



The Southtowns Journal

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

Volume VII Number 2

Autumn 2007



WELCOME DR. CUNNINGHAM!

Dr. Virginia Cunningham, DVM, was born and raised in Charlottesville, Virginia, and received her Bachelor's Degree in Animal and Poultry Science from Virginia Tech. She received her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Cunningham's interest in emergency medicine and the critical care of seriously ill patients started just after college while working at the local after-hours clinic in her hometown.

About herself she says: "I like to help the sick ones. Nothing is better than being able to help a sick dog wag its tail again, or to have an injured cat purr." She also has an interest in, and is studying alternative medicine

Dr. Cunningham lives with her cats Bili, Spot, Tucker, and Diane (aka "Princess"). In her spare time she enjoys Tai Chi, eating chocolate, and snuggling with her dogs, Manny and Holly.



Join The Festivities!

**Doctor Ted Winkle
And The Entire Staff
Cordially Invite You
To Our First
Southtowns Animal Hospital
Pet Fair**

Saturday, September 8th
10:00 am Til 4:00 pm
Pets Welcome!

Dog Wash

Call the Hospital at 824-4108 to sign up

Tour the Hospital

Chinese Auction

To Benefit Animal Birth Control

Door Prizes!

See our new Dog Park

Refreshments

To Benefit Ten Lives Club



Fuzzy Humor

What do you get when you cross a black cat with a lemon?

A sour-puss.

Why did the cowboy adopt a dachshund? Everyone kept telling him to get a long, little doggie.

What kind of cats like to go bowling?

Alley cats.

What do you get if you cross a cantaloupe with Lassie?

A mellon-collie baby.



September is Senior Pet Month

Thanks to advances in veterinary medicine, pets are living longer than ever before. However, with this increased lifespan comes an increase in ailments that can afflict senior pets. As pets reach the golden years, there are a variety of conditions that they can face, including weight and mobility changes; osteoarthritis; kidney, heart, and liver disease; tumors and cancers; and hormone disorders such as diabetes and thyroid imbalance. Just as the health care needs of humans change as we age, the same applies to pets.

When is a pet considered a senior? Generally, smaller breeds of dogs live longer than larger breeds, and cats live longer than dogs. Some small dog breeds may be considered senior at 10-13 years, while giant breeds are classified as seniors at ages as young as five. Beyond that, the life span will vary with each individual.

Scheduling regular examinations is one of the most important steps pet owners can take to keep their pets in tip-top shape. When dogs and cats enter the senior years, these health examinations are more important than ever. Senior care is needed to catch and delay the onset or progress of disease and for the early detection of problems. The Doctors at Southtowns Animal Hospital recommend that healthy senior dogs and cats visit the hospital every six months for a complete exam and laboratory testing. Remember that every year for a dog or cat is equivalent to 5-7 human years. In order to stay current with your senior pet's health care, twice-a-year exams are a must.

With the senior years comes a general "slowing down" in pets. As their major senses dull, you may find that your pet has a slower response to sounds, sights, and scents. Pets may also be affected mentally as they age. This loss of sensory perception often is a slow, progressive process, and it may even escape your notice. The best remedy for gradual sensory reduction is to keep your pet active*playing and training are excellent ways to keep their senses sharp.

The physical changes your pets experience are generally easier to spot than the sensory changes. Most of these changes are rather subtle and can be addressed in a proactive manner. Regular senior health exams can help catch and treat these problems before they control your pet's life. It is crucial to contact us promptly if you notice a significant change in behavior or condition of your pet.

It is tempting to think of these changes in behavior or activity as "just old age". This is not always the case. Many of these changes are symptoms of diseases that can and should be treated for the health and comfort of your pet.

Many older pets benefit from food that is designed with older bodies in mind. Obesity in pets is often the result of reduced exercise and overfeeding and is a risk factor for problems such as heart disease. These special foods can help keep your pet's weight under control and reduce consumption of nutrients that are risk factors for the development of diseases, as well as organ- or age-related changes.

Exercise is yet another aspect of preventive geriatric care for your pets. You should definitely keep them going as they get older*if they are cooped up or kept lying down, their bodies will deteriorate much more quickly. You may want to ease up a bit on the exercise with an arthritic or debilitated cat or dog. Otherwise, you should keep them as active*mentally and physically*as possible in order to keep them sharp.

To help ensure your pet lives comfortably during the senior life stage, it's critical to tailor a senior wellness plan that is best for your dog or cat. Be sure to monitor behavior and physical conditions and report anything unusual so we can help your pet head into the twilight years with ease.



Yummy Yummy Yummy Annual Staff Picnic

Our picnic this year was a wonderful day. Not only do we all work together, we play together too, and we hope that shows in the care we give your animal companions.

Staff, family, kids and pets all had a great day. We all enjoy showing off our special culinary creations, and sampling new dishes when new members join the team. Our staff has grown with our recent expansion, so we can't even begin to list the dishes served. You will have to take our word for it that everything was delicious!



Cat Scratch Disease

Cat scratch disease (CSD) is a bacterial disease caused by *Bartonella henselae*. Most people with CSD have been bitten or scratched by a cat and developed a mild infection at the point of injury. Lymph nodes, especially those around the head, neck, and upper limbs, become swollen. Additionally, a person with CSD may experience fever, headache, fatigue, and a poor appetite. Rare complications of *B. henselae* infection are bacillary angiomatosis and Parinaud's oculolabial syndrome.

Most people get CSD from cat bites and scratches. Kittens are more likely to be infected and to pass the bacterium to people. About 40% of cats carry *B. henselae* at some time in their lives. Cats that carry *B. henselae* do not show any signs of illness; therefore, you cannot tell which cats can spread the disease to you. People with immunocompromised conditions, such as those undergoing immunosuppressive treatments for cancer, organ transplant patients, and people with HIV/AIDS, are more likely than others to have complications of CSD. Although *B. henselae* has been found in fleas, so far there is no evidence that a bite from an infected flea can give you CSD.

You can reduce the risk of getting cat scratch disease by avoiding "rough play" with cats, especially kittens. This includes any activity that may lead to cat scratches and bites. Wash cat bites and scratches immediately and thoroughly with running water and soap. Do not allow cats to lick open wounds that you may have. Control fleas.

Any bite or scratch from a cat can develop an infection, even if the cat does not have *Bartonella*. Always wash wounds with plenty of soap and warm water and contact your physician promptly.



Questions and Answers about Leptospirosis

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by bacteria called leptospire. It can affect humans as well as many wild and domestic animals, including dogs. In people, the symptoms are often like the flu, but sometimes can develop into a severe, life-threatening illness with infections in the kidney, liver, brain, lung, and heart. Leptospirosis has been diagnosed more frequently in the past few years. We want you to be able to protect yourself and your pets from contracting this illness

How do people and animals get leptospirosis?

The bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and can survive there for weeks to months. Humans and animals can become infected through contact with this contaminated urine, water, or soil. The bacteria can enter the body through skin or mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose, or mouth. Drinking contaminated water can also cause infection. Infected wild animals, such as rats, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, opossums, or deer may continue to excrete the bacteria into the environment continuously or every once in a while for a few months up

to several years. Because of increased building and development into areas that were previously rural, pets may be exposed to more wildlife that are infected with leptospirosis.

How can I prevent leptospirosis in my pet?

Keep rodent problems (rats, mice, or other animal pests) under control. Rodents can carry and spread the bacteria.

Get your pet vaccinated against leptospirosis. The vaccine does not provide 100% protection. This is because there are many strains (types) of leptospires, and the vaccine does not provide immunity against all strains. It is important to get your pet vaccinated again even if it gets leptospirosis because it can still get infected with a different strain.

What are the signs of leptospirosis in pets?

The clinical signs of leptospirosis vary and are nonspecific. Sometimes pets do not have any symptoms. Common clinical signs reported in dogs include fever, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, refusal to eat, severe weakness and depression, jaundice, stiffness, severe muscle pain, or inability to have puppies.

What should I do if I think my pet has leptospirosis?

Contact us immediately. We will want to run bloodwork to check your pet's liver and kidney values, and we will want to send samples to a laboratory that can perform tests to detect the presence of leptospiral antibodies or organisms in your pet. It takes a week for the results of these tests, so we will begin treatment for potential liver or kidney failure right away. Timely treatment is essential if a pet is to recover from this illness.

Is there a treatment for leptospirosis in pet animals?

Yes, leptospirosis is treatable with antibiotics. If an animal is treated early, it may recover more rapidly and any organ damage may be less severe. Other treatment methods, such as dialysis and hydration therapy may be required.

The time between exposure to the bacteria and development of disease is usually 5 to 14 days, but can be as short as a few days or as long as 30 days or more.

What should I do if I have been told my pet has leptospirosis?

Once we have confirmed leptospirosis infection in your pet, the appropriate action to take will depend on the nature of contact with your pet. Normal daily activities with your pet will not put you at high risk for leptospirosis infection. Types of contacts that are considered to be high risk include direct or indirect contact with urine, blood, and tissues of your pet during its infection. Assisting in the delivery of newborns from an infected animal is also considered a high-risk activity for transmission of leptospirosis.

If you have had contact with your pet during the time of its infection, inform your physician. If common symptoms, such as fever, muscle aches, and headaches, occur within 3 weeks after a high-risk exposure, see your physician. Tests can be performed to see if you have this disease.

How can I protect myself and other people when my pet has leptospirosis?

Do not handle or come in contact with urine, blood, or tissues from your infected pet before it has received proper treatment.

If you need to have contact with animal tissues or urine, wear protective clothing, such as gloves and boots.

As a general rule, always wash your hands after handling your pet or anything that might have your pet's excrement on it.

If you are cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated or have urine from an infected pet on them, use an antibacterial cleaning solution or a solution of 1 part household bleach in 10 parts water.

Make sure that your infected pet takes all of its medicine.

Signs of a Problem

Sustained, significant increase in water consumption or urination

Sudden weight loss or gain

Significant decrease in appetite or failure to eat for more than 24 hours

Significant increase in appetite

Repeated vomiting

Diarrhea lasting over three days

Difficulty in passing stool or urine

Change in housebreaking

Lameness lasting more than five days or lameness in more than one leg

Noticeable decrease in vision

Open sores or scabs on the skin that persist for more than one week

Foul mouth odor or drooling that lasts more than two days

Increasing size of the abdomen

Increasing inactivity or amount of time spent sleeping

Hair loss, especially if accompanied by scratching or if in specific areas

Excessive panting

Inability to chew dry food

Blood in stool or urine

Sudden collapse or bout of weakness

A seizure (convulsion)

Persistent coughing or gagging

Breathing heavily or rapidly at rest

If Your pet exhibits any of these signs or symptoms, please call our hospital at 824-4108 for an appointment.

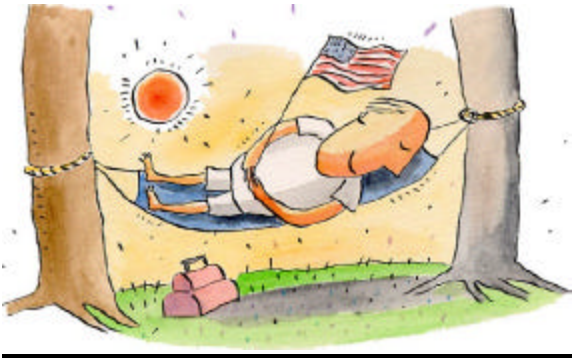


The end of summer

in Western New York does NOT mean the Fleas and Mosquitos go on vacation.

Keep your pets on Flea and Heartworm Preventive

All year round!



**The Doctors and Staff
(and Newman)
wish you all
A very happy
Labor Day!**