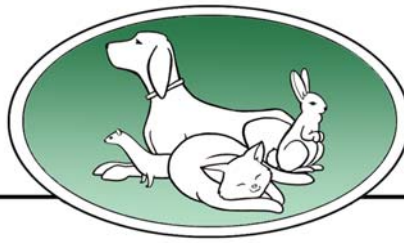


EAST VALLEY

5049 Upper 141st Street West

**ANIMAL CLINIC**

Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124



Paw Talk



A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

SPRING 2009

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Welcome Dr. Hammel!

East Valley Animal Clinic is happy to welcome Dr. Heidi Hammel to our staff. Dr. Hammel is a 2008 graduate of the University of Minnesota Veterinary College. She and her husband, who is also a veterinarian, reside in Minneapolis with their two dogs, a German Shepherd named Crash and a Jack Russell Terrier named Naya.



Dr. Hammel with Crash and Naya

Prior to vet school, Dr. Hammel was a surgical technician at the University of Minnesota Veterinary Hospital. In her spare time, Dr.

Hammel enjoys hiking, running and traveling. She has traveled to Ireland, the Cook Islands, Puerto Rico and Mexico.

Dr. Kathy Ranzinger, owner of East Valley Animal Clinic, comments that Dr. Hammel's experience as a veterinary technician has made her transition to the clinic very easy. Dr. Hammel is a wonderful addition to our clinic.

OUCH! That Hurts!

Chronic Pain and Your Pet

Your pet isn't always able to let you know that it is in pain, so it's up to you as its owner to know what to look for. As our pets age, they may begin to suffer pain from many chronic conditions, including arthritis and dental disease. In an effort to please their owners, most animals will continue with their normal activities even with significant discomfort. Because of this, it is our duty as caregivers to be aware of the signs of pain, and not dismiss or ignore them.

It's important to pay attention to your pet, and note any behavior or mobility changes. For example:

- Lack of desire to be petted
- Inability to jump up on beds, chairs, etc.
- Avoiding, or losing interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Unusual posture or movements
- Retreating to quiet areas of the house for long periods of time
- Inappropriate urination (It's just too uncomfortable to go outside.)
- Any degree of limping, even mild

It's common for owners to think that because the pet is eating and drinking, and not vocalizing its pain, the pain is not significant. Consider the fact that if you are in pain, you're probably not crying out with every step you take, and neither is your pet.

Dental pain is another commonly overlooked source of pain in our pets. Your pet could have an extremely uncomfortable mouth and still eat just fine. If a human is experiencing mouth pain, the only way you would know is if they told you, but your pet has no way of showing you that his mouth hurts. It's important that your pet gets regular dental care, which includes routine home care and regular examinations by your veterinarian.

There are many options available for managing pain in dogs and cats. The first step is a thorough examination by your veterinarian to evaluate your pet's overall health and determine the source of pain. While the available medications do a wonderful job with pain relief, many require periodic monitoring to ensure there are no unnecessary side effects.

At East Valley Animal Clinic, your pet's comfort is our number one priority, and we are always available to help with any concerns you might have.





Ear Mites

Your cat has been scratching at his ears, shaking his head, and now you notice an odor and a dark secretion. Ear infection? Maybe not. The most common cause of ear problems in cats is mites. Ear mites are highly contagious, tiny eight-legged parasites that actually feed on the oils and wax in cats' ears. There are several types of mites that can infect both dogs and cats (humans are rarely susceptible), but the problem is more prevalent in cats.

Ear mites will create irritation and inflammation, and left untreated they can cause serious skin and ear infections. Severe cases can lead to such discomfort that the cat's scratching and head shaking may result in an aural hematoma (rupture of blood vessels in the ear), which may require surgery to repair.

Visit your veterinarian at the first sign of problems with your cat's or dog's ears. It's important to identify the cause of the problem to ensure proper treatment. If mites are indeed the culprit, all your pets may require treatment, and it will be necessary to thoroughly clean their regular sleeping areas as well.



Recalls

Pet food, beef, spinach, chicken jerky treats and peanut butter...if you're having trouble keeping track of what food is safe to feed both your family and the pets, you're not alone. Fortunately, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration makes information about recalls readily available on its website. Go to www.fda.gov and select **Recalls and Safety Alerts**, where they list both human and pet food items. In addition, the Humane Society of the United States updates related information on its website, at www.humanesociety.org/petfoodsafety.

Delivering Smiles

A growing body of research has confirmed the remarkable benefits animals can provide, even during a relatively short visit. From reduced heart rate and blood pressure, decreased anxiety and stress, to enhanced feelings of well-being, scientists continue to document and confirm the value of not just pet ownership, but of animals visiting with people in nursing homes, hospitals and other facilities.

Some refer to them as "therapy dogs," others use the term "animal assisted activities" or "visiting pets." Regardless of what it's called, the goal is the same: to bring a few moments of happiness to someone special. If you're interested in volunteering, there are a number of organizations that can help. These groups can provide training, testing, registration and identification, which helps to assure the facilities you'd like to visit that you and your pet have demonstrated suitability for the task.

Some organizations focus only on dogs and their handlers, while others will evaluate cats and other pets as well. They all require your pet to be up-to-date on core vaccinations and in good health as certified by a licensed veterinarian.

For more information, contact:

- Therapy Dogs International at www.tdi-dog.org
- The Delta Society at www.deltasociety.org
- Therapy Dogs, Inc. at www.therapydogs.com



Photo courtesy of The Delta Society

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www.glasbergen.com



"My therapy is quite simple: I wag my tail and lick your face until you feel good about yourself again."



Heartworm

Many people are aware of heartworm disease, but are unfamiliar with the details of this potentially fatal and completely preventable threat.

Heartworms are parasitic worms that can infect dogs, cats, ferrets and a variety of wild animals. The only method of transmission is by mosquitoes and it has now been documented in all 50 states. Everyone should consider their pets at risk, even if they never go outside.

Mosquitoes become infected when they "bite" an infected host. Young heartworms, called microfilariae, circulate in the blood of their host until a mosquito ingests them. Within the mosquito, they develop into infective larvae and can be

transmitted to a new host when the mosquito takes another blood meal.

Once they've invaded their new host, the larvae travel through connective tissue, enter the veins and finally settle in the blood vessels of the lungs and heart. There they continue to mature and can reach lengths of 14 inches. As adults, they produce microfilariae, and the cycle continues.

Mature heartworms can inflict severe damage in the heart and lungs of dogs. Sometimes an immune response occurs, which can then damage other organs as well. Symptoms of infection include coughing, exercise intolerance, weight loss and abnormal lung and heart sounds. Once

the infection becomes symptomatic, it is labeled heartworm disease.

Left untreated, heartworm disease is almost always fatal. There is an FDA-approved treatment for dogs; however the associated risks are high and it is more likely to be successful if the infection is detected early.

Some tests for heartworm also screen for tick-borne diseases. If heartworms are detected, additional tests may be required to determine the extent of the infection and the best course of treatment.

Prevention is the safest and most economical approach to heartworms. The American Heartworm Society now recommends year-round prevention, even in colder climates. There are many approved preventives available, and some are also effective against additional parasites. Your veterinarian can recommend the best one for you.

**"One reason a dog
can be such a comfort
when you're feeling
blue is that he doesn't
try to find out why."**

– Author Unknown

Cats at Risk

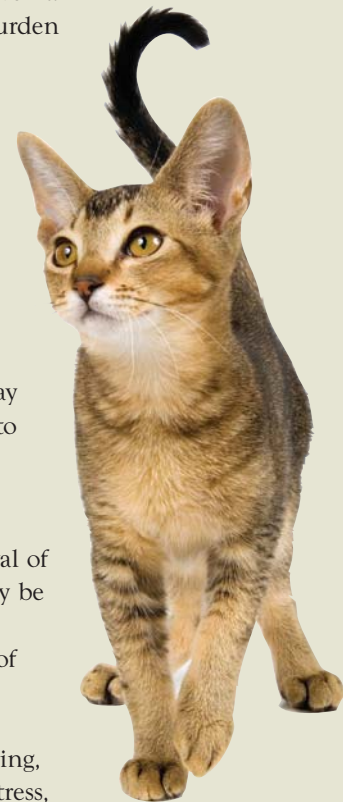
Cats are more resistant to heartworms than dogs, but they are still at risk of infection. Infected cats usually do not have microfilariae (immature heartworms) circulating in their blood, so they rarely transmit parasites to a mosquito; however, this also makes screening for heartworm difficult.

While dogs can have as many as 250 heartworms, infected cats often have fewer than six. The lifespan of the parasite in cats is only two to three years, compared to five to seven years in dogs.

Nevertheless, even a small worm burden in cats is potentially fatal. There are no approved treatment medications for cats with heartworm. Medication may be prescribed to reduce the inflammatory response, and surgical removal of the worms may be possible.

Symptoms of heartworm disease in cats include coughing, respiratory distress, lethargy, vomiting and weight loss. Diagnosis in cats is more difficult than in dogs.

There are multiple approved heartworm preventives for felines; your veterinarian can recommend the best choice for your pet.



According to the FDA, a single flea can bite your cat or dog more than 400 times in one day. Talk to your veterinarian about flea and tick preventives.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Welcome Back Dr. Dudley

Dr. Katie Dudley is a 2003 graduate of the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. She worked at East Valley Animal Clinic from 2003 to 2007

before moving to Baltimore, Maryland. Missing Minnesota, she moved back "home" and was very excited to be able to return to EVAC in January of 2009. She enjoys dermatology, feline



Dr. Katie Dudley and Walter

medicine and the opportunity to witness the bond between clients and their pets.

Currently, Dr. Dudley lives in St. Paul with her Standard Poodle, Walter, and two cats, Henry and Stuart. In her free time, she enjoys walking with Walter, reading, yoga, and attempting to knit and crochet.

Dr. Dudley is a talented veterinarian and a huge asset to our team.

Xylitol Poisoning

Xylitol is a common sugar substitute that is found in some sugarless chewing gum, mints and even certain baked goods. This low calorie sweetener helps fight gum disease in humans. Unfortunately, xylitol is toxic to pets.

At lower doses, xylitol causes hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. This can make your dog seem weak or disoriented and potentially lead to seizures. Left untreated, this could lead to death. Higher doses of xylitol can prove fatal as a result of liver destruction. Other signs of xylitol poisoning include vomiting, depression and coma.

The amount of xylitol needed to cause hypoglycemia is approximately 0.1 grams per kilogram of body weight. This translates to approximately one-and-one-half sticks of gum for a ten-pound dog. The dose needed to cause liver destruction requires that same ten-pound dog to eat a whole pack of gum.

At this time, there is no information about the effects of xylitol on cats.

If you suspect your pet may have ingested xylitol, please don't hesitate to contact us as immediate treatment may be required.



Mission Statement

Recognizing the importance of the human-animal bond, it is the mission of East Valley Animal Clinic to work as a team to protect that bond with outstanding care and service.

Right: East Valley Animal Clinic Team



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