



# The Southtowns Journal

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

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## **February Is Dental Health Month**

During National Pet Dental Health Month, we want to remind pet owners of the dangers of poor pet dental care. Because dogs and cats can't brush their own teeth, it's up to their owners to ensure their beloved pets get the oral care they need.

Trouble begins when food particles and bacteria build up in the mouth to form plaque and tartar on the teeth, which leads to gingivitis and severe periodontal disease. Periodontal disease leads to tooth decay, bad breath, bleeding gums, and, in severe cases, tooth loss.

Even more complications arise when the bacteria that cause periodontal disease travel into a pet's bloodstream, possibly resulting in damage to the heart, liver, kidneys and lungs.

To prevent serious health problems caused by poor oral health, pet owners can follow a few simple guidelines suggested by the American Veterinary Dental Society:

Take your pet to the veterinarian for a dental exam. Your pet should have a thorough physical exam, including examination of the teeth and gums, at least once a year. If plaque and tartar buildup is evident, we may recommend a dental cleaning. You can call us at 824-4108 to schedule an appointment.

Start a home dental care routine. Our veterinarians and nurses can suggest an at-home regimen that may include nutritional supplements and brushing your pet's teeth.

Monitor your pet's oral health by scheduling checkups with your veterinarian. Regular dental cleanings may be recommended.

By following these easy steps and making dental care a priority not just during February, but all year long pet owners can help prevent periodontal disease, ensuring a lifetime of healthy smiles for their pets. For more information on pet dental care and National Pet Dental Health Month, visit [www.petdental.com](http://www.petdental.com).



## **Things They Are A-Changin'—A message from Doctor Winkle**

Southtowns Animal Hospital is growing. We have added our new doctors to serve you better, and now it is time for us to grow in other ways.

Beginning this winter, we are expanding to provide your pets with better care. We will be adding more exam rooms, updating our treatment center, adding new boarding facilities and hospital wards.

For the comfort of the human half of the pet equation, we will be updating our reception area and waiting room.

As with any growth, there may be growing pains. We hope to have the construction completed by the spring of 2006. We ask for your patience as we expand, and we know you will join us in enjoying the result.

If any of our efforts to improve cause inconvenience, we do apologize.



## **Time For The New Year Neck Check**

Proper identification could mean the difference between life and death for your dog or cat. Approximately 15 million dogs and 10 million cats enter shelters throughout the United States each year as strays, according to the American Humane Society.

Tragically, only 19 % of the dogs and 3 % of the cats are ever returned to their owners. These percentages would increase dramatically if more pets were properly identified.

All pets, including indoor dogs and cats, need to wear collars with city licenses and rabies vaccination tags. Personal identification tags with the owner's name, address and telephone number are important back-ups. Special cat collars with elastic sewn into the band are available to protect cats from being caught in trees or on fences.

We offer permanent microchips to be implanted in your pet, in case your dog or cat ever slips from or loses his collar and tags. This can be done in the office, or during any routine surgical procedure.

Even the most responsible owners experience unexpected circumstances which cause pets to accidentally stray, becoming lost or injured.

Please, for your pets' sake, show you care by properly identifying them. Keep that identification up to date...even a microchip is useless if the phone number and address attached to it is incorrect. Be sure all information is readable.

Check buckles for wear and tear.

Your pet's life could depend on it.



## **New Year's Resolutions For Dogs**

Try to understand that the cat is from Venus, and I am from Mars.

I will no longer be beholden to the sound of the can opener.

Take time from busy schedule to stop and smell the behinds.

Always scoot before licking.

Grow opposable thumb; break into pantry; decide for MYSELF how much food is \*too\* much.

January 1st: Kill the sock! Must kill the sock! January 2nd - December 31st: Re-live victory over the sock.

I will NOT chase the damned stick unless I see it LEAVE HIS HAND.



## New Year's Resolutions For Dogs

I will not puff my entire body to twice its size for no reason after my human has finished watching a horror movie.

I will not use the bathtub to store live mice for late-night snacks.

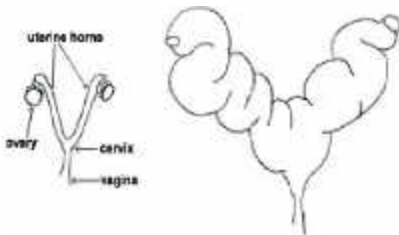
Screaming at the can of food will not make it open itself.

If I bite the cactus, it will bite back.

I will not play "dead cat on the stairs" while people are trying to bring in groceries or laundry.

I will learn to relax at the vet's office so they will start writing things in my records like "Good Kitty" instead of the stuff that's there now like "MEAN!! GET HELP!!!!!!"

A warm pepperoni pizza is not a good place for a nap.



Normal Uterus

Uterus with pyometra

## The Importance of Spaying Your Pet

Many times here at Southtowns Animal Hospital we see an unspayed cat or dog or cat, and we urge the owner to have the surgery done as soon as possible. Not only does this prevent unwanted puppies and kittens from being born, but also it prevents that animal from developing a severe uterine infection, called a pyometra. These infections end up being fatal if not treated.

The only treatment for this condition is to perform an emergency ovariohysterectomy to remove the pus filled uterus and its ovaries. The ovaries are removed so that they do not continue to produce hormones that cause the dog or cat to come into heat. Also, (There is always a small stump of uterine tissue left behind after a spay surgery, and the action of the hormones on that tissue can cause a second infection.)

Even though the pyometra surgery is essentially a spay surgery, it is much more complicated than a routine spay. The uterus is five to ten times larger than it should be, and since it is full of pus, there is a risk of rupture. Should this occur, the pus and bacteria in the uterus could infect the entire abdominal cavity, causing a condition called peritonitis. This causes the entire body to become severely infected. The animal can go into shock and die.

The pyometra surgery is also a greater risk than the normal spay surgery because the animal is sick before we begin. The patient needs to be placed on antibiotics before the surgery. They are also hospitalized before and after the procedure because they need to stay on intravenous fluids to maintain their blood pressure and keep them hydrated. The extra fluids also help to flush toxins from the infection out of the bodies.

Depending on how sick the animal is by the time a diagnosis is made, there is a chance that some animals may not make it through the surgery.

Some of the signs of a pyometra are: loss of appetite, increased thirst and urination, and vomiting. Sometimes there is a smelly vaginal discharge. This is a painful condition, and animals will often show they are in pain by not moving around as much. In a few cases, there are no clinical signs at all, and the animal goes into shock and suddenly dies.

If the doctor suspects that an animal has a pyometra, the only way to make a sure diagnosis is to run bloodwork and take X-rays. Bloodwork allows the doctor to detect elevated levels of white blood cells, which indicates an infection. It also enables us to find out if the pet is becoming anemic, or if the infection is affecting the animals other organs. X-rays can detect a massively huge uterus. Sometimes the doctor can even see how other organs are being pushed out of their normal positions by the pus-filled uterus.

Pyometra can be prevented by simply spaying the animal. If there is no uterus, there can be no life-threatening infection. We understand that cost is often a factor in delaying having an animal spayed\*but the cost of a pyometra surgery is much higher, both in terms of money and in risk.



## Take Care At The Holidays

While you are busy making your festive plans for Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year, please don't forget to include your pets. The holidays are a time for giving, but there are some things you should not share with your little best friends. Once you know the hazards, a little precaution and prevention will make holidays a happy time for everyone.

Some of the more common holiday hazards include:

**Bones:** The holiday turkey or chicken will leave a lot of tantalizing bones, but don't feed them to your pet. Beware of ham, steak, and soup bones, too. Small bones or bone chips can lodge in the throat, stomach, and intestinal tract. Remember...NO BONES!!

**Fat:** Those wonderful potato latkes (watch the hot oil!), gravies, and poultry skin can cause severe gastrointestinal upset as well.

**Holiday plants:** Holly and mistletoe are extremely poisonous when eaten. The lovely poinsettia may not be truly poisonous, but its milky white sap and leaves can certainly cause severe gastric distress. With so many hybrid varieties available each year, the best approach is to keep the plants out of your pet's reach.

**Electrical cords:** Holiday lights mean more electrical cords for kittens and puppies to chew. Be sure you have cords secured and out of the way. Also keep in mind that bunnies and ferrets are very clever at finding even hidden cords...watch the pocket pets!

**Candles:** Lighted candles should never be left unattended and that is even more important if left at kitty's eye level or within puppy's chewing zone. An exuberant tail, a swat of a paw, and candles and hot wax can quickly become disastrous. Anchor candles securely and away from curious faces, feet and tails.

**Pine needles:** Check around holiday trees and boughs frequently. Ingested pine needles can puncture your pet's intestines if sharp enough.

**Holiday tree:** Make sure your tree is well secured. If you have a tree-climbing cat or large dog with a happy tail, anchor the tree to the wall, using strong cord or rope. Preservatives often used in the water in a tree stand can cause gastric upsets, so be sure it is inaccessible or not used. Avoid sugar and aspirin additives in the water as well.

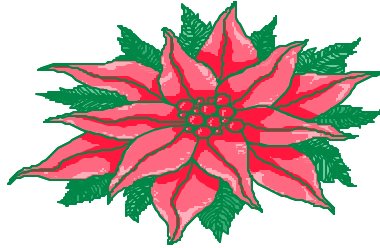
**Ornaments:** Sharp or breakable ornaments, dreidels, and even aluminum foil should be kept out of reach. String objects, especially tinsel and ribbons, are to be safeguarded at all costs. They are thin and sharp and can wrap around intestines or ball up in the stomach.

**Stress and company:** With everyone coming and going, watch out for open doors and sneaky pets. Make sure your pets have collars and tags on in case of escape. A microchip is safe and effective. Ask guests to keep an eye out for pets under foot and remind them that sometimes your normally friendly dog or cat may be less than willing to deal with enthusiastic children and rooms full of unfamiliar people. Provide a special quiet place with a blanket and fresh water for your pets to retreat to when the festivities get too stressful.



As a pet owner, you love your animal companions and want to do what's best for them. Once again, Southtowns will be offering low cost spays and neuters during Spay Week February 27 - March 3. Space is limited, so be sure to book your appointment early at 824-4108. These surgeries are only available on a first come first serve basis.

Happy Holidays from the Doctors and Staff



Of Southtowns Animal Hospital