

PAWPRINTS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

New Buzz on Heartworm Prevention
—Steve Dale 1

Pets Rule!
—Steve Dale 1

Joy of a Skink
—Steve Dale 1

Pets Don't Need to Suffer
—Merial 2

Safe Summer Fun with Your Pet
—AVMA 3

Assistance Dogs Lend Their Paws to Help People
—Margaret H. Bonham 4

Featured Websites 4

Welcome to the second year of PAWPRINTS. I am grateful to our sponsor, Merial, and also to the American Veterinary Medical Association for the ongoing determined commitment to reach people who have pets. I hope you find PAWPRINTS interesting and informative.

Our PAWPRINTS guarantee: *Love your pets, and they will love you back*

About the Editors

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Margaret H. Bonham – Editor. An award winning pet book author; her current titles include *The Complete Guide to Muttis*, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Labrador Retrievers* and *Introduction to Dog Agility*. She lives in Colorado, where she's 'owned' by several Alaskan Malamutes, Alaskan Huskies, a German Shepherd dog and a cat. Margaret's website: www.shadowhelm.net

New Buzz on Heartworm Prevention



By Steve Dale

Baltimore, MD. New guidelines for heartworm prevention developed by the American Heartworm Society were announced in June at the Forum of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine in Baltimore, MD. This is the annual meeting of the organization for veterinary medi-

cine specialists in neurology, oncology, cardiology and internal medicine.

One change in the Heartworm Society guidelines is that all dogs are now encouraged to be tested for heartworm annually.

Since heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes, people in communities in warm climates – where mosquitoes buzz year-round – were presumably giving their pups a preventative year-

round. Annual testing to determine if a dog had the disease seemed unnecessary since the preventatives do work. Or at least that's what everyone thought.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has received complaints from the general public that some of the products may not be working to prevent heartworm disease. Scientific studies demonstrate the

Continued on page 2

Pets Rule! New Survey Reveals Most People in America Have at Least One Pet

The pets are taking over: 63 percent of all households have at least one pet, according to the 2005-2006 American Pet Product Manufacturers Association (APPMA) National Pet Owners Survey.

The nationwide survey indicates consumers spent a record \$36 billion on all pet products and services combined in 2004, easily

doubling number spent ten years ago (\$17 billion).

"How much we spend on our pets wasn't impacted by the recent slow down in our economy and high tech problems," says Bob Vetere, chief operating officer and managing director of the APPMA, the industry trade association based in Greenwich, CT. "While science is now showing

that living with pets is good for us, perhaps we've instinctively known this all along. And 9/11 seemed give pet spending a boost, which is interesting. I'm no psychiatrist but I really believe – and the statistics show this – that since 9/11, we've needed to take comfort in our pets. In our insecure world, we feel secure with our pets. In a world of undependable people, our pets are consis-

Continued on page 3

Joy of a Skink

"I love my skinks," coos Melanie Vande Griend of Marshfield, MO. "They're personable and interactive – at least for a lizard. I mean, you don't expect them to fetch a newspaper, but they recognize me and enjoy being handled."

Melanie's husband, veterinarian Scott (a contributor to this newsletter) was turned on to



This is Annaka and Katy Vande Griend with Blue, Pinky and Pearl.

the 2 to 2 1/2-foot long lizards several years ago by a newspaper article touting them as an alternative to wildly popular but exceedingly difficult to maintain green iguanas.

"Cute as little pet store lizards, iguanas grow to be five to six feet, and love to climb – so they actually need a room of their own," says Scott.

Continued on page 4

NEW BUZZ ON HEARTWORM PREVENTION

(Continued from page 1)

products are indeed effective. So, what's going on?

Veterinary parasitologist, Dr. Jorge Guerrero, who is an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine says while it's possible mosquitoes (actually the heartworm parasite) have built some resistance, he personally feels that's unlikely. He says it's far more probable that people are missing doses. Indeed previous studies confirm this. According to a 2001 Gallup Poll of 18,000 veterinary clinics around the country, 20 per cent of dog owners forgot to give their pooch at least one dose of the monthly preventative and some stopped altogether for several consecutive months.

Still, before jumping to any conclusions, the FDA and the Heartworm Society require further data and more efficient tracking of what the public is doing.



Distribution: Worldwide
Vector: Larvae in stagnant waters like ponds and waterways; later various habitats

Heartworm is a miniscule parasite transmitted through the mouth parts of infected mosquitoes. Once settling inside a dog, the parasite develops into a six to 12-inch long spaghetti shaped worm winding around the arteries and perhaps settling in the lungs. Unprotected dogs may have dozens of these worms or even over 100. It's no wonder the dog's health is impacted. Effects may include coughing, intolerance to exercise and potentially congestive heart failure.

Another change in the guidelines is a new recommendation to use a preventative year-round, even where mosquitoes aren't prevalent for all 12 months.

Dr. Thomas Nelson, president of the American Heartworm Society, says for example, in Michigan a client hasn't used a preventative in the winter months, and then the dog throws up the preventive pill given in April without the owner realizing it, and in May the owner forgets to give the preventative, that dog could easily wind up with heart-

worm disease. However, if you're using a preventative year-round, and the dog throws up a single monthly dose or the client forgets to dose, there's considerable left over protection accumulated in the dog from all those other months the dog previously used the preventative.

Also, many of the heartworm preventatives double as protection against internal parasites, such as hookworm and roundworm. These internal parasites are a major concern, particularly roundworm because of its potential to be transmitted to people.

The American Heartworm Society is also now urgently encouraging preventatives for cats." I have no doubt that heartworm disease in cats is under-diagnosed," says Nelson. New research demonstrates that at least some cats diagnosed with feline asthma in actuality have feline heartworm disease.

Sadly, often the only symptom of heartworm in cats is often sudden death.

Learn more at www.heartwormsociety.org.

MERIAL MUSINGS

Pets Don't Need to Suffer



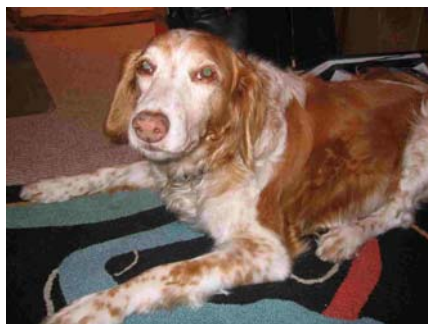
"Mikey", a 16-year old American Eskimo dog, was having a really bad day. Like millions of other dogs, he was in pain from arthritis. It hurt Mikey to jump up on the wooden deck at the back of the house. So instead of jumping up, he just laid in the shade, even though he wished he could be in the house with his people. Laying there, he dreamed of the days where he used to play fetch and chase balls tossed by his person, Gayle.

"The good news is that our pets don't need to suffer," says Dr. Daniel Aja, president of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). "At least many dogs tell us when they hurt, often times cats, birds and other kinds of pets do not. In general, any change in behavior could mean pain."

For example, a cat who misses the litter box may indeed have a behavioral problem, but that's not necessarily the case. A cat may miss the box due to abdominal pain, associating the tummy ache with the box – so the cat goes elsewhere. Or due to arthritis, a senior cat

with arthritis may simply have difficulty getting into the box.

"We often assume, well, the pet is just old," says Dr. Gary Landsberg, a veterinary behaviorist based in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. "But old age isn't a disease. For example, a pet who is acting just out of and is panting when it's not particularly hot may actually be in pain."



Your dog doesn't need to suffer; your veterinarian has medicine to help.

Aja, who has a private practice in Traverse City, MI says he recently treated a cat with an urinary tract infection whose only symptom was that he didn't want to be held. "People wouldn't typically associate reluctance to being held with bladder pain, but luckily they brought the cat to see the vet. Seeing the vet is important, not only to receive the proper pain relief, but also a diagnosis if there is a problem."

Realizing we have a nation filled with aging pets, AAHA has recently released new senior care guidelines. Included in these guidelines is a directive for veterinarians to be proactive concerning pain relief. "There is no excuse for an animal to suffer," says Aja. "It wasn't all too long ago when we felt animals don't feel pain as people do. Well, they do feel pain. And now we have an assortment of medications which can alleviate pain."

To learn more about the AAHA Senior Care Guidelines, check out www.healthypet.com.

— Scott Vande Griend, DVM and Steve Dale

FROM THE AVMA

Safe Summer Fun with Your Pets



Summertime can be a fun time for pets and their owners as the longer, warmer days lend themselves to more walks around the neighborhood, games of catch in the backyard and other enjoyable outdoor activities. To ensure that you and your pet have the most fun possible this summer, the American Veterinary Medical Association offers the following summer safety tips:

—Keep cool. If you're uncomfortable in the heat, so is your pet. Heat prostration is a cause of summer illness and even death. Temperatures inside a car with partially closed windows can climb to more than 100° F and cause death in as little as 10 minutes. Leave your pet home while running errands.

—For pets who spend a lot of time outdoors, provide a cool, shady spot (some dogs and cats can get sunburned!), plenty of water, and shelter from sudden storms.

—Beware of mosquitoes, fleas and ticks. These tiny summertime pests can cause big trouble for your pet. Mosquitoes transmit heartworm disease and West Nile virus.

Dogs and cats infected with West Nile virus mostly do not show clinical signs of the disease like people, horses, and wild birds do. Heartworm disease can cause death and is absolutely preventable. Ticks are capable of spreading serious infectious diseases, such as Lyme disease. Owners who take their pets to tick-prone areas while camping, sporting or hiking should examine their pets for ticks immediately upon returning home and remove any ticks from their pets. Of

vacation where there are ticks, consult your vet for a preventative. If your pet does get ticks, your vet can offer advice about how to remove them.

—Avoid hazardous pesticides. The spray application of pesticides and application of lawn pesticides pose summertime hazards for your pet. To limit your pet's exposure to these pesticides:

- Bring pets, pet dishes, and toys inside during mosquito spraying or application of lawn care products.
- Close windows and turn off window-unit air conditioners when spraying is taking place.
- Cover fish ponds during spraying.

Talk with your veterinarian for more summer safety tips specific to your pet. Visit www.avma.org for more information.



Summer is great fun, but watch out for overheating!

course, if you live near where ticks are, or

Pets Rule!

New Survey Reveals Most People in America Have at Least One Pet

(Continued from page 1)

tently dependable.”

That \$36 billion spent on pets in 2004 has become one of the largest sectors of the U.S. economy, exceeding the dollars spent on hardware, which is surprising considering the home improvement and make-over craze. The AP-PMA Survey reports in 2004, \$14 billion of that \$36 billion was spent on pet foods and treats, easily surpassing the dollars spent on baby food.

“That’s no surprise,” says Vetere, “We have more pets in America than babies.”

The survey also reveals about a quarter of all dog owners will buy a birthday gift for their dog. And about half that number buy a gift for a cat’s birthday. Only four percent of reptile owners buy a special birthday gift for their lizard or snake. But then, they no doubt have a dilemma about what to buy their friends with scales.

Vetere also points out that the old adage about cats and dogs feuding just isn’t true. In fact, count yourself among the trendy if you happen to have at least one cat and at least one dog living together. According to the APPMA survey, there are 43 million households with a dog

and 37 million with a cat; and 17.8 million of those have both at least one dog and at least one cat living together, presumably without necessitating the services of former president Jimmy Carter to make peace.

“It’s because of merging families coming together, say after a divorce or maybe a widow or widower,” says Vetere. “And these days, it’s love me and love my pet. So, if you take me, you have to take my cat with the package, that’s even if you happen to have a dog, a parrot, ferret, or whatever. Also, couples are getting married later.

Continued on page 4

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FEATURED WEBSITES:

American Animal Hospital Association — www.healthypet.org

AAHA Senior Care Guidelines — www.healthypet.com

American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine — www.acvim.org

American Heartworm Society — www.heartwormsociety.org

American Pet Product Manufacturers Association — www.appma.org

American Veterinary Medical Association — www.avma.org

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals — www.aspc.org

Assistance Dogs International — www.adionline.org/

Blue-Tongue Skinks — www.bluetongueskinks.net
www.bluetongueskinks.com

Canine Companions for Independence — www.cci.org

Good News for Pets — www.goodnewsforpets.com

Steve Dale’s New Site — www.petworldradio.net

Assistance Dogs Lend their Paws to Help

Tommy, the 10-year-old Keeshond champion stares into his owner’s face intently. His owner stops what she’s doing, knowing what will follow next. Karen Evasuik of Longmont, CO has learned to read her dog as much as he has learned to read her. Tommy, or Champion Twin Trees Stray Cat, is a designated seizure alert dog.

Most people recognize guide dogs for the blind – even dogs who help people in wheelchairs. But did you know that there are dogs who assist people as seizure or migraine headache alert dogs, hearing alert dogs, or even psychiatric therapy dogs?

“We were on our way to a dog show and were in a car accident,” Evasuik says. “I started

having bad migraines afterwards that were severely debilitating.” Six months after the accident, Tommy started alerting Evasuik to the migraines before they occurred. “He started waking me up in the middle of the night and I thought he had to go out, but he stood and looked at me as if to say ‘Hey, this is for you.’”

Assistance dogs can help with mundane tasks too, such as carrying things. Shilo and Tuuli are two assistance dogs who help Vicki Mitchell, a science fiction writer from Moscow, ID. Both dogs help carry items such as medicine, glasses, and other personal items for Mitchell who has a bad back, arthritis, and fibromyalgia.

“At Science Fiction conven-

tions where I have to do a lot of walking and standing around, they (the dogs) become very helpful,” says Mitchell. She found that she was in a lot of pain when she carried a backpack. Mitchell got the idea when another woman who was in a wheelchair with an assistance dog suggested she put her dogs to work. Both Shilo and Tuuli are medium-sized mixed breeds (36 and 45 pounds respectively) whom Mitchell rescued from a shelter.

“They’re both pound puppies,” she says with a smile.

— Margaret H. Bonham,
www.shadowhelm.net
www.havingfunwithagility.com

Joys of a Skink

(Continued from page 1)

“And many develop an attitude making them downright dangerous. Iguanas have very specific requirements for temperature, humidity lighting and diet.”

A single blue-tongue (they’re solitary) does fine in a 30 to 55 gallon tank. Unlike iguanas, they don’t require baths. A good size water bowl is necessary for humidity as well as a thirst quencher, and they can take a bath if they desire. An ordinary light bulb and

heat lamp or under glass heating pad are suffice.

For chow, they enjoy moist dog food (senior or low fat food is best) combined with mixed vegetables. To further vary the diet, offer small tidbits from your meals – fruits, chicken, even Gefilte fish. As adults they dine three to five days a week, but daily when they’re very young. As adults they can fast a week without food if you’re out of town.

They’re named for their bright blue tongues (they look like they’ve just had a blueberry Slurpee), which they wave as a flag when threatened. “I like to hold my skinks,” adds Melanie. “And I really do believe they enjoy the attention, at least they don’t seem to mind.”

Blue-tongues can live 20 years or more, and are generally \$75 to \$300.

— Steve Dale

Pets Rule!

(Continued from page 3)

As singles they may have had different species, and now come together with a total package of say a dog, a cat and a ferret – or whatever the combination is.”

Cats are still the most popular



Dogs are still quite popular at 74 million

pet; there are 90 million cats (an increase of 17 percent since 1998) and 74 million dogs (an increase of 18 percent since 1998).

—Steve Dale