



THE SOUTHTOWNS JOURNAL

A Quarterly Newsletter

Prepared by the staff of the Southtowns Animal Hospital

Newman, Editor-in-Chief

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Happy Halloween

It is almost time for everybody's favorite treat filled holiday. As always, be sure that your pet is safe from all of the festivities. Keep chocolate treats away! A 25 pound dog can start to show signs after eating only 1/2 oz of baking chocolate, or 3 oz of Milk chocolate. As you can see, chocolate in small amounts can be toxic to some animals, and even if your treats are chocolate free, eating a lot of them can cause intestinal and stomach upset. Some dogs will even eat the wrappers, and that could potentially cause a problem. Crinkly paper can also be attractive to cats, and some cats will also ingest candy wrappers.

You may also wish to consider confining your pet while trick or treating is going on. Cats can be "spooked" by all the unusual activity and try to dash out of the door. Dogs can become over excited and bark at all the visitors, or become aggressive when all those goblins invade the home turf. Pets are best left out of the Halloween fun.

If your dog is primarily a yard or house dog, Halloween night may not be a good time for a long walk. There can be a lot more activity and traffic than your dog may be used to.

If you have any questions, or if your pet gets himself into a Halloween "trick" and eats the treats, call us at 824-4108



Good senses Are key in a physical exam

Seeing puppies and kittens come to the hospital with their new families is one of the joyful moments in veterinary practice. I was examining a kitten for a family the other day, and one of the children asked me, "What are you doing?"

I thought about it for a moment. I was examining the kitten thoroughly, but to someone unfamiliar with veterinary medicine, it might be hard to tell.

A physical exam on an animal uses all of a doctor's senses beginning with sight and smell. First I look to see how the animal sits, the condition of the haircoat and eyes. Smell can be important to detecting certain conditions. Bad breath, for example can signal many different conditions from gum disease to diabetes. Looking at the teeth and gums also can tell me things about how sick or well an animal is. Teeth should be white and tartar free, and the gums should be a healthy pink. Pale or yellowish gums can signal problems



Dr.. Ted Winkle

Handling an animal tells a veterinarian much. When I examine an animal I begin by petting the head. This lets me make friends with the animal, and I am feeling for any swellings or scabs on the head or in the ears. When I pet the animal under the chin, I am checking the lymph glands in the neck. By rubbing the sides and back of an animal a veterinarian is able to assess the body score, which indicates how thin, (or fat!) a pet is. Improper weight can lead to diseases like diabetes.

By observing how a dog or cat reacts as I move the limbs and tail, I can determine if an animal is in pain. In the wild, animals hide their signs of illness. In the wild, if you look sick, you get eaten, so we veterinarians have to be on the lookout for the very subtle symptoms of an animal in discomfort.

When I use the stethoscope, I am listening to be sure that the heart and lungs are functioning properly. An animal cannot tell me that he is having trouble breathing.

Lastly, I palpate the abdomen, which is a fancy way of saying "feel the belly". I can feel some of the internal organs, such as the liver and bladder, through the abdominal wall so I can feel for any abnormalities.

Many pets are afraid when they come to the doctor's office, so it is important to do the physical as swiftly as possible, so that stress to the animal is minimized

The most important part of the physical exam, however, involves listening. You, the caring pet owner know your animal best. Giving information to the attending veterinarian helps to round out what we find using our senses.

Should you run or walk to the vet?

Here is a simple quiz. Which one of these situations is an emergency?

- 1.) Your dog had been shaking his head for a few days, and now you notice that his ear is red and inflamed.
- 2.) While camping, your son threw a croquet ball for your dog to catch and he chipped the point off of his canine tooth. It is not bleeding.
- 3.) Your dog slipped his leash and ran into the street. A car hit him, but he is walking fine and seems normal.
- 4.) You were walking your dog and he stopped to poop. When you go to pick up the stool you see several long white worms.

Stumped? All of these situations need medical attention. The key to finding the emergency is to determine what needs immediate attention and what needs prompt attention. Let's examine these situations to see which one is the emergency.

In Example 1, the dog is certainly uncomfortable, but an ear infection is not a life-threatening condition. This dog needs to see us as soon as possible, but if his owner has to wait a day or two for an appointment due to his work schedule, no great harm will be likely. Ear infections can be painful to a dog, and left untreated can lead to conditions that will need surgical repair.

Example 2 is certainly a dramatic-looking condition. A broken tooth will probably need to have a root canal or be extracted. Left untreated a painful infection or abscess can form. There is no need to cut your vacation short, but you should make an appointment to see the doctor as soon as you get home.

When an animal is hit by a car, as in Example 3, its adrenaline levels soar, and that can mask pain and other symptoms. It may not be apparent immediately after the incident, but the dog may have internal injuries, and once back at home may go into shock, which can be life threatening without quick medical attention. Depending on the time of day, quick medical attention may mean a trip to an emergency hospital.

Worms can also be dangerous if left untreated. That said, there is no need for the dog in Example 4 to have a trip to the emergency room for a case of worms. The prescriptions we have here are very effective, and less expensive than an office call at the emergency clinic.

As you can see, there are some dramatic conditions that while care should be given as soon as possible, no extreme measured need to be taken, while an animal that seems fine may actually be in a critical condition.

Let's try another one.

- 1.) You fed your cat early in the morning, and later on she vomited partially digested food. She seems normal, and does not get sick again for the rest of the day.

2.) Your male cat is in and out of the litter box all day. He squats like he wants to eliminate, but you don't see anything. Otherwise, he seems normal.

3.) While brushing your cat you notice that she has a large sore at the base of her tail. You didn't see it before because the fur covered it up.

4.) You are trimming your cat's claws, and he is not having a good time. Just as you are about to clip a claw he squirms, and you cut the nail too short. Now he is bleeding—all over.

Do you think that this one is easier or harder than the first quiz? Just as before, all of these conditions may need prompt attention.

A cat that vomits barely digested food like the cat in Example 1, could be trying to pass a hairball. As long as no other vomiting occurs, and the cat is eating, drinking and acting normally, you are probably safe in just observing her at home. However, more bouts of vomiting, depression and lack of appetite mean that we need to see your cat as soon as possible

Example 2 is a much more serious condition. Some male cats, due to the narrowness of the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the end of the penis, called the urethra, can become blocked. This means that they can't pass any urine. Urine is full of waste products which, if not eliminated, can cause serious illness, and damage the kidneys and other organs. If the condition is not treated immediately, the bladder can even rupture.

There can be many causes for sores, from allergies to bacterial infections. The cat in Example 3 needs evaluation and treatment for comfort, but you don't have to leave work early to get her in to see us.

If you nick the vein, like the owner in Example 4, she might act like she is going to bleed to death, but this isn't usually a serious condition. By applying pressure to the cut nail, the bleeding will usually clot in 5 minutes or less. You can also apply a styptic powder or pencil. You should have us check the toe, because sometimes an infection can occur.

Of course, you are the best judge of your pet's health. It is always better to err on the side of caution if you are unsure if a condition is an emergency or not. Feel free to call us with any concerns you may have.

Important Emergency Numbers

Emergency Veterinary Hospital
(716) 839-4043

ASPCA Poison Control Hotline
(888) 426-4435

(There is a fee to use this service)

Animals in the classroom

Are you a grade school teacher? Do you have fish or a hamster in your class? The use of animals has grown since the 1980s. Teachers use animals in a variety of ways, as pets or as specimens that allow students the opportunity to observe behavior function and life cycles. Studies have found that they motivate students and help education in such things as reproduction and social interactions. They also provide a way to study environmental factors and for students to assume responsibility for animal welfare.

A study in California found that many teachers are in need of supportive resource materials to help keep the animals in their room healthy, and of ways to incorporate the animals into classroom activities.

If you are a teacher looking for effective lesson plans and other educational materials, the university of California has started a website with resources for teachers. Please go to: www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/Animal_Alternatives/main.htm

The site is growing, and the university plans to add a user friendly search template in the coming months.



Nemo's Story

The Pet Emergency Fund at Work

Meet Nemo. He is a chinchilla owned by Andy Rommel of West Seneca. He was brought to our hospital because he had an accident and hurt his leg. When Dr. Winkle examined him, he thought that his leg may be broken. He ordered X-rays, and found that the little chinchilla's leg was indeed broken, but because of the location of the break and the way the bone broke, it would not be possible to splint or put a cast on the leg. Things weren't looking good for poor Nemo.

The only way to save his life would be to amputate his leg--a surgery seldom performed on chinchillas. Thanks to the Pet Emergency Fund, Nemo was able to have his surgery, and we are happy to report that he is doing well.

He has adapted to his new circumstances, and is as active and loving to his owners as he ever was.

Nemo was able to have his surgery thanks to the donations of caring people like you. If you would like to donate to this fund, we have envelopes available here in the office at Southtowns, or you can visit the website:

<http://nfvsonline.org/emergency.html>

Or you can write for information to:

**Pet Emergency Fund
P. O. Box 2846
Buffalo, NY 14240-2846**

There are lots of creatures who will thank you for your generosity. Nemo and his owners do.

Picnic A Success Despite Rain

As always, we had a fabulous time at our annual picnic. The yearly horseshoe tournament was canceled due to the rain that day, but Dr. Winkle's mom made us Clams Casino, and that made up for it. There were lots of other goodies and a big barbecue, so you can be sure none of us left hungry.

All the dogs had a great time, especially Dr. Edinger's Labrador, Rocky, who had a great time in the pond. The people had fun too.

Newman, who does not like getting wet, remained at the hospital and had a private party that day.



HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Join us in congratulating Dr. Ted Winkle for being nominated President Elect of our West Seneca Kiwanis Club.

He and his fellow officers will take up their new duties following an installation dinner in October.



SOUTHTOWNS ANIMAL HOSPITAL

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Visit us on the web!

www.SouthtownsAnimalHospital.com

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Is your school, organization or service group looking for a charitable project? You could consider holding a fundraiser for the Pet Emergency Fund. This is a great way for Scout Troops and others to get involed in a service project that will help many animals. For more information call The Pet Emergency Fund at: 716-883-8544



The National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America has proclaimed October 13-19 as National Veterinary Technician Week! The annual event marks

the contributions of Vet Techs as members of your pet's health care team. Tell the next Tech you see what a great job she is doing and make her day!



Our Mission Statement:

To achieve excellence in the treatment and care of all pets.