

Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

February, 2009

Welcome

Welcome to our first newsletter! In this issue, you will find seasonal information about heart and dental health, as well as discounts to help keep your pet in optimal condition. Here at EAH, your pet's health is our top priority, so we include as much information as we can to help you make informed decisions. As always, if you have any questions, contact us via email, phone, or just stop by.

Safety First

Wintertime is a fun time, but winter can be a dangerous time for pets, too. This season provides opportunities for pets to get into all kinds of trouble. As much as we love to see our patients, we prefer to see them for wellness exams, if we can help it! The following tips can help protect your pets through the winter.

- Keep cats indoors and shorten walks and outside playtime for dogs. Once the temperature drops below freezing you should pay extra attention to your pet's needs.



- Provide adequate shelter if the pet must be outside for any length of time. This should be no larger than three times the pet's size, should face south to avoid the strongest winds, and should have some sort of bedding inside that is easily disposable or washable.
- Never allow your pet to walk on a lake or a pond that looks frozen. If the pet happens to fall through, the freezing temperatures can cause rapid onset of hypothermia, an often fatal condition.
- Keep candles out of your pet's reach. Do the same with electrical cords, presents and garbage. Garbage tends to be especially attractive to dogs during the holidays, as we are eating lots of rich, good-smelling foods.

- Other edible poisons common during winter include candy, especially chocolate and gums or candies containing xylitol, alcohol, plants such as lilies, poinsettia, mistletoe, holly and pine needles, and antifreeze. These have varying degrees of toxicity, often affecting the liver and kidneys, and ingestion may be lethal.
- Rock salt can cause irritation and cracking of pets' paws. Use pet-safe salt on your own walkways, and wash and wipe your pet's paws after he comes in from walking anywhere else.

February: Heart Health and Dental Health Awareness Month

This month, we've got a double treat, heart health and dental health. Did you know that they are related? Having bad teeth can actually cause a heart murmur. Read on to find out more facts about keeping your pet's heart healthy from the inside out.

- Keeping your pet on a well-balanced diet with little to no "processed" human food is one way to reduce their risk. A list of recommended foods can be found on our website, or discuss using a homemade food with Dr. Cechner.



- Exercising your pet will also help prevent heart disease. A dog should get a 30-minute walk every day; a cat should play about the same amount of time. Consider a laser pointer or wand toy to keep your cat entertained.
- Brush your pet's teeth regularly! This is one of the easiest and most overlooked ways to keep your pet healthy. Pets with dirty mouths tend to have more chronic disease, including an infection of the heart valves that can cause an irreparable heart murmur. Start when they're young, and your pet may live up to two years longer!
- Visit your veterinarian regularly. Pets' bodies age as much as 7 years for each one they live with us. We recommend scheduling a wellness visit every 6 months to keep up with the changes your pet will naturally experience.

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Every time we see a patient, we evaluate their dental health. The teeth and gums provide a direct pipeline for bacteria to enter the bloodstream. It's not just that pets can lose teeth and have bad breath, but the



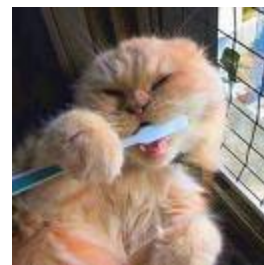
bacteria in their mouths can infect *every* organ in the body. Although infections are often curable in early stages, they can cause chronic illness, pain and even death if ignored. Follow these steps to keep your pet's mouth healthy:

- Take your pet in for a check up twice a year. We will check the teeth and gums and make recommendations to keep your pet healthy and happy for a very long time.
- Get a professional cleaning if it's recommended. We don't just tell you your pet needs it—we really mean it. With elderly pets, or those whose teeth are really in need of some help, we will recommend bloodwork beforehand, so we have an idea of how the internal organs are functioning before we put them under anesthesia.



- Practice dental care at home. This is the best thing you can do to maintain your pet's oral health. Brush once a day every day with a toothpaste formulated for pets. We will still probably need to clean your pet's teeth eventually, but instead of starting at age 4, maybe we can wait until age 7.
- If brushing is out of the question for whatever reason, consider using one of the gels, rinses, water additives, treats, or dental diets available.

Consider the cost—a toothbrush and toothpaste, plus the time it takes to brush once a day, versus a dental cleaning once a year after your pet turns 4 years old, versus the medications and diagnostics and heartbreak of chronic diseases that can be caused or worsened by having poor dental health.



February Special: Any dental cleaning* done in February will receive a free minipanel on the day of the procedure to evaluate for kidney, liver, and anemia issues. A \$40 value.

*Elderly or compromised pets will require more extensive bloodwork that requires us to send the sample to a lab at least two days prior to procedure. Clients will receive \$40 off the cost of this bloodwork.

Thanks for your patronage. Next month, we'll feature reasons to spay and neuter your pet, as well as how to keep your pet safe and healthy in early spring. If you would like to opt out of receiving the Elburn Animal Hospital newsletter, please contact us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.