

# Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

July, 2010

## Welcome

This July we are discussing small mammals, or pocket pets. These pets are considered “exotic” because a doctor wishing to treat these animals must take a specialized track in veterinary school. They are not seen as often as dogs and cats in veterinary medicine, although this is changing. Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff at (630) 365-9599, or you can contact us via email at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).

## Safety First

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is right around the corner! The following tips can help keep your pet safe during this exciting holiday.

- Leave pets at home. No matter how tempted you are to include family pets in celebrations, don't. Even very calm, placid animals can become incredibly frightened when confronted with noise, crowds and unfamiliar territory. Pets may unexpectedly bite or run off.
- Don't ever leave your pet in a parked car, even in mild weather. They may become extremely fearful, even destructive, during fireworks displays, or even in crowded parking areas, and exhibit unusual behavior, including biting. Even if your pet does not do this, there is not enough air flow inside a parked car to prevent heat stress in pets, even with the windows open. Normal temperatures can reach the 90-120F in a matter of minutes when outside temperatures are in the mid 70s.
- Keep your pet confined inside the house, in a kennel if need be. Many pets are frightened of loud noises, and being confined in a “safe zone” can reduce the tension they feel. Confining your pet in this manner also helps keep him from injuring himself during panicky moments. This is especially helpful if you are not available to calm your pet during the fireworks.
- If your pet becomes extremely agitated during thunderstorms or other loud times, you may



consider additional means to calm him. Here we have two products that can help. One is herbal and does not give a sedative effect, but helps the pet manage his fearfulness better. The other is a



sedative and is used for more severe cases. These options are usually considered for pets who cannot be safely crated.

- Never leave alcoholic beverages within your pet's reach. Small amounts of alcohol are enough to severely affect companion animals, and may cause coma or death in sufficient quantities.

- Keep poisonous “party” items away from pets. These include citronella products, other insect repellants, matches, lighter fluid, and glow jewelry. Some of these products can cause serious injury, especially if ingested. If you suspect your pet has ingested or come in contact with any of these chemicals, please call ASPCA Poison Control at (888) 426-4435 (there is a fee involved).

## July: Pocket Pets Month

Exotic small mammals are interesting creatures and often have engaging personalities. Some pocket pets become bonded to their caregiver, while other types are kept more for viewing pleasure. Either way, these little guys need regular veterinary care just like the more traditional pets, dogs and cats. Following is a partial list of the exotic small mammals we regularly see at the clinic, a few facts about each type, and some information on common illnesses and injuries seen.

- Rabbits: Bunnies are a type of exotic mammal often seen here at Elburn Animal Hospital. There are over 50 different breeds of rabbit recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA), but the most common ones



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found in the pet trade are the Netherland Dwarf, the Mini Lop, and the Mini Rex. Pet rabbits range in size from 2 to 20 pounds depending on the breed. They live an average of 6 to 10 years. Many pet rabbits can be litterbox trained, and some may even learn tricks! Rabbits are active and many like to engage in play with their household members. Common injuries and illness we see in pet rabbits include malocclusion of the teeth, ileus (when the stomach is not moving food through the gut), pasteurella, spinal injuries (from improper handling) and heat stroke. Special note: Rabbits are not actually rodents, but belong to a distinct order of mammals called Lagomorpha.

- Ferrets: These mammals belonging to the weasel family, are closely related to the polecat, and have



been living with humans for over 2500 years. They were originally used for hunting vermin and small game. The ferrets found in the pet trade are Marshall ferrets. These average 1.5 to 4 pounds, with males being

larger than females. They live approximately 7 to 10 years. Ferrets are susceptible to several common diseases, such as human influenza, canine distemper, Aleutian disease, lymphoma, cancer of the adrenal glands, and insulinoma. This is the only exotic small mammal required to receive a vaccination against rabies. Special Note: In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was illegal to keep ferrets in England – unless you were rich!

- Guinea Pigs: Also called cavy, these rodents were domesticated in the Andes Mountain region of South America as early as 5000 B.C. They now come in many different colors and the ARBA recognizes 13 separate breeds. They usually weigh



between 2 and 2.5 pounds at maturity, and live 5-7 years on average. Guinea pigs are social, vocal creatures that may learn to respond to verbal such as a name, or even the refrigerator door opening! Some common illnesses and injuries seen in guinea pigs include malocclusion of the teeth, mite infestation, heat stroke, scurvy, respiratory infections, bumblefoot (sores on the feet) and obesity. Special Note: Guinea pigs were not only used as food in the Andes, but were also revered as deities!

- Chinchillas: These rodents are from high mountainous regions of the Andes. They are best adapted to colder temperatures and may in fact suffer heatstroke if kept at temperatures above 80F. Chinchillas are known for their soft fur



worldwide, but as pets they are known for their inquisitive, sensitive nature and bouncy activity. They appreciate room to exercise, play and interact with their family. Chinchillas are medium-sized rodents that look heavier due to their thick fur. They generally live 10-15 years. The most common illnesses and injuries we see in chinchillas are heat intolerance or heatstroke, malocclusion of the teeth, hair loss due to skin parasites, constipation, respiratory infections, bloat (twisting of the stomach), and a condition called "hair ring," in which hair gets trapped around the penis, cutting off blood supply and causing severe pain with a high risk of infection. Special Note: Because of their exceptionally thick fur, chinchillas do not swim!

- Rats: Rats have been much-maligned throughout history, but pet rats tend to be friendly and outgoing. Due to



inbreeding and genetic frailties, a rat's lifespan is only 1-2 years, but the intelligence and interaction they bring to their home is often a good

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counterpoint for their short lifespans. The domestic rat originates from the Brown rats of Norway, which were domesticated in England during the 1800s. Many different colors and hair coats now exist in pet "fancy" rats. The National Fancy Rat Society was founded in 1976 to support fancy rats as pets. The most common ailments of fancy rats include cancer, respiratory disease, mites and lice, abscesses, and overgrown teeth. Special Note: It was not the Brown rat that harbored fleas carrying the bubonic plague during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the Black rat, an undomesticated species from Asia!

- Hamsters: The five species of hamster commonly kept as pets include the Syrian, Campbell's Dwarf, Russian Winter White Dwarf, the Roborovski Dwarf and

the Chinese hamster.

They vary in size from just 2 inches long to around 7 inches long.

Of these, the Roborovski is the smallest, and the longest-lived, averaging 4-5 years. The Syrian hamster is the largest and has one of the shortest lifespans at only 2-3 years. Hamsters are especially prone to a condition called "wet-tail," which is nothing more than diarrhea arising from a number of causes. Unfortunately, this condition can be fatal if not treated professionally. Other illnesses and injuries seen include respiratory infection, broken bones from falling, crushing injuries, and proptosis (dislocation of the eyeball). They are also notorious escape artists! Special Note: All the Syrian hamsters in the pet trade today have been shown to be descended from one female captured in 1930!



These are not the only exotic small mammals seen at Elburn Animal Hospital. We also see pets such as hedgehogs, mice, gerbils, degus, and sugar gliders. But those discussed above are the types we see most often. If you have questions about any of these pets, please call to speak with one of the staff, or email us and we will respond as soon as we are able.

Most pocket pets are exciting and rewarding companions. Each type has its own special needs;

providing for these needs helps keep your pet healthy and happy for as long as possible. To this end, we recommend nutritious food, regular and careful husbandry, and routine physical examinations. Many pocket pets can live as long as a dog or a cat if they receive proper care including veterinary care. As with all pets, prevention of illness is the key to keeping your companion with you for as long as possible.

Now check out our feature of adoptable pets found at TAILS Animal Shelter in DeKalb!

This month we are featuring some of their exotic mammal pets for adoption, as well as delegate cats to celebrate their Cat Independence Day promotion, running between July 1<sup>st</sup> and July 10<sup>th</sup>.

These cats and others over 6 months of age are adoptable during this event for only \$17.76!

Orton: 2year male, lop eared rabbit medium sized who is housetrained! Owned 1y-family member allergic.



Peanut Butter: 3year small female Guinea Pig, bought at a pet store, family member developed allergies

Loretta: 10-month old Vietnamese Pot-



Bellied Pig who was abandoned, medium sized, now living in foster home, call TAILS (815-758-

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2457) for details. Note: Dr. Cechner does not treat pot bellied pigs.



Abigail: 3year female stray, inquisitive cat who is adaptable to all situations: kids & other pets.

Locke, 8years, male, middle-aged statesman who was a stray. He's very sweet and loves attention.



Dean: 4year, male, rescue from another shelter, loves belly rubs, good with dogs, dominant with cats.



Mara, 4year female, came from home that had too many pets. She lived with kids, dogs & cats. She's a mellow cat who would love to be a personal assistant!

Rusty: 3year male, rescue from another shelter, loves naps but can be crazy-energetic, good with cats, OK with dogs, beautiful buff tabby cat.



Sharma, 5year, female, rescued from another shelter. Her name in sanskrit means "bliss," "harmony," and "shelter." She is blissful and harmonious but needs someone to shelter her.

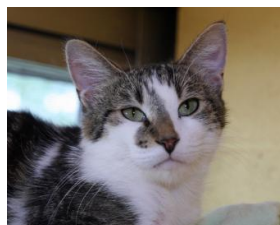


Bear: 1year, male stray who is essence of Love, Peace & Harmony.



Bandit, 3year female, given to TAILS because owners were moving. Bandit fits in any situation beautifully and has lived with kids, cats and dogs.

Lucy, 3year female, rescue from another shelter, very social, playful, vocal & likes cats.

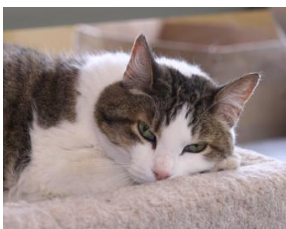


Myra, 4year female, rescued from another shelter, curious cat who loves to be beside people. She has a little mischievous side.



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Betty, 4year female, rescued from another shelter, true lover, enjoys sitting on people's laps & other cats.

Maxine, 4year female, large bossy go-getter who is chatty and a private investigator interested in everything.



Tazz, 1year male, found as a stray, eager to please.

National Assistance Dog Day is August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our August newsletter will feature information about therapy pets. These are pets that are used to provide different forms of therapy to individuals and groups. If you share your home with a therapy pet, or know one, please send us a picture and some information about your friend. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information, visit our website at [www.elburnanimalhospital.com](http://www.elburnanimalhospital.com), or give us a call at (630) 365-9599. If you would like to opt out of receiving our newsletter, please send an email to us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).

**July Special:** Bring in your exotic small mammal friend for a wellness exam and mention this ad to receive a \$25 discount.

**Upcoming Events:** Due to the unpredictable weather this past June,

we rescheduled our **charity dog wash**. The event will now take place on Saturday, July 24<sup>th</sup> from 1:00pm until 4:00pm. There are still several spots left, but we do ask that you reserve a spot ahead of time if possible. This year proceeds will again benefit the Fox Valley Wildlife Center, helping to offset the costs associated with caring for our wild neighbors. We are offering discounted bathing, nail trims, ear cleaning, and anal gland expression.

Also mark the calendar for this year's annual **Open House!** Yes, we are hosting another open house at our office on Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. We are featuring games, treats and area rescue groups.

Do you have an idea for a newsletter? A question you'd like answered about caring for your pet? Email us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net) and let us know! We are always interested in what you have to say and what you want to know.