and Utah Prairie Dogs and the Black Footed Ferret

Black-Footed Ferret

In addition to the 60 million Bison (who's combined weight is greater than every person living in USA and Canada today), the Great Plains were once home to 50 million Pronghorn Antelope, an estimated 5 billion prairie dogs, millions of deer and elk, and countless other species.



Ironically, to see thriving grasslands supporting large herds of migrating animals, North Americans must now travel to Africa!!



Pet Foods and Diets -- The final word

Some one sent me this little gem, it was too good not to pass on !! -Ed.

I was in Walmart buying a large bag of Purina for my dog and was in line to check out. A woman behind me asked me if I had a dog...(DUHHHH)

I was feeling a bit crabby so on impulse, I told her NO and that I was starting The Purina Diet again, although I probably shouldn't because I ended up in the hospital the last time. BUT, I'd lost 50 pounds before I awakened in an intensive care unit with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IV's in both arms. Her eyes about bugged out of her head.

I went on and on with the bogus diet story and she was totally buying it. I told her that it was an easy, inexpensive diet and that the way it worked is to load your pockets or purse with Purina nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The package said the food is nutritionally complete so I was going to try it again. (I have to mention here that practically everyone in the line was by now enthralled with my story, particularly a tall guy behind her.)

Horrified, she asked if something in the dog food had poisoned me and was that why I ended up in the hospital. I said, Oh NO!, I'd been sitting in the street licking my butt when a car hit me. I thought the tall guy in back of the line was going to have to be carried out .



Dr Jack's Wisdom

"47% of all statistics are worthless"

Employment Opportunity

We have an opening for a part-time receptionist who can work 2-3 days a week and some Saturdays. We are looking for a mature individual with excellent communication and organizational skills. Experience in a veterinary, dental or medical office is an asset. Applicants should apply in person to Joyce Fairley and bring a resume.