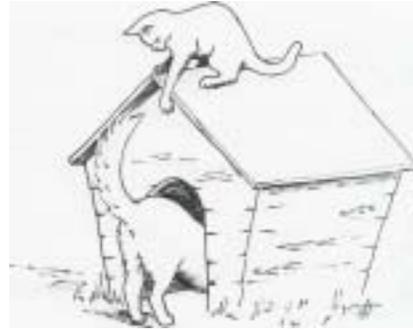


Tails from the Dog House

The Quarterly Newsletter from the
Sardis Animal Hospital



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Hospital
7236 A Vedder Rd,
Chilliwack, British
Columbia V2R 5K7
Canada
Phone 604-858-4415

Distributed free by e-mail
to our subscriber list.

Direct inquiries to:

staff@sardisvet.com

Website:

www.sardisvet.com

Giving Pets as Gifts --Good or Bad?



Whether it be Christmas or any other special occasion like a birthday, a pet is often considered as a gift. Right or wrong? Well I guess it depends. If you're thinking of giving a pet as a gift, there are some things you should consider.

1. It should not be a spontaneous decision to surprise the recipient. You're at the mall, you see an adorable puppy in a pet store. You say to yourself, "that would be the perfect gift for....." a child, an elderly person who just lost a spouse, a friend or relative who's pet just died. With the best of intentions you make the purchase and present the pet without consulting the recipient or thinking about the long term consequences. Does the recipient really want a pet? Are they willing to make a commitment? Is the pet appropriate for the person? Do they have the housing and space for a pet? If you don't know the answer to these questions, walk on!

2. A pet is not a commodity, it is a living thing. It requires commitment, care, and finances to deal with it's many needs. When you give a pet as a gift, you also give the recipient a bill for food, shots, neutering, veterinary care, licensing, accessories, kennel costs, etc. Do you know for sure if the recipient can afford all of that?

3. Is the pet appropriate for the recipient and their circumstances? Or are you giving a cute puppy of unknown breeding that turns into a 120 pound long haired whatever to a frail 95 pound elderly lady? Or a rottweiler puppy to an 8 year old child. A hunting breed that needs space and exercise to some one in a wheel chair living in a townhouse? We've seen all of these situations at the animal hospital, and each one had an unhappy outcome.

Giving a pet as a gift can be a marketing trap that the well intended but inexperienced can fall into. BEWARE! Do your home work!! The only way to know if a person wants a pet is to listen. If they come up with the idea on their own, chances are they want one. Just asking "do you want a pet" is not a good idea. Consultation with the intended recipient and outlining all the responsibilities of time, space and money are a must. Then if you are going to be involved, be clear about what your role is. Are you helping with just the initial purchase or more? Don't fall into marketing "traps", find a reputable source that will back you up. Avoid puppy mills and brokers like the plague! Research the type of pet and make sure its appropriate and above all, make sure the recipient is actively involved in all stages of the process.



Staff News: Dr Anvik Re-certifies

Staff News

**Dr Anvik
successfully
sits specialty
board re-
certification
exams**



It's usual for professionals to have a bunch of letters after their names. Next time you come in the office, take a second look at the names on the door. You will see the title "Diplomate ABVP" after Dr Anvik's name. Just what the heck is a Diplomate anyway and what does ABVP mean?

A "Diplomate" is more than a term for someone who has a diploma. In veterinary circles, the title "Diplomate" refers to a doctor who has become "Board Certified" as a specialist in one area of veterinary

medicine. Vets can certify as a discipline specialist, for example an ophthalmologist or a pathologist, or they can become a species clinical specialist as in a dairy, swine, equine or in Dr A's case, a Canine/Feline clinical specialist. The requirements for board certification are stringent and involve post graduate study in the specialty. Diplomates also have to pass a very difficult series of examinations in order to qualify. Specialties in the veterinary profession are administered by one body, which is internationally recognized. That body is the same one that certifies veterinary colleges worldwide, namely the American Vet Medical Association. AVMA specialty credentials are recognized worldwide, as most countries have too few veterinary specialists to administer the certification process. For example in Dr A's specialty, there are only 13 Canadian veterinarians who are board certified. ABVP stands for "American Board of Veterinary Practitioners" and The title of ABVP Diplomate is bestowed on veterinarians who have met the standards of the Board.

The ABVP requires that its Diplomates recertify every ten years. This is to insure that Diplomates stay current and keep their medical skills and knowledge at the expected level. Dr Anvik first certified in 1985 and was the first Canadian veterinarian to qualify in the Canine/Feline specialty shortly after the board was established. He recertified in 1995. Diplomates are allowed to challenge the eight hour long exam (the same exam that new candidates take) in year 8,9, or 10. Dr. A sat the exam in the 8th year of his current term and passing the exam extends his certification to the year 2015. About 50 veterinarians from USA, Canada and Europe gathered in Chicago in November to sit the exam. The examination candidates consisted of both new applicants and Diplomates who are re-certifying. About half were Canine/Feline candidates and the rest a mix of Equine, Bovine, Swine and Avian specialists. Congrats Dr. A!

**Pet Food Avail-
ability
may fall victim
to Mad Cow
Politics**

Availability of American Made Pet Foods may be in Jeopardy.

Some of the most popular brands of pet foods may become victims of import restrictions imposed by recent events in the on-going Mad Cow soap opera. If you are feeding your pet one of the excellent US made pet foods like Iams, Science Diet, Purina, Nutro and others, you may find supplies dwindling.

If you find it necessary to switch to a Canadian Made pet food consider the Medi-Cal line available at the animal hospital or Technical which is sold in pet food outlets. For more information on Mad Cow and pet foods see the article on page 4.

Medical Miracles

"Rock Hound"
recovers from
major surgery

Corgi Puppy Survives Ordeal With Swallowed Rocks



Puppies are notorious for getting into things. As they explore their world they will commonly place things in their mouths and sometimes swallow objects that should not be swallowed.

Hanna, a totally adorable 5 month old Pembroke Welsh Corgi was brought to the animal hospital because she had thrown up a rock and was not feeling well. Upon examining Hanna, Dr. Powell could feel something unusual in her abdomen. X-rays revealed four large dense objects presumed to be rocks. She was taken to surgery and exploration of her abdomen revealed two stones lodged in half way down her small intestine and two in her stomach. Incisions were made in the intestine and stomach and the stones were removed from their respective organs.

Hanna stayed in the animal hospital for 3 days and recovered uneventfully.

The x-ray shown to the right shows the stones. Sometimes ingested rocks will pass on their own, other times, such as in Hanna's case the intestine will clamp down around them and cause complete obstructions that can become life threatening.



Every Day Health Threats

Beware of raw
meat diets!

Raw Meat Diets, "To feed or not to feed" **NOT!**

The practice of feeding raw meat diets to pets comes in and out of vogue. Proponents argue that it is more "natural" than feeding commercial pet foods. Ludicrous claims are made that sled dogs pull harder, that greyhounds race better, that guard dogs guard better and that exotic cats are happier when fed raw meat diets. One diet known as the "BARF" diet (bones and raw food) was scrutinized carefully by two Calgary Veterinarians, Drs Joffe and Schlesinger who reported their findings in a recent edition of the Canadian Veterinary Journal.

The BARF diet, consisting of raw chicken and vegetables was tested for the presence of Salmonella bacteria in the feed. The stools of dogs fed the diet were also cultured for the pathogen. 80% of the food samples were positive for Salmonella and 30% of the stools from BARF fed dogs were also positive for Salmonella. Stool cultures from control dogs fed commercial diets were totally negative for Salmonella, as were the diets themselves.

The Nov 2003 Journal of the American Animal Hospital Assoc also reported on two cases of fatal Salmonella food poisoning in cats fed home -prepared diets containing raw beef. We cook our own food for very good reasons. The same principles apply to our pet's foods. Raw meat diets as well as other raw products such as bones, pigs ears, hides and hooves are potential sources for Salmonella and other forms of food poisoning that can cause serious illness in your pet and serve as a potential source of serious illness for you and your family.



Mad Cow and Animal Feeds

BSE, Pets and Pet Foods

The current media frenzy over Mad Cow is raising concerns about the safety of pet foods and risks to Canadian pets. Here is some information that should help reduce your concerns.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or BSE is a fatal food-borne infection of cattle. Also called "Mad Cow disease", BSE is caused by the intake of a modified protein structure called a "prion". This protein structure is very resistant to enzyme degradation by the digestive system of the host ingesting the prion. The BSE prion exists exclusively in the brain and spinal chord of the infected host. Prions are not found in the standard cuts of meat generally used for human consumption. Spread from cow to cow (or other potential hosts) occurs when parts of bovine carcasses containing brain or spinal chord tissue is processed and fed back to cows. The past practice of making cattle feed out of such remnants of slaughtered cattle and other ruminants is thought to be the cause of the spread of this disease.

Mechanically recovered meat and bone meal coming out of slaughter houses has been used as a source of protein and mineral in ruminant feeds and other animal feeds for decades, particularly in Britain and Europe, where BSE is widespread. Tissue of brain and spinal cord origin would be processed along with spinal vertebrae and skull bones for processing into bone meal used in feeds. Cattle can become infected with BSE by eating as little as 10 grams of infected material. Thus the only solution to halt the spread of BSE is a complete ban on the practice of incorporating ruminant origin meat and bone meals into cattle feeds.

There has been a ruminant to ruminant feeding ban in place for ruminant feeds in North America since 1996. In theory, once the current North American herd ages sufficiently, any cattle that may have been fed prion containing feeds prior to 1996 will disappear. The 2 cows (one Canadian and one from Washington state) that have been diagnosed with BSE were both older cows that most likely contracted the agent prior to the 1996 ban. BSE (and other similar diseases in other species) is known to have a long incubation period, often many years.

It's reassuring to know that the main stream beef sources we eat today are from younger stock that have not been fed ruminant to ruminant ingredients. That's why we can legitimately claim the Canadian meat supply to be safe, in spite of these two old cows.

Now to the politics. Both USA and Canada have food safety rules that close the doors to import of beef products of any kind (including pet foods) from a country that has BSE. So USA closed its doors to Canadian Cattle when we had a case, and now Canada has closed its border to American beef when they reported a case. Either action seems pretty silly, considering that our two countries have such integrated Beef and food industries. The regulations as currently written may not be as useful between Canada and USA as with in restricting beef importation from Europe. Add to that some cantakerous anti-free trade members of congress who want to protect their beef producing states from competition from Canada and things get a lot uglier than they need to be. (continued next page)



BSE Infection in Companion Animals and Man

Humans who have consumed BSE prion containing foods can develop a degenerative brain disorder called Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. A BSE-type disease, Feline Spongiform Encephalopathy (FSE) has been diagnosed in cats from Britain and France. There have been 91 confirmed cases of FSE in domestic cats and 22 in captive wild Felidae. There is uncertainty as to whether these cats were fed exclusively commercial cat foods. The incidence of FSE in Europe has declined from a high of 15 cases in 1995 to just one case in 2001. Likely due to changes in feed formulation and slaughterhouse practices that have been put in place since 1995. In contrast to cats, there have been no BSE type disease reported in dogs in Europe. *Nor has there been any BSE type disease reported in either cats or dogs in North America.* The absence of any BSE type disease in dogs is interesting and may indicate a genetic or species related resistance to the BSE agent.

BSE and Pet food Safety in North America

The use of mechanically recovered meat meal and bone meal in feeds has never been as widespread in North America as it has in Europe. Both Canada and USA have banned beef by products from Britain and Europe for use in animal feeds. BSE has been a reportable disease in North America since 1988 and ruminant to ruminant feeding bans have been in place since 1996.

Medi-Cal pet foods and BSE

Veterinary Medical Diets launched the Medi-Cal line of therapeutic pet foods in Canada in October 1990. No Medi-Cal diet formulation has ever contained mechanically recovered meat, or ruminant bone meal. Thus, the potential for BSE infection in cats and dogs consuming Medi-Cal diets is virtually nonexistent.

**Statement from
the makers of
Medi-Cal Diets**



"Every dog has its day, but nights are reserved for cats."



Doggy doo-doo

**Do you have a
weight problem?
Here's some "cool"
advice**



Kitty Capers

How your dog can help you control your weight.

Owning a dog has long been known to have numerous health benefits. Regular exercise from walking Sparky helps you stay fit and trim. Petting a pooch is known to lower blood pressure and the loyalty and unconditional love from a dog has many benefits for our mental health and self esteem. But have you ever thought of incorporating your dog into your weight-loss program?

Here is the most bizarre weight loss tip I have ever heard: **TEACH YOUR DOG TO GUARD THE FRIDGE!!**

If you or your spouse has a problem with midnight snacking, try teaching your dog this new trick.

1. Train Sparky to bark on command by holding a treat and saying "Speak"
2. Go to the refrigerator after dark, tell Sparky to speak, then open it and give him a treat.

Eventually, he'll run to the fridge and bark when he sees you heading there, which will serve as a reminder for you not to snack. If you're cruising for a snack in the middle of the night, the noise will wake your spouse and you will be "caught in the act".

If you're worried that his bark will annoy you at meal times, when you legitimately need to be in the fridge, just put Sparky in another room. Dogs really shouldn't be in the kitchen at meal time anyway. Its too easy to slip him left-overs or induce begging behavior.

"To assume that a cat is asleep is a grave mistake. He can close his eyes and keep both his ears awake." -Aileen Fisher



"Cats are intended to show us that not everything in nature has a function" - Garrison Keillor

**The Proper Use
of Leashes for
Controlling Dogs**



Leash Laws and Retractable Leashes

Our community has animal control bylaws that state that dogs off their property must be on a leash *and* under control. Just what does that mean, and do retractable leashes qualify?

“Under control” means that the person walking the dog can completely contain the movements and activities of the dog. It can be argued that retractable leashes are not very effective in controlling a dog.

When a retractable leash is in the locked position with a short lead, it functions as a standard leash and the level of control is adequate. However, when the free coiling option is in place, the dog may be connected to the handler, but the dog has free range of motion for a considerable radius. Such dogs may not be under effective control and may approach people or other dogs with unpredictable results. If an altercation ensues, you will be liable for the actions of your dog. Even though he is on a “leash”, he is not under control and you are in violation of animal control bylaws as well as being liable for any damage your dog may inflict.

Think twice about using retractable leashes! At the animal hospital we have seen a number of serious altercations between dogs, and between dogs and people that could have been avoided if the parties concerned had used standard leashes or locked their retractable leash into a shorter, controllable distance.

So if you use a retractable leash on your walks, be sure and reel your dog in close and lock the leash as soon as you see another person and/or dog approaching. Do not let your dog sniff or approach a strange dog close enough for contact, even if the other dog is on a leash. Some large dogs can overwhelm its handler’s ability to control the dog if its determined enough to explore or attack. If you have a small dog and a large dog is approaching, you might consider carrying your dog until the larger dog passes. You may be risking your dog’s health and safety by uncontrolled close contacts on your walk.

**And keep your dog on a
short leash when visiting
the animal hospital**

