

Paw Talk



A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

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East Valley Animal Clinic
5049 Upper 141st Street West
Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124
Phone: 952-423-6800

Kathy Ranzinger, DVM
Pam Takeuchi, DVM
Katie Dudley, DVM
Mary Jo Wagner, DVM
Kirsten Jagow, DVM

www.EastValleyAnimalClinic.com



Meet Dr. Wagner

Dr. Mary Jo Wagner started working at East Valley Animal Clinic in the summer of 2005, shortly after graduating from vet school at the University of Minnesota. A native of Minnesota, she had worked in a number of clinics over the years as a certified veterinary technician prior to returning to school to get her veterinary degree. She also teaches veterinary technician students at Argosy University in Eagan.

Dr. Wagner loves the atmosphere at East Valley Animal Clinic. "I enjoy coming to work. The people here are the best, and having such a great staff

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An Ounce of Prevention...

We often feature articles stressing how preventive care helps keep pets healthier. This quarter we'll discuss how preventive care saves you money!

Veterinary Pet Insurance Co. (VPI), the nation's oldest and largest provider of pet health insurance, recently sorted its database of more than 485,000 insured pets to determine costs associated with the most common preventive canine and feline conditions in 2012. Following is a cost analysis of the five most common ailments that can be avoided through preventive care:

Dental Diseases:

Definition: Diseases related to inflammation or infection of the gums or teeth.

Examples: Tooth infection and periodontal disease.

Average cost per pet to treat: \$531.71

Average cost per pet to prevent: \$171.82

Prevention tips: Routine dental care, such as brushing teeth or feeding pet foods designed to help reduce dental tartar, can result in improved overall health. The most effective preventive treatment for dental disease is a professional teeth cleaning, which removes plaque buildup and tartar before it leads to more serious oral issues, such as tooth decay and periodontal disease.



Internal Parasites:

Definition: A parasite is a plant or animal that lives within another living organism (called the host). Pets may acquire conditions caused directly by a parasite or the pet's response to the parasite living within its body.

Examples: Round worms, tapeworms and giardia.

Average cost per pet to treat: \$179.93

Average cost per pet to prevent: \$29.51

Prevention tips: Keep your pet and the environment free of fleas. Clean up your pet's feces immediately, and eliminate exposure to the feces of other animals when your pet goes for a walk. Annual fecal exams and preventive medications can greatly reduce the chance of a parasitic infestation.

External Parasites:

Definition: A plant or animal that lives upon another living organism. Pets may acquire conditions caused directly by a parasite or the pet's response to the parasite or its bite. Some conditions are the result of a toxin or organism (e.g., bacteria, virus, etc.) transmitted by the parasite, which can cause an illness.

Examples: Heartworms transmitted by mosquitoes, Lyme disease transmitted by ticks



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"Just bark. The app automatically translates it to English!"

Beware of Bloat

The number one killer of dogs in the United States is cancer. Number two? Bloat. This condition can affect healthy, active dogs in their prime, and is often fatal. Swift emergency medical treatment is imperative, as dogs can die quickly following onset of symptoms.

The medical term for bloat is gastric dilation and volvulus, or GDV. During gastric dilation, the stomach distends due to a buildup of gas or fluid. Next, the stomach may twist or rotate (volvulus), closing off the esophagus. At this point, the dog is unable to vomit or belch to relieve pressure, which may continue to build. As a result, the dog's blood pressure drops, and blood supply to the stomach is reduced. Shock can occur, and stomach tissue may die. The liver and spleen may be damaged as well.

This condition typically affects large breed, deep chested dogs, such as Great Danes, St. Bernards and German Shepherd Dogs, however all breeds and all ages of dogs are susceptible. The cause of bloat is not always known, but most typical causes are bolting down food, drinking large amounts of water after meals and vigorous exercise after eating.

All dog owners should know the signs of bloat, which are sometimes hard to distinguish from other types of distress. Among the signs of bloat:

- Unproductive vomiting, or vomiting which produces only mucous or foam
- Anxiety or restlessness
- A distended abdomen that may feel tight (like a drum) — although this is not always apparent

- Abdominal discomfort, sometimes noticeable if a dog is looking at its stomach
- Pacing, and refusing to sit or lie down
- The dog just isn't acting "normal"

If you suspect bloat, seek emergency veterinary care immediately.

Veterinary treatment of GDV involves first trying to relieve the pressure by releasing gas from the stomach — either by inserting a tube down the esophagus or surgically through the stomach wall. X-rays may help determine whether the stomach has rotated, and if so, surgery is required to return the stomach to the correct position using a procedure known as "gastropexy," which also helps prevent recurrence. Depending on how advanced the condition, supportive care for shock and other treatments may be necessary.

To help prevent GDV, avoid exercising your dog immediately before and especially after meals, and consider feeding several small meals throughout the day rather than one large meal to dogs at higher risk. Gastropexy can be performed prophylactically in high-risk dogs.

"No matter how close we are to another person, few human relationships are as free from strife, disagreement, and frustration as is the relationship you have with a good dog."

— Dean Koontz



CKD

One of the most common diseases affecting older cats is chronic kidney disease, or CKD, which is estimated to afflict more than two million felines in the United States. The terms chronic renal disease (CRD) and chronic renal failure (CRF) refer to the same condition.

The kidneys play a number of important roles. They filter waste products and toxins from the blood, which are excreted with water as urine. They help to regulate the amount of water, calcium and Vitamin D in the blood, and help regulate blood pressure as well. Kidneys also produce some vital enzymes and hormones.

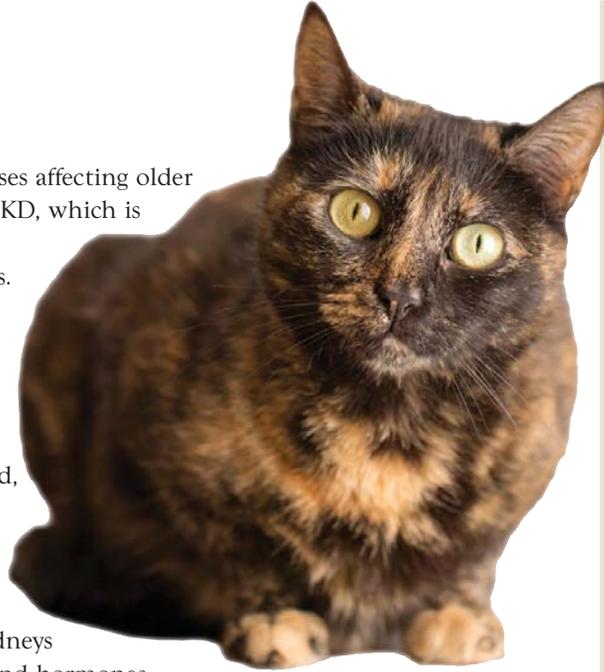
Kidneys are made up of thousands of tiny filters known as nephrons. Not all nephrons are functioning at once; the body holds some in reserve for future use. As animals age or if the kidneys are damaged, some nephrons die, and those in reserve become active. Because of this reserve capacity, early stages of kidney disease are not usually apparent; in fact, symptoms may not appear until two-thirds or more of the total nephrons have been lost.

A number of ailments can lead to CKD, such as chronic bacterial infections in the kidneys, high blood pressure or immune system diseases, but most frequently, the cause of CKD is unknown. Senior cats over seven years old are at highest risk. CKD is progressive and there is no cure. In many cases, however, the progression of the disease can be slowed, and cats can live months or even years after being diagnosed.

Signs of CKD include increased thirst and urination (sometimes accompanied by incontinence), poor appetite and weight loss, lethargy/weakness, diarrhea and vomiting. These are similar to signs of other conditions, such as hyperthyroidism and diabetes, so your veterinarian will need to do blood and urine tests to diagnose correctly. Additional tests may be required to determine the underlying cause and the state of disease in your cat. Regular wellness examinations and senior screenings can help detect kidney disease before symptoms are apparent, giving earlier opportunities for treatment.

CKD is incurable, but advancements in nutrition and medicine give us treatment options that allow cats with the disease to live much longer and more comfortably than ever before. Prescription diets can help reduce the amount of metabolic waste the kidneys must process. Fluid therapy can be given in hospital and at home. Dialysis and kidney transplants are becoming more viable options for cats as well.

The Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine has an online video series designed to help cat owners understand kidney disease at <http://www.partnersah.vet.cornell.edu/pet-owners/kidney-disease>.



The Cat's Meow

Do you talk to your cat? Several surveys show that most of us do. Indeed, despite the fact that they have not mastered language, cats appear to communicate quite well with us, too. A study performed at Cornell University showed that cats vary the pitch and duration of their vocalizations in different situations when interacting with humans. A greeting "meow" may sound quite different to its owner from a "FEED ME!" demand, which is also different from a request to go in or out.

Interestingly, these variations aren't universal among cats. Most cats adjust their vocalizations to their human families, so your cat's unique sounds may be different from those your neighbor's cat uses to communicate with them.

Feral cats do not vocalize to one another very often. Kittens will meow to their mothers (who may meow back), but this behavior dissipates as they age. Cats looking for a mate will yowl. Most cat-cat communication is in the form of body posture, eye contact, tactile communication (including touching or rubbing and grooming one another) and olfactory (smell) communication, such as urine marking. Vocal communication among cats typically consists of purrs, "trills," "chirps" and hisses, but not meows.

Changes in vocalization patterns can be an important clue to observant owners that something is wrong. If your cat starts meowing while in or near the litter box, it could be a sign of a lower urinary tract problem. Increased vocalization in older cats, especially at night, may be an indication of pain, hypertension or cognitive dysfunction.

Cats tend to be masters at hiding illness and disease, so even minor changes in habits, especially vocalization, are good reasons to contact your veterinarian to determine if something is wrong.



SOME SPECIES OF FLEAS AND TICKS are most active in the fall! Please remain diligent about flea and tick prevention.



OUNCE OF PREVENTION... continued from pg. 1

and flea allergic dermatitis.

Average cost per pet to treat: \$180.67

Average cost per pet to prevent: \$84.89

Prevention tips: Keep your pet and the environment free of fleas and ticks. Thoroughly check your pets after outdoor activities and remove any ticks you find with a pair of tweezers. As recommended by your veterinarian, use preventive medications and vaccines.

Infectious Diseases:

Definition: Conditions transmitted via bite or contact with another animal that carries a transmittable disease (virus, bacteria, fungi, etc.). Transmission of disease can occur in various ways, including physical contact, contaminated food, body fluids, objects and airborne inhalation.

Examples: Parvovirus, Lyme disease and feline leukemia virus.

Average cost per pet to treat: \$678.24

Average cost per canine to prevent using core vaccines: \$85.14

Average cost per feline to prevent using core vaccines: \$73.52

Prevention tips: Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent contraction of common canine and feline infectious diseases. Keep your pet and the environment free of fleas and ticks to limit exposure to organisms that external parasites carry. In addition, keep your pet away from any other animals that may be sick.



Reproductive Organ Diseases:

Definition: Conditions caused by, or directly related to, the pet having intact reproductive organs.



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DR. WAGNER continued from pg. 1

makes my job a treat."

When not at work, Dr. Wagner enjoys an array of never-ending home projects. She also enjoys scrapbooking and spending time with her two grown children. She has quite a menagerie of pets, all of which have special needs. She has three cats with a brain defect that leaves them very unsteady on their feet; Walter, a Basset mix that had all four legs operated on by the time he was a year old; and Otis, a Boston Terrier that, until recently, followed her to work.

OUNCE OF PREVENTION... continued from pg. 4

Examples: Pyometra (infection of uterus), prostatitis (infection or inflammation of prostate gland) and ovarian cancer.

Average cost per pet to treat: \$531.98

Average cost per pet to prevent: \$260.69

Prevention tips: Spay or neuter your pet.

As you can see, some of these conditions are very inexpensive to prevent, and very costly to treat. Not only does this save you money in the long run, but most importantly, it keeps your pet happy and healthy!

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