



# Animal Health Clinic of Funkstown

*"We'll treat your pet like family!"*

Newsletter

July – September 2009

CRITTER'S CHRONICLE

## I'm Scared –

Summer is a fun and exciting time of year with picnics, pool parties, and fireworks. Although we may find fireworks exciting and beautiful, our pets may find them frightening. Many pets are terrified of loud noises such as fireworks, gun shots, thunderstorms, or even just too much company at the house. There are a few things you can do to help your pet stay calm this summer.

- Keep windows and doors closed during thunderstorms or fireworks to minimize the sights and sounds that can be disturbing to pets.
- Try putting on background music or noise to distract the pet.
- Give treats or special toys or let the pet play with another pet that is not disturbed by the noise.

• Try desensitizing your pet to whatever disturbs it by playing CDs with sounds similar to the ones that bother your pet, i.e. thunder claps, gun shots, or fireworks. Start with the volume on low for a few days allowing the pet to get used to it. Once the pet seems comfortable with that volume, turn it up some. Repeat this process until your pet is comfortable with the noise at a loud volume similar to that of the natural occurrence.

- In extreme cases, some pets need to be sedated during such events. However sedatives can take an hour or more to be affective. Such medications work well for fireworks when you can plan ahead, but not in such cases as thunderstorms which can spring up rather suddenly.
- If your pet is very fearful of strangers, put them in a quiet place with their



favorite toys, bedding, etc. where they can feel comfortable until the picnic or party is over.

The goal is to keep your pet as calm as possible. If your pet is one of the more extreme cases, please contact us so that our doctors can possibly prescribe medications to help your pet.

## Satellite Adoptions –

It is kitten season again and we are feeling the effects. We currently have 6 beautiful adult cats and kittens looking for homes.

"Joy" is our longest standing feline resident having been here since December. Joy came in with her sister Holly after being rescued from right here in Funkstown. Holly found a forever home but Joy is still waiting for her turn. She is a gorgeous 1 year old, all grey, domestic short hair. She has been Felv/FIV tested, spayed, dewormed, and had all of her vaccinations. She was once very shy and has come out of her shell quite a bit, however we still feel it will take her a little time to get used to new surroundings. Therefore, she will need a family that will be mindful of that. We want to find her the perfect home as we have grown quite fond of her. You may stop in to fill out an application.

We also have a very regal spayed adult female, domestic short hair named "Q." Q has been a resident here before, was adopted, and returned due to her dominant personality. She would make a wonderful pet for someone who does not have other female cats. We feel she would do fine in a home with male cats (as long as they are neutered) and even dogs. She also would prefer an all

adult household as children tend to make her nervous. Because of her "special requests" it may take longer to find her the forever home she deserves, however we will not give up and hope that someone out there may be looking for a kitty just like her. She is approximately 2-3 years old, spayed, and current on vaccines. Please let us know if you or someone you know is interested in Q.

## Tick Removal –

There are many theories about how to safely and effectively remove ticks from our pets as well as ourselves. It has long been thought that if you scorch the tick with a recently blown out match, the tick will detach. This may in fact be true, but you also risk burning your pet at the same time. Tweezers may be used to remove ticks as well but more often than not, the head is left behind. A new method of tick removal has recently been brought to our attention that is much safer and more effective than some of the older ways.

First you will want to squirt some liquid soap on a cotton ball. Then place the cotton ball, soap down, on the tick and hold it there for a few seconds. Next rub the cotton ball around on the tick for 15-20 seconds. When you lift the cotton ball the tick will no



longer be embedded in your pet and will now be stuck to the cotton ball for easy disposal. It sounds too good to be true but it really does work.

## Change in Office Hours

Due to a change in scheduling, we will now be having our weekly staff meetings on Wednesdays instead of Thursdays from 1:30 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. As always, during this time the office will be closed and our phones will be turned over to our answering service. If you have a medical emergency a doctor can still be paged so that your pet can receive prompt treatment. If you need to speak to us on a non-emergency basis, you may leave a message on our voicemail and we will return your call as soon as possible. We apologize for any inconvenience this causes and appreciate your understanding. These staff meetings allow us to receive education from both inside and outside the hospital. We are able to stay current on everything from medications to customer service, which we are confident will help us to better serve our valued customers.



*“Often times when a cat died it was mummified and buried as royalty with its owner”*

## ***A Difficult Decision –***

“I think it’s time but maybe not.” Those few words have been uttered so many times by pet owners trying to decide if it is time to let their beloved pet go. There are so many things to consider when it comes to euthanasia. Nobody ever wants to say good-bye to their family pet but we have to be mindful of them as well. It is never an easy decision to make but perhaps we can give you some things to think about that will assist you, it is called the quality of life scale. There are 7 things to reflect on when it comes to your pet’s quality of life:

**1. Hurt** – Is your pet in pain? Most geriatric pets experience arthritis but in most cases it can be managed with pain medications. If pain medication is no longer easing your pet’s pain, it may be time to make a decision. Pain can manifest itself as typical limping or stiffness but inability to breathe is also at the top of the pain scale.

**2. Hunger** – Is your pet still eating? Some pets as they age may no longer eat their normal dog food but as long as they are eating in general, they are still believed to have a good quality of life. It is a pet owner’s individual decision if they are willing to force feed a pet or have a feeding tube placed. It is not fair to you or to your pet to let them suffer through starvation.

**3. Hydration** – Is your pet drinking enough to sustain itself? Some pets, especially pets experiencing kidney issues, will need subcutaneous fluids to maintain the proper level of hydration. This can be done as often as needed.

**4. Hygiene** – Is your pet still able to groom itself or be groomed? Being able to still bathe and brush or comb your pet is something to think about as well. If your pet is getting extremely matted and not allowing combing or brushing, it can mean that it is painful for them.

**5. Happiness** – Does your pet still seem happy? Do they still enjoy interacting with the family or do they hide a lot? Does your dog still enjoy going outside? Does your cat still purr and want to be petted? Does your pet still sleep in bed with you at night? All of these things should be taken into consideration. Hiding, unwillingness to interact with the family or even get out of bed can all be signals that a pet has given up.

**6. Mobility** – Is the pet simply unable to move around on its own? Cats and smaller breeds of dogs are easier to deal with when they have difficulty moving around on their own whereas large and giant breed dogs prove more complicated. Once pets become completely immobile the concern becomes that they will be urinating & defecating on themselves causing sores. Therefore additional and more extensive grooming may be necessary.

**7. More Good Days than Bad** – This may be one of the most significant considerations when coming to a decision about euthanasia. Bad days may include days of vomiting, diarrhea, frustration, nausea, or seizures. Having multiple bad days in a row and withdrawing from family may mean your pet has decided enough is enough.

Once 4 of the 7 qualities of life are gone, it may be time to elect euthanasia. No matter how or why you make the ultimate decision for euthanasia it is never easy. Often times, however, we tend

to hold on longer than what is good for our pets. After all, their pain and suffering will be over but ours will have just begun. We are the ones left behind with the reality of no longer having our best furry friends as part of our lives. We are always available to answer any questions when it comes to making such a difficult decision.

## ***Feline Fact or Myth? –***

Test your feline knowledge with this fact or myth quiz.

**1.** Cats have better hearing than dogs.

**Fact.** Cats can hear better than humans and dogs alike.

**2.** Cats are strictly carnivores and do not need vegetables and grains.

**Fact.** Vegetables and grains were added to the cat’s diet by humans but cats in the wild do not require them.

**3.** Cats will suck the breath out of a baby.

**Myth.** This is just a superstition with no relevance.

**4.** Cats began colonizing the world as long as 3000 years ago.

**Fact.** The first were found in Africa but were moved to Europe and Asia by merchants. Cats were brought to the Americas around 1500 A.D.

**5.** The domestic cats we know today are descendants of the North African wild cat.

**Fact.** These cats actually chose to move into human communities, living side by side with us and depending on us for their every day needs.

**6.** Cats need to have cow’s milk.

**Myth.** Cats actually tend to be lactose intolerant and can get quite ill from cow’s milk. There are milk supplements available which are specifically made for a cats system that can be offered instead, however adult cats do not need milk as a part of their regular diet.

**7.** In ancient Egypt cats were revered and worshipped as gods.

**Fact.** Often times when a cat died it was mummified and buried as royalty with its owner.

**8.** A litter of kittens can have several different fathers.

**Fact.** Cats are induced ovulators meaning that each time they mate, eggs are released therefore one litter of kittens may have several different fathers.

**9.** Cats claw furniture/carpet because they are angry at their owners.

**Myth.** Cats do not have the emotional capability to hold a grudge. Clawing actually allows the pet to mark its territory as well as to remove its old, dead nails.

**10.** There are over 200 million domestic cats in the world today.

**Fact.** There are approximately 50 million cats living in the United States, 30 million in Russia, 50 million in the rest of Europe, and countless other millions in Africa, Australia, Asia, and the rest of the Americas making them the most successful feline that has ever existed.

**11.** Cats have excellent memories.

**Fact.** A cat’s memory lasts for approximately 16 hours. In comparison, a dog’s lasts for only 5 minutes.



*“Time is one of the biggest enemies when it comes to treatment.”*



How did you do? Cats are very interesting animals and there are loads more facts out there. Stay tuned next time for the dog quiz.

## **Pancreatitis –**

Pancreatitis is classified as inflammation of the pancreas, which sounds fairly mild. However acute pancreatitis can be fatal, even in young animals. The pancreas is a V-shaped organ that has two main functions; it metabolizes the sugar in the system by producing insulin and aids in the digestion of nutrients by producing pancreatic enzymes.

Acute pancreatitis can be caused by a multitude of factors. Pets whose diets are high in fat are more likely to develop pancreatitis, as are garbage eaters or pets that are fed “people food.” Also certain medications, infections, and diseases can predispose a pet to pancreatitis, as well as obesity or trauma to the pancreas. Research has also shown that middle-aged dogs tend to be more at risk for the development of pancreatitis.

Acute pancreatitis can manifest itself in several ways. Symptoms can include:

- Painful abdomen
- Abdominal distension or swollen belly
- Decrease or loss of appetite
- Depression
- Dehydration
- Fever
- “Hunched up” appearance
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Yellow or greasy stools



Diagnosis of pancreatitis is usually achieved through blood work. The two pancreatic enzymes which are increased with pancreatitis are the Lipase and Amylase. The doctors will also base their diagnosis in part on the pet's history and physical examination. Once pancreatitis is confirmed, time is of the essence with treatment.

Treatment will often include several days in the hospital with the pet receiving IV (intravenous) fluids to prevent dehydration. This also helps to stabilize the pet's electrolytes which can become imbalanced during a bout of pancreatitis. Often times, the pet is fasted which gives the pancreas a chance to rest from producing pancreatic enzymes. If vomiting is severe, the amount of time the pet is fasted may be extended until vomiting has ceased. Once the vomiting is under control, the pet may be started on oral medications and fed multiple small, bland meals a day. Some pets will need to stay on the bland diet for a short time while others may need to be kept on it for life.

In most cases, if the pet recovers from the acute form of pancreatitis, prognosis is good. If the problem reoccurs, the pet may need life long treatment/prevention. Chronic pancreatitis can cause such problems as diabetes mellitus and/or pancreatic insufficiency. Pets with pancreatic insufficiency will have ravenous appetites but because the nutrients are not being absorbed into the system, they will literally starve to death.

Whether acute or chronic, pancreatitis can have devastating, even fatal results for your pet. So now the question remains, how can

pancreatitis be prevented? Prevention can be as simple as keeping your pet on one, good quality diet. If a diet change is needed a slow transition is recommended. Keeping pets on a low fat diet is very important as is not feeding your pet “people food.” Animals' systems are not able to deal with french fries or pizza. They are just not able to digest such things. Try to keep garbage out of your pets' reach and make sure visitors to your home also stick to approved treats, etc.

Most importantly, do not ignore the signs of pancreatitis. Do not assume that vomiting will stop in a day or two. It does not take long for pets to become dehydrated which will compound the problem of pancreatitis. Time is one of the biggest enemies when it comes to treatment. The sooner treatment is started, the better the outcome is for your best friend.

## **Ear Care –**

Ear infections are one of the most common afflictions of cats and dogs. They can range from an ear mite infestation, to yeast or bacterial infections, to hematomas (broken blood vessels in the flap of the ear causing the flap to fill with blood). In some way or another, you have probably experienced some kind of ear problem in your pet.

Some common signs of a problem in your pet's ears may be:

- Unpleasant odor
- Excessive scratching and pawing of the ear and head
- Sensitivity to touch, often resulting in pain
- Constant tilting/shaking of the head to one side
- Black or yellowish discharge
- Redness or swelling of the ear flap or canal
- Changes in behavior like listlessness, depression or irritability
- Accumulation of dark brown wax
- Loss of balance or hearing and disorientation
- Bleeding or discharge resembling coffee grounds

If you notice any of these symptoms, you need to contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Not only can ear infections be painful, but if left untreated they can affect your pet's hearing. The earlier you catch the problem the easier it is to treat. Several recheck appointments may be required to completely heal the problem. If your pet has a persistent ear infection that does not clear up after treatment, it may be recommended that we explore other causes such as allergies. Allergies can cause similar symptoms as the common ear infection but will generally need additional testing and medications to control.

Regular cleanings at home are a great way to prevent an infection. It is also important to dry the ears out completely after baths or swimming. Even a small amount of water left behind can create a breeding ground for yeast and bacteria. Dogs with floppy ears such as Cocker Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers, Basset Hounds, etc. are more susceptible to ear infections because their ear canals are covered by their ear flaps which in turn keeps them moist and warm. Ear care is so important in keeping your pet happy and healthy. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way.



## Online Shopping –

How wonderful would it be to be able to order all of your pet's medications, shampoos, treats, or even clothing online? Now you have the opportunity to do so. We have added a new online store to our website, [www.funkstownvet.com](http://www.funkstownvet.com). The online store carries everything you need from prescription medications to kennels, from toys to pet food and it is all just a click away. Everything ordered from the online store will be shipped directly to you; some products are even free to ship! Feel free to browse the store directly from our website as you do not need to sign up to window shop.

We are hoping that by offering an online store, we will save our clients time and money. All products on the online store are also guaranteed by the manufacturer, unlike many other online stores, because our products are purchased directly from the manufacturer. Please feel free to call the office with any questions.

## Hot Spot Season –

As the weather increases in warmth and dampness, hot spots begin to show their ugly faces. Hot spots are raw areas of infection that form on the pet's skin. Allergies are a common reason for hot spots and summer is prime allergy season. Many dogs are allergic to grasses and pollen which make summer an incredibly difficult time of year. Many dogs swim in the summer or play in the sprinkler in the yard which increases the chances of hot spots. Hot spots often times develop either under the collar or under matted hair where it stays warm and moist. Taking collars off when the pet is inside can reduce the chances of a hot spot occurring. Regular grooming, especially in the case of thick coated dogs, can reduce the risk of hot spots

Some dogs, as a rule, are prone to getting hot spots no matter what the weather but some dogs are more susceptible during the warmer months. Hot spots can spread or be made more severe when the pet scratches, so prompt treatment is imperative. Some hot spots can be treated with topical medications while the more severe ones often need antibiotics to clear up. If the pet is repeatedly getting hot spots there may be a need to go further with diagnostics to figure out why; is the pet allergic to something or is there an underlying infection of the skin, etc. At the first sign of a hot spot, you should call your veterinarian for an appointment.

## Pet Insurance –

Pet health insurance has been around for many years, the oldest of which being VPI which was founded in 1980. There are numerous pet insurance companies around today and each offers different plans depending on your pet's particular needs. Some differences between pet and human insurance include:

- There is not a co-pay system. The pet owner is still expected to pay the veterinary bill in full and the insurance company will in turn reimburse the pet owner.
- The pet owner is responsible for submitting all necessary claim forms.
- You can choose between several different plans; routine, routine and emergency, or emergency only.
- Pet insurance can be used at the veterinary hospital of your choice.

Some ways that human and pet insurance are similar include:

- Pet insurance will not cover pre-existing conditions.
- There is a monthly premium for all plans.
- Pet insurance will cover certain medications, surgeries, dental cleanings, etc. although normally not in full.

The pricing and amount of coverage available will depend on the company you work with. Some plans will cover all vaccines, heartworm testing and prevention, fecal tests, flea medications, etc. Others are more specific in what kind of coverage they offer. It is best to explore all of your options before deciding on the right plan for you.

## Employee Spotlight –

We are happy to welcome Jamie Willard to our support staff of veterinary technicians. Jamie just recently joined our team but is fitting in very well with the employees and clients alike.

Prior to coming to work at AHC, Jamie worked at Emmittsburg Animal Hospital for 7 years. She has a special affinity for hounds and pitbulls. When she is not hard at work she enjoys hiking and scrapbooking. Jamie resides in Cascade with her fiancé Danny and furry family; dogs, Ike and Maddie, 4 cats, Buzz, Torran, Valley, and Peanut, and 2 cockatiels, Petey and Izzy.

We are so pleased to have Jamie as a part of our work family. She brings with her a lot of energy, knowledge, and ideas.

www.funkstownvet.com

July – Pediatrics Month  
 Wednesday July 1st – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Saturday July 4th – Independence Day – Office Closed  
 Wednesday July 8th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Saturday July 11th – Battle of Funkstown – Allow extra time for traffic  
 Wednesday July 15th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Saturday July 18th – Mudd Volleyball Tournament – Office Closed  
 Wednesday July 22nd – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday July 29th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 August – Vacation Time  
 Wednesday August 5th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday August 12th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Saturday August 15th – National Homeless Animals Day  
 Wednesday August 19th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday August 26th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 September – National Senior Pet Health Month  
 Wednesday September 2nd – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Friday September 4th – National Wildlife Day  
 Monday September 7th – Labor Day – Office Closed  
 Wednesday September 9th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday September 16th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday September 23rd – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed  
 Wednesday September 30th – Staff Meeting 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. – Office Closed



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## Calendar of Events –