

# Paw Talk

A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

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Dr. Wilkes with Emma (black), Powder (white)

## Welcome Dr. Wilkes

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Greg Wilkes to East Valley Animal Clinic. Dr. Wilkes graduated from the University of Minnesota, but this isn't his first career. He started out with a degree in business, but wanted something more hands-on, so he

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## Canine Influenza

There has recently been an outbreak of canine influenza virus (or CIV) in the Twin Cities in some boarding facilities and humane societies. As of September, 12 cases have been reported to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health. The current strain of influenza is the H3N2 strain. A few years back, there was an outbreak of influenza in other parts of the U.S., which was the H3N8 strain. So far, we have not seen the H3N8 strain in Minnesota.

Canine influenza is a virus that is transmitted between dogs by direct contact of respiratory secretions. Coughing, sneezing and contact with infected bowls and toys are common ways for it to spread. In rare cases, cats may be infected. People are not at risk.

Signs of canine influenza include coughing, nasal discharge, lack of energy, fever and not eating. In some cases it can progress to pneumonia, and in rare cases, it can be fatal. If you notice any of these signs, call for an appointment. We may recommend x-rays, and may prescribe antibiotics and cough suppressants, depending on exam findings. In severe cases, your dog may need to be hospitalized. There is a test for canine influenza, but we often will treat your dog for symptoms without testing, as the majority of dogs recover without problems within one to three weeks.

If you suspect your dog has an upper respiratory infection, it is important to keep it separated from any other dogs. It is a highly contagious virus. Your dog may be contagious for up to three weeks.

We offer a vaccine that protects against both the H3N2 and H3N8 strains. After an initial vaccination, a booster is given in three weeks, and then again yearly. Many local boarding kennels are recommending the vaccine, and there are a few that are starting to require it. If you are planning to board your pet, contact the kennel and find out about their requirements.

Contact East Valley Animal Clinic if you have any questions about canine influenza virus.

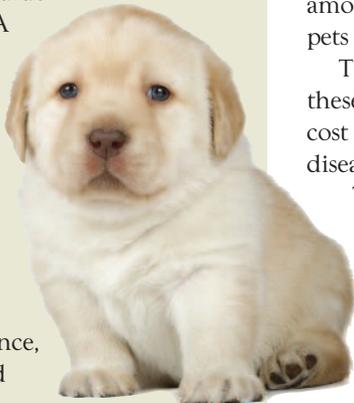




## Pampered Pups

Pampered puppies don't grow to be good guides, according to a recent study that analyzed mother-puppy interactions in a group of would-be guide dogs.

The job of a guide dog is complex. A dog must have an even temperament and navigate through an unpredictable world, all while avoiding distractions. It requires intelligence, perseverance, and self-confidence.



About 30% of the puppies in a New Jersey breeding and training program for guide dogs end up being unsuccessful. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania followed 98 puppies in the program from birth to adulthood, to see if they could determine predictors for success. The results of their study were recently published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The researchers found that dogs whose mothers were more attentive (licking, grooming, and spending more time in the whelping box) were three times less likely to become guide dogs. Nursing styles made a difference as well. Some mothers laid down to nurse more often, making it easier for pups to nurse. Others often nursed their pups while sitting, which requires more effort for the pups. Pups from that second group were four times more likely to succeed as guide dogs.

Good mothering is important, but this research shows that a level of "tough love," where pups learn at a very young age to face challenges and solve problems, seems to serve them well as they grow.

## The Value of Preventive Care

The statistics are sobering: each year, more than six million dogs and six million cats are diagnosed with cancer, and about 60% of aging dogs will experience heart disease. According to the Banfield State of Pet Health Report, there has been a 79.6% increase in the prevalence of diabetes in dogs over the past decade. These diseases are among "the silent killers," as they can easily go undetected in their early stages because pets often don't show symptoms until the diseases are advanced.

The good news is that in most cases, with early detection and treatment, many of these cases can be well-managed, and sometimes even cured. When caught early, the cost of treatment is often lower as well. Many other diseases, such as heartworm disease, rabies and distemper, are preventable.

The value of preventive care cannot be overstated for humans or pets. A key element of preventive care is a regular wellness examination.

A routine exam starts with asking you about your pet's history, then taking vital statistics (temperature, pulse, respiration, weight), followed by a thorough nose-to-tail examination including ears, eyes, mouth, skin and coat, abdominal palpations, and the limbs. Your veterinarian will be looking for a wide range of signs, including external parasites, such as ear mites or fleas, any inflammation, abnormal lumps or bumps, a normal ability to flex and extend each limb, signs of pain, an abnormal heart beat, and much more.

Lab tests may be recommended, especially if there are any abnormal findings during the physical examination, or if your pet has preexisting conditions, is on certain medications or is a senior pet.

Most pets will test positive for intestinal parasites at some time in their life simply from picking them up in the environment. Some parasites can be transferred to humans, so testing your pets helps keep your family safer as well. External parasites, such as fleas, ticks and ear mites, are an issue as well.

Because dogs and cats age more quickly than humans, an annual exam for them is the equivalent of an exam every few years for humans. For some pets, it is appropriate to have more frequent wellness exams; this is especially true for geriatric pets or those with chronic health problems. Whether you choose six or twelve month intervals, remember that the wellness exam is an important part of your pet's care.



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**"I like everyone and I'm always in a good mood. That can't be normal!"**



# Optimize

## Making the most of your annual veterinary exam

Dogs and cats are incredibly adept at hiding signs of illness, and when symptoms do arise, they can be very subtle at first. Pet owners play a key role in helping veterinarians to assess each pet's health. Here are some tips to make the most of your pet's wellness exam.

Observe your pet, and watch for changes in behavior. Does your dog play less, or hesitate before going up stairs? Does your cat forego her favorite window perch for a new spot, or does she seem to be hiding sometimes?

Note changes in appetite and drinking habits, as these can indicate many conditions, from painful teeth to kidney disease. Changes in the skin and coat may be the first indication you see of an underlying condition such as a thyroid problem. Vision and hearing changes often come with age, but they can be indications of other things as well, so be sure to mention them to your veterinarian. It's best to never pass something off as "normal aging," because it may be an important clue about your pet's health.

Prior to your visit, make a list of any changes you've noted, and any questions you have. In addition, bring a list of all the food your pet eats, including treats and people food, and all the medications and supplements that you feed as well.

If it's your first time at a new veterinary practice, be sure to have your pet's records with you.

Arrive a little early in case there are new forms you need to fill out. Be sure your dog is on a leash and your cat is in a carrier. While your dog may be gregarious and love meeting others, remember that not all dogs feel the same way, and many animals are very stressed when they're at the vet.

More than half of all pets who visit the vet are overweight, but many owners don't want to hear that news. Be proactive, and ask your vet: "How is my pet's weight?" If the answer is that she could lose a pound or two, ask for suggestions to get you on track. There are prescription diets that really help, and other suggestions your veterinarian can give you.

If your pet is diagnosed with a medical condition, ask your veterinarian to explain what options you may have for treatment. For example, if your pet has arthritis, there may be several choices of medications and supplements that can make him more comfortable. Your veterinarian can explain the pros and cons, and help you decide which choice is best for your dog.

In some cases, your veterinarian may recommend additional diagnostics to help reach an accurate diagnosis and determine the appropriate treatment protocol.



**"I have lived with several Zen masters – all of them cats."**

*– Eckhart Tolle*

# Veterinary Diagnostics

State-of-the-art diagnostics help veterinarians provide the best medical care possible for pets. Some tests can be run "in-house," while others may need to be sent to an outside laboratory for processing by specialized equipment. Here's an overview of some common diagnostic tools:

**Blood work** – There are multiple types of tests to run on blood. Some measure the cellular components of blood, such as red and white blood cells, while others measure blood chemistry, such as glucose, protein, and various enzymes that are produced by different internal organs. Abnormal results can indicate things such as infection, leukemia, anemia, muscle injuries, and problems with the heart, pancreas, kidneys and liver.

**Urinalysis** – Urinalysis can detect urinary tract infections, bacteria, crystals and yeast, as well as diabetes, kidney and liver disease.

**Intestinal Parasite Screening** – Detects the presence of parasite eggs (larvae) in pets' feces.

**4DX** – This combination test can detect heartworms and three different tick-borne diseases: Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and ehrlichia.

**X-rays** (radiographs) – help to image bones, gas, soft tissue, fluids and metal. They help identify fractures or joint problems, and to find foreign body obstructions. X-rays also help to discover dental problems, including those that occur below the gum line.

**Ultrasound** – Ultrasound is valuable for imaging soft tissue and internal organs. The fast update rate allows organs like the heart to be viewed as they are functioning. Tumors, abscesses, cysts, bladder or kidney stones, fluid pockets and obstructions can be detected and measured with ultrasound. Ultrasound may also be used to help guide a needle when performing a needle biopsy of tissue.



# Rabies in Minnesota

Minnesota pet owners should all be aware of rabies. Caused by a virus, rabies attacks the nervous system and is almost always fatal once clinical symptoms appear.

Animals contract rabies from exposure to the saliva of an infected animal; usually from a bite, although it is also possible to transmit the disease when the saliva comes in contact with an open wound, or the eyes, nose or mouth. In Minnesota, the most common sources of rabies are bats and skunks.

Early signs of rabies infection in wildlife include abnormal behavior and sometimes aggression. Dogs and outdoor cats are clearly at risk of exposure if a normally timid wild animal wanders into your



yard. Recently, a family cat killed a rabid skunk in Minnesota. Luckily the cat was up-to-date on its rabies vaccine and is doing fine.

We are commonly asked whether indoor cats need rabies vaccines. While the chances of an indoor cat contracting rabies is small, it is still possible. Bats can crawl through tiny spaces, such as the vents in the eaves of your home. In fact, they seek those spaces out for good places to roost during the day.

A couple years ago, a cat in Minnesota died from rabies, even though it was an indoor-only cat. A rabid bat had gotten into the home, and the cat caught it. The cat was not current on its rabies vaccine. Because rabies is transmissible to people, every

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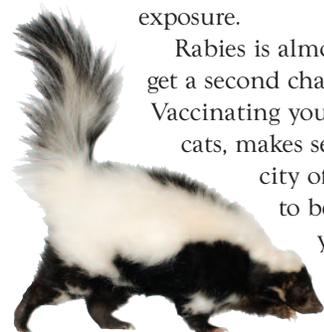
Start your pup off on the right paw with proper socialization. Call for more info.



### **RABIES IN MINNESOTA** *continued from above*

person that came in contact with the cat required rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, which is a series of vaccines given after a potential exposure.

Rabies is almost 100% fatal. You don't get a second chance. It is also preventable. Vaccinating your pets, including indoor cats, makes sense. For this reason, the city of Apple Valley requires cats to be vaccinated for rabies. If your cat or dog is not current on its rabies vaccine, please call the clinic for an appointment.



### **WELCOME DR. WILKES** *continued from pg. 1*

trained as a carpenter. He found enjoyment as a cabinet maker because of the attention to detail that is required. But as time went on, he realized his real passion was caring for animals, which led him to vet school.

Dr. Wilkes' family moved a lot when he was a child, but he has spent most of his adult life in Minnesota and loves the outdoors here. He especially loves the water, enjoying boating, kayaking, and camping in his free time. He loves a good road trip to anywhere near the ocean. When he is not outside, he enjoys woodworking and automotive work.

Dr. Wilkes shares his home with his two dogs: Emma, a black lab mix, and Powder, a white German Shepherd.

He has a special interest in dermatology, ophthalmology and helping geriatric patients enjoy their golden years. We are excited to have Dr. Wilkes join the East Valley Animal Clinic family. Please say hello to him the next time you are at the clinic.