



# Paw Talk

A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

WINTER 2012

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## Winter in Minnesota

Winter in Minnesota is upon us, and as we retreat indoors, not to see our neighbors outside until spring, it is important to remember our pets' health and safety as they venture outside. As you enjoy the warmth of your home, keep the following tips in mind to ensure your pets are comfortable and warm as well.

Puppies and kittens, older pets and pets with health issues are much less tolerant of the cold than healthy adults. Most pets should be kept indoors in the winter, but if you do need to leave your healthy, adult pet outside for any length of time, make sure it has shelter and a heated water bowl.

Your pet's fur coat may not be adequate to keep it warm, even on short walks. Sleet and freezing rain are especially dangerous for all pets, as wet fur loses much of its ability to provide warmth. While some breeds may revel in the snow, others, such as greyhounds and Chihuahuas, often become cold quickly. A properly-fitting

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## February is Dental Health Month!

Periodontal disease is one of the most prevalent health care problems of dogs and cats, and it is preventable! By the age of three years, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have signs of dental disease. Unfortunately, those signs can be subtle, and many aren't present until there is significant damage.

An animal with a painful mouth still eats, but may chew on one side. Another typical sign is bad breath and tartar. A buildup of tartar on the teeth can erode the gum tissue, leading to bone loss and painful tooth root abscesses.

Part of your pet's yearly wellness exam includes a dental exam. During this exam, the veterinarian may point out tartar, gum recession, broken teeth and feline resorptive lesions. Resorptive lesions are excruciatingly painful erosions of the enamel that can occur on cats' teeth. According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, 60% of cats over six years of age have one or more of these painful lesions. Unfortunately, the only way to treat this painful condition is to extract the tooth.

What can you do to preserve your pet's teeth? Start with your pet's yearly wellness exam, where we will talk with you about a home dental care program. Along with home care, regular professional dental cleanings allow us to do a thorough oral exam, take x-rays of and treat any affected teeth.

*During the month of February, we are offering 10% off of the entire dental procedure, which includes the dental cleaning, any x-rays and extractions. This is a outstanding deal and a great time to get your pet's teeth looking and feeling their best!*



(Above) Before and after cleaning. Look at the difference!



This x-ray shows an abscessed lower premolar in a dog. The dark shadow around the roots is abscessation and periodontal infection. You can see the significant loss of bone around the roots caused by the infection. This is a painful tooth!

**East Valley  
Animal Clinic**

**Dental Special  
10% OFF**

During Dental Health Month

PLEASE PRESENT THIS COUPON  
Limit one coupon per family. Cannot  
be combined with any other offers.

GOOD THROUGH FEBRUARY 29, 2012



# Dangerous Drugs

Cats are curious, and some dogs will eat anything in sight. Those two factors contribute to the fact that the most common toxic exposures for pets are from items most of us have in our homes: human medications. In fact, according to the ASPCA Poison Control Center, ingestion of human medications accounted for almost 25% of the calls to their Poison Control Hotline in 2010.

The most common culprits are medicines that almost all households contain: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDS, (such as ibuprofen and naproxen), and acetaminophen (the active ingredient in Tylenol). These drugs can cause major problems in dogs and cats, even in small doses. Other dangerous drugs include antidepressants, drugs used to treat ADHD, pseudoephedrine (a decongestant found in many cold medicines), and oral anti-diabetic medications. Even vitamins can pose a threat, especially vitamin D derivatives.

Keep your home safe for your pets by storing all medications in a medicine chest—not on your counters or nightstands. If you suspect an accidental ingestion by one of your pets, don't wait for symptoms to occur! Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435. (There may be a charge for this call.)

**“If having a soul means being able to feel love and loyalty and gratitude, then animals are better off than a lot of humans.”**

– James Herriot

# Toxic Embrace

Dangerous exposures to human medications are not only from pills! The Food and Drug Administration has warned that pets (and children) exposed to certain topical hormones used by menopausal women to treat hot flashes can suffer from severe adverse effects. The topical hormones can come in the form of sprays, gels or creams, and are typically applied to the forearm. Adverse effects in dogs can include swelling of the nipples in both sexes, swelling of the genitals in females, and prostate infections in males.

The accidental exposure to pets often occurs when women are holding their cat or dog. Pets should not be allowed to lick or touch the areas where the hormones have been applied.

In addition to topical hormones used by women, there is some evidence that topical testosterone used by men may cause problems in animals as well.

If you or someone in your home is using any of these products, please exercise caution. Apply the products to skin areas that will be covered with clothing and will not allow exposure to your children or pets.



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**“Everywhere I go, people are eager to shake my hand and shower me with compliments. With that kind of charisma, I’d be crazy not to run for office!”**



## FEBRUARY IS DENTAL HEALTH MONTH!

According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have signs of periodontal disease by age three. Not only can this disease cause pain, tooth and bone loss, the resulting bacterial infections can enter the bloodstream, then spread throughout the body and cause permanent damage to the heart, lungs, kidneys and liver. Prevention is safer and far less costly than treating this disease, so please consider a dental checkup for your pet.





# Heart Disease

A dog's heart beats between 60 and 120 times per minute, and with each contraction, oxygen and energy are carried in the blood to the muscles and organs of the body, and waste products are carried away. As with humans, cats' and dogs' hearts consist of four chambers separated by valves that ensure the blood flows in only one direction.

Heart disease can either be congenital, meaning the animal is born with an abnormality, or acquired, meaning the disease occurs later in life. There are a number of different types of heart disease, but for most pets, the disease typically falls into one of two categories:

1. **Valvular disease** is a condition where one or more of the valves of the heart do not close properly. The majority of dogs with heart disease suffer from this.
2. **Cardiomyopathy** is a condition where the heart cannot pump effectively. There are several types of cardiomyopathy, which is the most common form of heart disease in cats.

In many cases, the cause of heart disease is unknown, but as with humans, risk increases with age. Certain breeds of dogs and cats appear to be predisposed to different types of heart disease.

Hyperthyroidism can contribute to heart disease in cats, as can diets low in taurine, an essential amino acid.

Heartworms, which are transmitted by mosquitoes, can cause heart problems in both dogs and cats.

**Signs of heart disease can be subtle, and may be mistaken for normal aging.**

They include:

- Coughing (less

common in cats)

- Rapid breathing, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing (open-mouth breathing in cats)
- Lethargy
- Behavior changes (less interested in walks or play)
- Weakness
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Swollen abdomen

Dogs and cats with mild heart disease may not show any signs of illness. Unfortunately, the condition is usually progressive, and eventually heart failure (the inability of the heart to pump an adequate blood supply through the body) may occur.

It is sometimes possible to detect heart disease before your pet shows any symptoms. In addition to listening to your pet's heart for signs of a heart murmur or abnormal rhythm, there are a number of diagnostic tests your veterinarian may recommend, including X-rays, ultrasound, blood work, electrocardiograph and blood pressure tests, all of which can help determine whether the heart is diseased and the extent of the disease.

There is no cure for heart disease, but early detection and treatment can help your beloved pet live longer and more comfortably with the disease.



One or more long-term medicines may be prescribed.

Modifications to your pet's diet and exercise regimen may be required, and follow-up examinations by your veterinarian at regular intervals are strongly recommended to monitor the progression of the disease.

## Great & Small

*All Creatures Great and Small* is a classic novel by James Herriot, a renowned veterinarian in Yorkshire, England, about caring for animals ranging in size from mice to cattle. But what about the size variations in just two species: domestic cats and dogs?

According to Guinness World Records, the smallest living domestic cat on record stands only 6" at the shoulder. Her name is Fizz Girl, and she's a Munchkin cat—a breed of cats with normal bodies but short legs caused by a genetic mutation.

The record for the tallest domestic cat is held by Scarlett's Magic, a Savannah cat who is 18.07" tall. The world's longest cat is 48.5 inches long. This cat, a Maine Coon cat named Mymains Stewart Gilligan, also holds the record for the longest tail, at 16.34 inches.



Mymains Stewart Gilligan  
Photo courtesy of  
Robin Hendrickson

Dogs claim the title of the mammal with the greatest diversity in size, although Guinness does not have a category for that. The Guinness World Record holder for the smallest living dog in terms of height is a long-haired Chihuahua named Boo Boo, who is a mere four inches tall, and the smallest in terms of length is another Chihuahua named Brandy, who measures a tiny six inches from nose to tail tip. The tallest living dog is a Great Dane named Giant George, an imposing figure at 43 inches tall.

In dogs, longevity tends to be related to size; in general, small dogs tend to live longer, and are considered "seniors" at around age nine or ten, whereas giant breeds live shorter lives, and are considered seniors as early as five or six years of age.



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Becky with Stella, Lucy (the cat), Gertie and Casey the cockatiel.

That friendly greeting you receive when you walk into the clinic is probably from our veterinary assistant, **Becky**. Becky has been working here since 2004. She and her husband, Ryan, are originally from North Dakota, but for the last ten years they've called Apple Valley their home, along with their two pugs, Stella and Gertie, Lucy the cat and Casey the cockatiel.

Becky adores walking, shopping, reading and soaking in the sun. During the winter, you can often find her snowboarding.

Becky likes meeting new clients and ensuring that all of our clients and their pets enjoy their visit to our clinic. She does so with a welcoming smile on her face and a cheerful hello for everyone! If you happen to be bringing in a new puppy, she will be quick to greet it and try to sneak in a hug, as she has a real soft spot for puppies!

## WINTER... *continued from pg. 1*

coat may help keep your dog warm during winter, and boots may help protect his paws as well.

Remember, pets wearing coats should never be left unattended, as it could endanger them if they try to remove it or if it gets snagged.

Frostbite is a serious concern in freezing weather. Frostbitten skin is red or gray, but with paw pads it can be difficult to detect at first. Pay close attention to your pet's skin after being outdoors, especially their nose, paws, ears and tail. Seek medical attention if you suspect your pet may have frostbite—do not rub the skin as it can cause permanent damage.

Outdoor cats sometimes crawl under the hoods of cars seeking warmth in the winter. If you have an outdoor cat or know there are feral cats nearby, bang on the hood or blow your horn before starting your engine.

Many ice melting products are toxic to pets, so be sure to look for pet-friendly products before putting them on your walkways and driveways. Road salt and other chemicals can become trapped in dogs' paws or coat, and can cause severe stomach upset (or worse) if ingested when they lick it off. Wipe off your dog's paws, legs and stomach when you return from a walk on the road.

Antifreeze is deadly to pets, and unfortunately it has an appealing taste and smell. Be sure to clean up any spills in your garage and driveway, and consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.

Remember, if it's too cold for you, it's too cold for your pet!



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