



The Southtowns Journal

A Quarterly Newsletter Prepared by the Doctors and Staff of Southtowns Animal Hospital

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September Is Senior Pet Month—A Message From Dr. Winkle

Important facts about senior testing

An aging pet's organs gradually deteriorate and may lose their ability to function properly. We use senior testing to promote early detection and treatment of disease, so we can maintain health and prevent illness during your pet's senior years. Early detection of disease often gives us more effective and less costly treatment options. And senior testing helps establish normal baseline values for your pet, creating a point of comparison for the future.

What pets should take part in senior testing?

We recommend senior testing for all senior pets as well as any pet who is exhibiting one or more of the following symptoms: Weight loss or gain, increased thirst or urination, lethargy, vomiting and/or diarrhea, poor hair coat, coughing, seizures, unusual behavior, or overall decline in condition. Pets also tend to hide symptoms until they are seriously ill.

Is my pet a senior?

If your pet is 7 years old or older, we consider him or her a senior. Your pet may seem healthy well into its senior years. However, many problems common to senior pets (like kidney or heart failure) may not present symptoms until your pet becomes seriously ill. A comprehensive senior care program helps the doctors here at Southtowns detect problems early enough to institute preventive health care measures.

What is senior testing?

Your pet's complete senior testing program includes these elements:

- A physical exam is the most important part of the senior care program. Your veterinarian will assess all body systems to check for any abnormalities.
- Blood chemistry tests measure levels of various substances in the blood and diagnose diseases such as diabetes or liver and kidney failure.
- A complete blood count (CBC) provides a detailed look at the blood itself and helps the doctor diagnose anemia or infection.
- Urinalysis gives information on kidney function and checks for urinary tract infections.
- The thyroid screen (T4) helps diagnose thyroid disease, which is an especially common ailment in older cats and dogs.
- Glaucoma testing measures the pressure in each eye quickly and painlessly using a tonometer. Undetected glaucoma leads to irreversible blindness.
- Blood pressure measurement is a check for hypertension. Just as in humans, high blood pressure in pets can lead to kidney problems, heart disease, blindness and other complications.
- Radiographs (X-rays) are usually taken of the chest to assess the heart and lungs. However, it is possible that the veterinarian may decide a different set of radiographs would be more important for your pet. For example, we could recommend abdominal radiographs to assess the liver or kidneys.

I'd like my senior pet to participate. What do I do?

Call us to arrange a day for your pet to receive his or her testing. We will give you instructions should any fasting prior to testing be necessary. We prefer that your pet be admitted to the hospital by 8:30 am, and we will schedule a checkout appointment between 4 and 7:30 pm the same day to review some of the test results with you.



Back To School Considerations for Teachers and Pets in the Classroom

A classroom pet can be a great asset when teaching life sciences: building empathy and respect for living things, as well as fostering responsibility. But the learning environment can turn sour when, at the end of the school year, the classroom mascot becomes the classroom problem and must be turned over to the local animal shelter because there is no one to care for him or her.

Before bringing a live animal into your classroom, ask yourself some questions: Are live animals necessary to achieve the learning objectives I set for my students? Consider field trips to zoos and wildlife habitats or speakers with "ambassador" animals.

Can I ensure consistent, conscientious and compassionate care?

Will the animal be actively integrated into a variety of lessons?

Do any of my students have asthma or allergies that would preclude keeping certain animals?

How will I ensure the health and care of the animal during holidays, breaks, weekends, and at year's end? Every summer, shelters across the country are inundated with hamsters, mice, rabbits, gerbils, fish, guinea pigs and reptiles whose tenure as classroom pets ended unceremoniously.

What animal is best for my classroom? Learn as much as you can about a prospective pet. For example, is the animal active during the day or at night? If you wake a nocturnal animal such as a hamster, she may bite.

If you determine that a classroom pet would best meet your goals, be prepared to observe some basic guidelines. First, discuss the idea with your principal. Also discuss the animal's presence with the custodial staff and decide your respective roles and responsibilities. Check on the use of insecticides or other pest control chemicals and cleaning products that may be harmful to the animal. Realize that the ultimate responsibility for the animal is yours and includes the cost of care.

Educate your students about the animal's needs, habits and behaviors.

Integrate the animal across the spectrum of your curriculum.

Ensure that a proper habitat for the animal is constructed and maintained. Set the habitat up in a place free of drafts, harsh sunlight and high traffic.

Keep the habitat contained and clean. Determine who is responsible for the animal on weekends, breaks, holidays and summer vacations ahead of time. Be aware that many public buildings reduce heat and air conditioning after hours and on weekends.

Make provisions for evacuating the animal in case of fire or other emergency.

Be prepared to deal with the issue of death and your students' grief should the animal die.

Don't let your students learn responsibility by trial and error. When caring is an assigned duty, what is being taught? Classroom pet duties need to be a reward for proven responsibility, not a method for teaching responsibility. The learning process can be filled with mistakes and failures that ultimately lead to growth and development, but may mean suffering for a dependant animal.

With the proper research and mindset, it is possible for a classroom pet to be a richly rewarding experience for everyone involved.

If you are a teacher, and have questions about what sorts of animals make good classroom pets, feel free to call our hospital at 824-4108 and we would be more than happy to help you. If you know you are unable to have a permanent animal in your classroom, you can also call us to arrange for one of our staff to come and speak to your students on a number of animal-related topics.



Beware Over-The-Counter Flea Products

Protecting your pet from fleas and ticks is an important part of caring for your pet. Although there are many brands of over-the-counter flea and tick products available at supermarkets and pet supply stores, it is critical to read labels, and consult with your veterinarian, before using them. These products may contain ingredients that could harm pets and children.

In November 2000, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) released a report called Poisons on Pets: Health Hazards from Flea and Tick Products. The report demonstrated a link between chemicals commonly used in over-the-counter flea and tick products and serious health problems.

There are many ingredients which are found in OTC flea and tick products to be concerned about. If a product contains chlorpyrifos, dichlorvos, phosmet, tetrachlorvinphos, diazinon, or malathion, carbaryl or propoxur, one should exercise caution before using the product. According to the NRDC, the potential dangers are greatest for children and pets. There is reason to be concerned about long-term exposures as well as combined exposures from the use of other products containing these chemicals.

The NRDC's report lists flea- and tick-control products marketed under the many major brand names. To protect their pets and children, consumers should consult with a veterinarian before purchasing over-the-counter (OTC) products.

According to the NRDC, there are studies that show these ingredients can harm the nervous system. Children can be especially vulnerable because their nervous systems are still developing. For pets, the data is limited, but according to NRDC, many companion animals appear to have been injured or killed through exposure to OTC flea products. Cats are particularly vulnerable, since they often lack enzymes for metabolizing the products and can ingest them by licking their fur.

Each year, millions of Americans purchase over-the-counter flea and tick products believing that they couldn't be sold unless they were proven safe. But the EPA did not begin to review pet products for safety until 1996. There is a backlog of products to be tested, so many pet products containing potentially harmful pesticides still make their way onto store shelves. Recently, after reaching an agreement with manufacturers, the EPA announced that chlorpyrifos, also known as Dursban, would be on a fast track for a phase-out, as is diazinon.

To combat fleas, we suggest the following alternatives to Over-the-Counter flea products:

Use prescription topical products, available through veterinarians, that are insecticides designed to have fewer toxic effects on the nervous systems of mammals such as: imidacloprid (found in Advantage),

Use alternatives to pesticides to control fleas and ticks: Comb your pet regularly with a flea comb, vacuum frequently and dispose of the bags immediately after use, mow areas of the lawn where your dog spends time, wash pet bedding weekly, and wash your pet with a pesticide-free pet shampoo.

Always consult a veterinarian before buying or using any flea or tick control product on your pet.

Never use flea and tick products designed for dogs on your cat, or vice versa.

Remember never to apply pesticides to very young, elderly, pregnant, or sick animals unless directed to do so by a veterinarian.

Always read the ingredients, instructions, and warnings on the package thoroughly.

Consider using a product with insect-growth regulators (IGRs), which are not pesticides. These will prevent the next generation of fleas but will not kill insects already on your pet. Common and effective IGR products include those made with lufenuron (found in Program and Sentinel and available by prescription),

If you suspect your pet may have suffered negative health effects as a result of an OTC flea product, consult with your veterinarian immediately. If you think a child has ingested a pesticide, call your local poison control center.



Avoid Counterfeit Advantage

Bayer Health Care welcomes and applauds the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) efforts to stop the distribution and sales of counterfeit Advantage products which falsely contain EPA registration numbers and labeling. The counterfeit products are packaged in retail cartons designed to look similar to legitimate products registered with EPA.

Protecting the well-being of animals is Bayer Animal Health's first priority, and we have been working with EPA and the veterinary profession to stop counterfeiters, said John B. Payne, President of Bayer Animal Health Division. *Our policy is based on the belief that veterinarians possess the most knowledge about their clients' pets and can offer them information about the proper use of Advantage products.* Any time a product is not purchased from a licensed veterinarian there is a risk that the product is counterfeit, and may not be effective.

The company has issued warnings to non-veterinary outlets, such as internet pharmacies, catalogs, and pet stores selling counterfeit Advantage products, resulting in the removal of these products from these outlets.

EPA is advising consumers who have purchased counterfeit Advantage products not to use them and instead dispose of them in accordance with any local disposal guidelines. EPA's website, www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm has more information regarding the actions they are taking in identifying counterfeit products.

The counterfeit Advantage products were unlawfully imported and packaged in retail cartons designed to look similar to legitimately registered products. In some cases, the product applicators may not have child-resistant packaging or instructional leaflet. In addition, the consumer cannot be assured that the product dosage is correct for the animal pictured on the retail carton.

Bayer Animal Health exclusively sells Advantage flea control products through a licensed, practicing veterinarian. Consumers who purchased their Advantage from such veterinarians should not be concerned about the authenticity of the product.

According to EPA, the counterfeit packaging can be difficult to distinguish from legitimate products. To determine if the product you have purchased is legitimate, check to see if it meets the following criteria. If the product fails any one of these criteria, it most likely is an illegitimate product.

The only way to determine a legitimate Advantage product from a counterfeit product is by examining the actual applicator tubes that are inside the carton. Check the language that is printed on the applicator tubes. The legitimate Advantage products all contain applicator tubes that are printed in English. The most obvious sign of a counterfeit product is that the applicator tubes are printed in a foreign language.

The legitimate applicator tubes include EPA Registration Number, the signal word WARNING, and the child hazard warning (Keep Out of Reach of Children). Counterfeit applicator tubes may lack this information.

Legitimate applicator tubes will also include a reference statement that refers users to the main labeling for directions for use and will include the manufacturing company's name (Bayer). Counterfeit applicator tubes may lack this information.

Legitimate applicator tubes will contain an active ingredient statement that agrees with the active ingredient statement on the retail carton (9.1% imidacloprid). A counterfeit product may have an active ingredient statement that differs (such as 10%).

For further information or to report counterfeit products, consumers can go to www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm. Consumers can also call Bayer's Customer Care Center at 1-866-459-3771 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Standard Time, Monday through Friday.

Pet owners should be aware that Advantage purchased anywhere other than a licensed, practicing veterinarian is not guaranteed to work, and there is no legal recourse should an adverse reaction occur.



Annual Picnic A Big Success

This year's staff picnic was, as always, a wonderful event. Everyone brought their usual specialty dish, like German Potato Salad and yummy Baked Beans. There were also some new treats, like Lasagne this year. Did we say yummy already?

All of our kids and dogs were there too, having a grand time, on a perfect day for Picnicking. The only thing we forgot was a Watermelon! Oh well, there is always next year.



Ask Newman

Dear Newman,

Hi! My name is Virginia, I'm six years old and I have a kitty named Pumpkin. I have to have my tonsils out soon and I want to know if my kitty has tonsils too. My mom says you will know.

Dear Virginia,

Yes, Virginia, kitties do have tonsils, but kitties don't have their tonsils out unless they are very, very sick.

Dogs have tonsils too, and some kinds of dogs with pushed in noses have trouble breathing because the tonsils are in the way, just like some people do. Sometimes a dog will have to have his tonsils out, but it is also very, very rare.

Of course, not having to have my tonsils out is why it is so cool to be a cat...

And by the way, good luck with your tonsils, Virginia, I know you will be just fine.

Newman



Fun Fall Factoids

The average life of a Major League baseball is only 5-7 pitches.

Men are six times more likely to be struck by lightning than women.



Some Advice For Pet-Friendly Renting

Give yourself enough time. Nobody likes the hassles involved with moving, much less finding rental housing that accepts pets. If you are renting now, start to check ads and contact real estate agents and rental agencies at least six weeks before your lease expires.

Understand why so many landlords reject pets. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. They may have had bad experiences with irresponsible pet owners who didn't pick up their feces, sneaked pets in, or left ruined carpets and drapes when they moved out. They may be worried about complaints from neighbors about barking dogs and wonder how they are going to deal effectively with pet owners if problems arise. All these concerns are legitimate.

That's why people looking to rent must be able to sell themselves as responsible pet owners, who are committed to providing responsible pet care and being responsible neighbors.

Make use of available resources. Contact the humane society serving the area into which you are moving; they may be able to provide you with a list of landlords that allow pets. If you know any real estate agents, ask them for leads.

Look for a community apartment guidebook at the supermarket or near newspaper distribution boxes on the street. The guide may indicate which apartment communities allow pets and may list any restrictions, such as species allowed or weight limits. In addition, be sure to check local newspapers.

Recognize that it may be futile to try to sell yourself and your pet to a large rental community with a no-pets policy. You're more likely to be successful if you focus on places that allow most pets, allow certain pets (for example, cats or dogs weighing less than 20 pounds), or that don't say, "Sorry, no pets." Individual home and condominium owners may be easiest to persuade. Ideally, look for a community with appropriate pet-keeping guidelines that specify resident obligations. That's the kind of place that's ideal for pet owners because you'll know that other pet care givers there also are committed to being responsible residents.

Gather proof that you're responsible. The more documentation you can provide showing your conscientiousness as a pet owner, the more convincing your appeal will be to your future landlord.

Compile the following documents: 1.) A letter of reference from your current landlord verifying that you are a responsible pet owner. 2.) Written proof that your adult dog has completed a training class, or that your puppy is enrolled in one.

Make your request to the individual or group with the ultimate authority to grant your request. Usually this will be the owner of the house or apartment. The owner may, however, delegate the decision to a property manager or resident manager.

If you encounter a no-pets policy, ask if it is the result of a negative experience with a previous resident. Addressing your landlord's prior experience may show you how to present your own request most effectively.

Let the landlord know that you share any concerns about cleanliness. Point out that your pet is house trained or litter-box trained. Emphasize that you always clean up after your dog outdoors and that you always properly dispose of your pet's waste.

Promote yourself. Responsible pet owners make excellent residents. Because they must search harder for a place to live, pet care givers are more likely to stay put. Lower vacancy rates mean lower costs and fewer headaches for landlords and real estate agents. Let prospective landlords know that you understand that living with a companion animal is a privilege, not a right.

Offer to bring your pet to meet the owner or property manager, or invite the landlord to visit you and your pet in your current home. A freshly groomed, well-behaved pet will speak volumes. Emphasize that the same pride you take in caring for your pet extends to taking care of your home. Many landlords are concerned about fleas, so be sure to let your prospective landlord know that you maintain an active flea-control program for your pet and home.

Make it clear to the landlord, manager, or condominium board that you keep your cat inside and your dog under control at all times and that you understand the health and safety benefits of doing so.

Tell your prospective landlord or resident manager that you are willing to pay an extra security deposit to cover any damages your pet might make to the property. You may be required to pay a pet deposit, some or all of which may be non-refundable. Be sure to discuss deposits and monthly pet-related fees in advance.

Once you have been given permission by a landlord, manager, or condominium committee to have a pet, be sure to get it in writing. Sign a pet addendum to your rental agreement. Comprehensive agreements protect people, property, and the pets themselves. Request a copy of any house rules pertaining to pets. Let the landlord know that you will abide by the rules.

Be honest. Don't try to sneak your pet in. Keeping an animal in violation of a no-pets rule contributes to the general inclination of landlords not to allow pets. You also may be subject to possible eviction or other legal action.



Happy Halloween and Thanksgiving From The Southtowns Team

Halloween and Thanksgiving mean the beginning of the holiday season, and we always want you to keep your pet's safety in mind. It is easy, with all the busy bustle of company, to forget and leave a big bowl of candy in reach of a pet.

Dogs and cats can also be very excited or frightened by trick-or-treaters, guests, and the changes in routine that happen at these holidays, especially new or very young pets.

Be sure to let visiting family know what your pet is allowed to have for a treat, and keep the table scraps and bones away. Many older relatives insist that it is just fine for animals to have bones and scraps.

Trash and wrappers should also be kept out of our pets reach. Kitties in particular can chew and swallow ribbon or candy papers.

The Doctors and staff of Southtowns Animal Hospital want everyone to remain well and healthy as the holidays roll around again.