

THE SOUTHTOWNS JOURNAL

A Quarterly Newsletter

Prepared by the staff of the Southtowns Animal Hospital

Newman, Editor-in-Chief

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SUMMER,



Rabies Is A Concern For Pet Owners In New York State

Rabies is a viral infection that affects the nervous system of mammals. It is usually transmitted by an infected animal's bite, and is almost always fatal once symptoms occur. Prompt vaccination after a bite can prevent rabies in humans. Up-to-date vaccinations of our pet animals prior to exposure can protect them against the disease.

Raccoons are the largest carrier of rabies in New York, and should always be avoided. Never feed or attract raccoons and keep trash in secure containers. Call animal control if you see a raccoon in daytime, as they are normally nocturnal animals.

Avoiding encounters with wildlife can reduce your risk of exposure. Bats, deer, skunks, foxes, and squirrels can all carry and transmit rabies. Avoid animals found dead. Beware animals acting strangely, especially wild animals that are unusually tame, aggressive or paralyzed.

If you find a wild animal such as a bat, in your home, call the NYS Department of Health, Animal Control or the SPCA. If you come in contact with a suspected rabid animal, call the Department Of Health. If the animal is in your home, confine it so that it can be tested. Post-exposure vaccinations must begin as soon as possible.

Do not think that indoor pets do not need to be vaccinated! Bats in particular can enter the home unnoticed and come into contact with our pets. If your dog or cat eats the animal in question, you may never realize your pet, and you, have been exposed to rabies.

If your pet receives any type of bite wound it is safest to bring him to the hospital for an evaluation and health Department mandated booster vaccine. Rabies is too dangerous a disease to do any less.

Congratulations!



A big round of applause goes to the winners of our 2002 National Pet Week coloring contest! We hope that Kim Michalek, Shelby O'Neill, Amy Glinski, and their pets enjoy their prizes!

CRASH! BANG! BOOM!



Does a thunderstorm send your dog under the bed to hide? Do the fireworks on Independence Day drive your pet wild? Summer time crashes and bangs can make this a very anxiety filled season for your pet, but there are things you can do to reduce your pet's distress.

Some animals are more fearful of loud noises than others, and when we see that our pet is afraid, the first thing we as humans want to do is to comfort them. Unfortunately, all that does is reinforce to the animal (dogs especially) that there is indeed something of which to be frightened.

Young pets will look to their owners for cues on how to behave when something frightens them. If you are calm during a thunderstorm or a fireworks display your pet will usually learn that there is nothing to fear. Distracting a young animal with treats or toys can help him associate loud noises with good times and help to keep him from becoming hypersensitized to them.

Older animals who are already fearful of loud sounds like firecrackers can be trained to accept them, but like any behavior modification, this takes time and effort from all members of the family. There is no quick fix.

Some pet owners have found that playing a tape or CD of a thundering rainstorm (available at nature stores) at low volume and gradually turning up the sound helps. Others will fire a child's cap gun while the pet is distracted by food or toys and bringing the noise slowly nearer can be effective. Ignoring a dog that seeks attention during a firework display can reduce anxiety over time by not reinforcing his distress.

Tranquilizers are available for severely anxious pets, but they do not work immediately, and timing is important. If you live near a park that has a firework display, and you know it starts at 10 PM, you can give tranquilizers half an hour beforehand, and will probably have good results. But, if the neighborhood kids have firecrackers, and are setting them off randomly all through late June and July, tranquilizers probably will not help. The same holds true for thunderstorms. It is hard to predict when the storm will pass through. Tranquilizers given after the fear-provoking noise has begun will not help.



So, as you can see, desensitization is the best long-term solution. Give us a call at **824-4108** if you have a pet who is sensitive to thunder or fireworks and we can try to help you before crashes, bangs and booms of summer begin.



The Technical View

By
Deborah Pawelczyk, L.V.T.

As you come into Southtowns Animal Hospital, you see many people cooperating with the veterinarian in the care of your pet. You may wonder who these people are, and how are they involved? I will address the profession of Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT), and the roles they play in caring for your pet.

Every Veterinary Technician must be licensed by the state of New York after completing the required course work, concentrated in the sciences: Anatomy, Microbiology, Radiology, Anesthesia, Lab Methods and Surgical Nursing, just to name a few. An A.A.S. degree is awarded by an accredited college. Only after graduation and passing the NYS Licensing exam can one practice in this state. Even after graduation, and all through one's career, the LVT must attend continuing education classes to keep up with current treatment practices.

That said, one might well wonder what, exactly, does an LVT do? To compare to human medicine, the best analogy would be to a Nurse Practitioner. The Veterinary Technician functions as Anesthetist, Radiologist, Surgical Assistant, Pharmacist, Lab Tech, and Nurse. So you can see, we wear a variety of "hats" These "hats" enable us, along with the Veterinarian, to help your pet in a variety of ways.

In this issue I will cover three common blood tests. These are: the Feline Leukemia Test, Feline Immunodeficiency Test and the Canine Heartworm Test. Many people may be aware that these tests require a small sample of blood, but what happens afterward may be a mystery to them. What, exactly, are the Doctor and LVT looking for? I would like to explain what each test is about and how the results are obtained. 90% of the bloodwork drawn here, including the above tests, is analyzed on site at Southtowns Animal Hospital. Only a few very complex tests are sent away to a large university diagnostic laboratory.

Feline Leukemia Virus Antigen Test This virus is passed by close contact through saliva, biting or licking, and sexual contact. It can also be carried across the placenta and affect unborn kittens. Many cats are carriers without showing symptoms. To obtain the blood sample, the kitty is first properly restrained by the Outpatient Nurse, while the LVT, using a small syringe and needle, draws approximately 3 drops of blood from a vein in the rear leg of your cat. You may hear some complaining. This is mostly due to the restraint rather than the needle. Cats won't hold a leg in the proper position for the sample to be drawn and do not hesitate to voice their displeasure.

After the sample is drawn, it is transferred to

the proper test apparatus. The test is looking for antigens in the blood that react to the presence of the FeLV virus. After 5 minutes the results are noted with a color change. The LVT can then inform you of the results. Once a cat has tested negative, a vaccine is available to protect against leukemia.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus This disease is also called feline AIDS. All cats, and kittens over 12 weeks old should be tested. FIV is transmitted through sexual contact and through bite wounds. Free roaming cats are more likely to contract FIV. An antibody test is used to react to the presence of antibodies in the cat's blood, and, as with FeLV, a color change develops that lets us know the results. Unlike Feline leukemia, there is no vaccine for FIV.

There is a combination test so that we can check for both of these diseases while drawing only one blood sample, something most cats appreciate. Since these diseases are easily contracted, it is important to test your feline friend.

It is also important to note that neither of these diseases can be passed to humans.

Canine Heartworm Test This test requires a little more blood than the feline tests listed above. Most dogs do not object to the sample being drawn, but they are required to hold still for a few seconds. Canine Heartworm Disease is transmitted from one dog to another by a mosquito bite. This test looks for the presence of enzymes attached to the dog's antibodies reacting to the presence of the adult heartworm (*Derofilaria immitus*). As before, a color change indicates a positive result. All puppies over 6 months of age and adult dogs should be tested. Once a dog is tested negative, preventative measures can be taken to ensure your dog does not contract this dangerous infestation.

I hope this has been informative and has given you a more in-depth understanding of some of the more common blood tests we perform here at Southtowns Animal Hospital. Never be embarrassed to ask us if you are not familiar with a certain test. We will be happy to explain it to you.

Your pet may get upset about having their blood drawn because they can't understand that it is for their good. Hopefully this article helped you, their caring owner to understand.

In upcoming issues I hope to discuss other aspects from a Technical Viewpoint.





ASK NEWMAN

Dear Newman,
 I am a 7 year old dog and my housemate is a 10 year old cat. Our people bring us to see you every year. Now, all of a sudden, your doctors want them to brush our teeth and have them cleaned! What gives?
 -- Old-timers in Buffalo

Dear Old-timer,

Dental care can be expensive, but we see the need for it on a daily basis here at the Hospital. In the past, veterinary care was limited to treating animals only when they were sick. But now, with preventative care, animals are living longer, healthier lives. Dental problems were often overlooked because people didn't understand the pain involved or the severity of some conditions.. Dental problems also take time to become severe, so the increasing number of animals living to a ripe old age means that we see more bad teeth.

Probably 80% of dogs and 70% of cats older than three years have some problems in the area around the teeth. This is called periodontal disease. As with humans, problems begin with the buildup of plaque, made largely of bacteria which irritate the gums, and causes gingivitis. If the plaque is removed by frequent tooth brushing, the gingivitis can go away. If not, the plaque hardens into tartar. Over time, the tartar will cause a severe gum infection, bone loss and loss of teeth.

Feeding hard food and biscuits may help, but not as much as people think. There are special diets such as Hill's t/d, and chews such as C.E.T. chews that help prevent tartar buildup, but there is no substitute for daily toothbrushing.

As for the expense, it is costly for the doctors here to clean up a really bad mouth. Years of tartar needs to be removed, and they use the same kind of instruments that your dentist uses. Often x-rays are needed to assess the extent of the work involved. An anesthetic, and the related bloodwork is a must. I don't know about other cats, but I'm not going to rinse and spit for anybody!

Brushing your pet's teeth, while a hassle, will help prevent serious mouth problems, and regular dental checks help find dental problems early.

Don't hesitate to ask to see my teeth, which are in excellent shape due to yearly cleanings here at the hospital.

--Newman



Welcome Back Doctor Edinger!

As some of you may have known, Doctor Edinger was absent from the hospital due to illness. We are happy to report that he is back in the full swing of things and feeling much better now.

IT'S A BOY!

Darlene had her baby!!
 James Robert Sciandra was born on May 17th, and tipped the scales at over 9 pounds!



Traveling With Your Pets

The RV is packed and it is time to hit the open road! Many of us like to include our pets on family vacations, and with a little advance planning, they can have a great time with us.

First, make sure that your pet is up to date on all vaccines. Hotels that accept pets and national parks will want to see proof that your pet is vaccinated, especially against rabies. Rabies tags are not proof! A certificate is usually required. If you no longer have the vaccine certificates we gave you at the time of vaccination we will gladly print you new ones for a minuscule fee. Airlines differ on the documentation they require, so check with your carrier early.

Dogs usually travel better than cats, but not always. We know a few cats who love car rides. Cats should ride in carriers, and dogs should be crated or use an approved dog seat belt. An unrestrained pet can be a danger should there be an accident.

Be sure to bring food and water, as well as a toy or two. The proper items for cleaning up messes are essential.

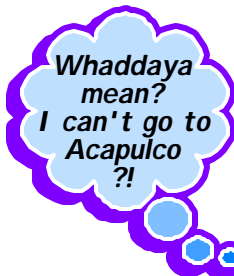
Do some research before you leave and locate emergency veterinary care along your travel route and at your destination, just in case.

Be sure to call us for enough of your pet's medications to last for the duration of your trip.

If this is the first time you are considering traveling with a pet, try a short trip first, just to see how he reacts.

If it isn't possible for you to take your pet with you, we offer climate-controlled boarding facilities right here at Southtowns Animal Hospital. All pets must be current with all vaccinations, including kennel cough for dogs, to stay with us. We would be happy to give you an estimate for you pet. Just call us at 824-4108. Certain dates

around the holidays book up quickly, so be sure to confirm your reservation early!



SOUTHTOWNS ANIMAL HOSPITAL

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Referring your freinds to our hospital is the most sincere thank-you you can give us.

THE SOUTHTOWNS JOURNAL

IN THIS EXCITING ISSUE:



Station Wagons, Ho! Travel
Tips for Your Pet



A New Feature by Licensed
Technician Debbie



Fireworks and your pet.
Reduce anxiety this summer



Rabies in New York State--
what you need to know

DITCH THE ITCH!

BUY
6 TUBES
OF
ADVANTAGE
GET ONE
FREE!



STOP FLEAS DEAD!



We love to treat your pet!