

Tails from the Dog House

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Happy Chinese New Year - The Year of the Dog

There is an old proverb that says "Every dog has his day". Well, according to our Chinese friends, the lucky proverbial dog gets a whole year this year. Another canine proverb says "It's a dog's life", a saying that means living with no worries, having all your needs provided. Maybe being a dog isn't so bad, assuming of course you have a caring owner.

The animal symbols of the Chinese calendar have their own special features. The species characteristics have a prophetic value, predicting what kind of year it will be. This year, the Chinese look forward to a good year, as the dog symbolizes loyalty, courage and unconditional love.

Man and dog have a long association with one another. Some authorities believe that the domestication of the dog goes back to the very origin of human society and that the two species have lived in a mutually beneficial relationship for so long that we have developed a bond of reciprocal respect and even dependency. I even wonder if our long association has produced a connection between our respective psyches.

Companionship and watchfulness are features that humans appreciate in their canine friends. But dogs have other unique characteristics that at times leaves me to wonder just which species is more highly evolved. The stories that I have heard at times leave me in awe. For example, there are dogs that can predict their epileptic owner's seizures, even heart attacks. Dogs who by their very presence have healed their owner's depression and have prevented suicides.

As a veterinarian, I interact with dogs at a level that is different than most. I see them at a time when they are the most needy and vulnerable. I have often wondered what goes on in their little minds when they stay with me. At times I see their apprehension, the same anxiety I have when I'm in the hospital and they are equally as happy to leave. However, there are times when I see a different look, a look of gratitude and even respect especially when I have a quiet moment with a patient. You would be surprised how relaxed and at ease most of the sick ones are, especially during late evening rounds, when the bustle of activity and phone ringing has died down. It's as if they are saying "Hey Doc, you're a pretty good guy for working so hard to care for me and my buddies when we are sick."





Staff News

new face at the
front counter

Welcome Erin Armstrong, Receptionist



We are happy to welcome Erin Armstrong to our animal hospital team. She will be working full time in our reception area. Erin has a wealth of experience in the Veterinary field, having worked for many years at the Fraser Heights and Allondale Veterinary Hospitals in Surrey. She also has several years experience working for Associated Veterinary Purchasing, the major drug and supply wholesaler serving the veterinary profession in BC.

Erin replaces Mellissa Burroughs who left to resume her training with the RCMP.

Good News for Dogs



Island 22 Designated Off Leash Area for Dogs

According to our local papers, officials have set aside a designated "off leash" area for dogs on Island 22. Located at the far north end of Young Road by the Fraser River, Island 22 has long been set aside for community recreation. Its readily accessible for dog lovers living on the north side of the freeway and Fairfield Island.

Use common sense and courtesy when taking your dog to an off leash area. If your dog is aggressive to other dogs, doesn't obey your verbal commands or is likely to run away, perhaps you should still leash him. Remember to bring a poop bag, you are still responsible to clean up after your dog.

Doggy Doo-doo



Long life is a
function of level
of care

Who's in charge anyway?



How Old is Your Dog?

The notion that one human year equals seven dog years is not very accurate. The reason is that dogs reach adulthood earlier than humans. A more accurate calculation can be made by using the following formula. Calculate your dog's age as 10 and a half years for the first two years of life and then four dog years per human year thereafter.

This works for medium sized dogs but does not work for giant breeds which are often elderly by age seven, whereas small dogs (under 20 pounds) may only be middle aged by then.

Longevity varies with breed. Some breeds such as Poodles, Chihuahuas, and Shelties have a long life expectancy. We have seen some members of these breeds living happily to 16 or 17 or more. Breeds not known for long life are Boxers, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Sharpeis and most giant breeds such as Mastiffs, Danes, St Bernards, and Newfoundlands.

Longevity is also a function of good medical care, owner awareness and husbandry. Dogs that are neutered, fed premium dog foods, exercised regularly, kept slim and have regular checkups and dental care generally live longer.

Pets Rule!

A recent survey of pet owners conducted by the American Animal Hospital Association revealed the following:

- * When asked "who listens to you best?" 45% said their pet, 30% chose their spouse.
- * 93% are likely to risk their life for their pet
- * 69% break household rules (such as letting their pet on the bed) when their spouse is not present
- * If deserted on an island and could choose one companion, 50% would pick a dog or cat rather than a human



Kitty Capers

Urinary
blockage in
male cats
becomes life-
threatening
very quickly



feeding
premium diets
is the key to
prevention

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

For some reason, we see a rash of cases of male cats with urinary tract blockage every winter. We have had a half a dozen cases in just the last two weeks!

FLUTD is a life threatening condition that requires early owner recognition and prompt medical attention. Symptoms seen at home are frequent visits to the litter box, excess scratching in the litter with frequent attempts to urinate. Close inspection shows that the cat is producing small amounts (often just a drop) or no urine. He may hunch his back in straining posture and vocalize a mournful yowl as he attempts to pee. You may just find him lying on his side feeling cold to the touch and switching his tail. Cats that urinate outside are often found flat out cold, or even dead.

Cats that block will show signs of discomfort within a few hours of blocking. By 18 to 24 hours they are noticeably sick. By 48 hours they are in real trouble and by 72 hours (sometimes less) they are dead. A blocked cat is a life-threatening medical emergency. If you think your cat is blocked, call us no matter what the hour. He needs to be seen ASAP!! It is possible to misinterpret the symptoms shown by a blocked cat as constipation. Careful observation and monitoring of the litter will help differentiate. If in doubt, have him checked!

So why do they block? FLUTD cats have a predictable patient profile. Most are mature, moderately overweight males that drink very little water and are fed "low-end" cat foods. It's not appropriate to name brands here, but they are generally cheaper cat foods sold in grocery stores rather than in pet stores or vet hospitals. Formulating cat foods to be urinary tract friendly costs more, as attention has to be paid to digestibility, bioavailability of nutrients, concentration of Magnesium, Calcium, Phosphorus and ability to stimulate thirst and produce dilute urine of a particular pH. The premium brands such as Iams, Science diet and Medi-Cal do this very well. Cats fed such diets rarely block.

When water intake goes down, the concentration of salts in the urine goes up and when the saturation point is reached, dissolved inorganic salts precipitate out of solution and form crystals. These crystals will plug up the narrow lower urinary track of cats and block their penis just as if a cork had been jammed in.

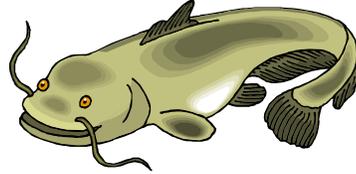
FLUTD is caused by a number of factors all acting together. *The most controllable of these factors is diet.* Your best strategy for prevention is to feed the Premium brand cat foods, control weight, and allow access to fresh clean water. Change the litter box daily so you can tell how much urine is being produced.

The premium diets cost a little more, but you more than make it up in savings on vet bills,

Animal Trivia and other Weird Stuff

Trivia Page

A father sea catfish keeps the eggs of his young in his mouth until they are ready to hatch. He does not eat during that time, which may take several weeks



A lion's roar can be heard up to five miles away and warns off intruders and re-unites scattered members of the pride

Cat scratch disease is a painful condition caused by a bacteria that is found in the base of the claws of cats and other animals



Human tapeworms can grow up to 22 meters in length!!



Lassie, the TV collie, first appeared in a 1930's short novel entitled "Lassie come home" written by Eric Mowbray Knight. The dog in the novel was based on Knight's real life collie "Toots". On TV, Lassie was played by several male dogs, because the male collies were thought to look better on screen. The male "actor" was named "Pal"



Health Alert for Dogs

**Keep sugar
free gum
and candies
away from
Rover**

**Xylitol can
cause a life-
threatening
drop in
blood sugar
in dogs.**

Xylitol Sweetener Can Be Toxic to Dogs

The American Vet Med Association and The ASPCA have issued a health alert for dog owners. The problem is that "sugar-free" candies and gum that contain the sweetener xylitol can create a serious health risk in dogs.

Xylitol is an all-natural wood sugar which is harvested largely from birch trees. It is found naturally in many fruits and vegetables and is naturally synthesized in the human body as a component of a number of metabolic processes. The safety and kinetics of xylitol in humans were extensively researched in the 1960's and 70's. Since that time, xylitol has gained popularity as a sugar substitute. It has some unique properties that make it both a safe and suitable sweetener for human diabetics and others needing to watch their intake of sugars and simple carbohydrates. Not so for dogs, apparently. In the dog, xylitol has been shown to increase blood insulin levels resulting in a rapid and significant decrease in blood sugar. One or two pieces of xylitol sweetened gum can pose a concern for the development of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) in a 20 lb dog.

Clinical signs associated with the ingestion of significant amounts of xylitol containing products most commonly include depression, vomiting, and hypoglycemia. Depending on the degree of hypoglycemia that develops, additional signs of such as weakness, balance problems, even seizures can be seen. In the case of chocolate products that contain xylitol, signs such as tremors, rapid heart rate and seizures can also be due to the methylxanthine and caffeine content, particularly of concentrated dark chocolate.

Consumer products containing xylitol include candy, chewing gum, breath fresheners (even some sold for pets!) smoking cessation aids like nicotine gum, toothpastes, sunblock, and various vitamin and supplement products.

If your pooch is found partying on a pack of sugarless gum or diabetic candies, better give us a call. Serious signs can develop in as little as 30 minutes after ingestion. With dogs that are showing no signs, frequent feeding of small meals for 8 -12 hours after ingestion may prevent or minimize development of signs. If symptoms of weakness, ataxia, tremors, seizures etc, develop, your dog will need veterinary care.





Featured Pet Photo



"Dustmops in Action" Oliver and Delia Submitted by Linda Toddhunter.

Name the Dental Dogs

This photo appeared on a brochure of dental products made for dogs by the AVENTIX company. We thought it would be fun for our readers to give them names! The best ones will be listed in the next newsletter.



Help us name the Aventix Dental dogs. Send your suggestions to staff@sardisvet.com