

# Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

March, 2009

## Welcome

In this issue, you will learn about the many reasons for neutering and spaying your pets. We'll also discuss safety tips to think about during this wet, cold season. Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff, or you can contact us via email at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).

## Safety First

March is still cold here in Chicagoland, but now it's rainy, too. This combination can present new dangers for our pets. Following are examples of springtime dangers.

- **Mud.** As the snow melts we'll see more injuries, as mud can be slippery, and hide sharp objects and sticks that can injure your pet while playing. Never allow your pet to play outside unsupervised, keep cats inside, and make sure to check your pooch's feet as you wipe them off when he comes inside.
- **Frostbite.** Yes, frostbite is still a concern during early spring months. In wet, cold weather, your pet is more prone to frostbite if he is allowed outside for long periods of time. Don't leave your cat or dog unattended, and check his feet and ears after each venture out.
- **Wild animals.** Raccoons, skunks, and bats are becoming more active during this time, and pet encounters begin increasing. These are the prime carriers of diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis, and distemper, as well as others. All of these diseases are potentially fatal, and many can be contagious to humans. NEVER allow your pet to come in contact with a wild animal, living or dead. And be sure to get up-to-date on your pet's vaccinations, if you are not already.
- **Fleas and ticks.** When the temperature gets even slightly warmer, fleas and ticks become more active. They can harbor diseases and parasites that can infect your pets and humans too. If you do not keep your pets on a flea and tick control product year-round, begin treatment now.
- **Heartworm.** Mosquitoes transmit the heartworm parasite, and they can be found at temperatures

as low as 40 degrees F. Make sure your pet is taking a heartworm preventive medication. It is recommended to keep all your pets on this type of preventive year-round. If he hasn't been on the medication for 2 months or longer, he will need a blood test to be sure he hasn't been infected with these parasites before beginning a preventive regimen.

- **Gardening supplies.** Many homeowners begin planting early in the season, and many products used are dangerous to pets. Fertilizers, weed killers, and even some mulches can be deadly. Quite a few of the plants we keep in our gardens are toxic to pets, so don't let your pet enter your garden, and make sure he doesn't get into any of your supplies, plants, bulbs or seeds.

## March: Spay and Neuter Your Pet Month

Spring is here again! Now is the time when we begin seeing lots of kittens and puppies because they've reached that magical age of reproductive ability. In other words, we have a lot of patients that need to be spayed or neutered. The term "spay" means to remove the ovaries and uterus of a female pet; "neuter" means to remove the reproductive organs of either sex, although it is more commonly used to refer to removing the testicles from a male. But why are we so adamant about performing this procedure?



- Spayed and neutered pets experience fewer behavior problems, including urine marking in the house, roaming, fighting, and aggressive behavior towards humans. This is the case for both male and female dogs and cats.

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- For best behavioral results, do not wait past one year of age to have your pet "fixed." Once a hormone-triggered behavior has continued long



enough, you can be dealing with a firmly entrenched habit. Frequently, altering your pet helps with behavior problems, so don't give up on it just because you've missed the optimum time.

- Your 1-year-old or 2-year-old intact male dog may be easy to live with now, but if you leave him intact to the age of 3 years, you are more likely to experience undesirable behaviors. The age of 3 is prime time for an intact male dog to be involved with a terrible tragedy, such as those dogs who have killed children. Obviously, not all intact male dogs are aggressive child-killers. But the risk is increased, and parents need to know this, as does everyone who has a dog.

- Estrus is not just an emotional time for the female dog; it can be messy, too. Dogs in heat bleed from the vulva, and this can last for several weeks. There are diapers available, but you must also be aware of the risk of vaginitis, an infection of the vulva and vagina that often results from being moist and not-so-clean. Female cats cycle in and out of estrus about every week if they are not impregnated. They will cry and carry on until this occurs, and they tend to exhibit more unpredictable behavior.
- Female cats and dogs have a greatly increased risk of pyometra, an infection in the uterus that can become fatal. The cure for pyometra is spaying, but the procedure becomes much more dangerous for your pet when it must be done as an emergency procedure.
- Altering your pets reduces their risk of certain types of cancer. It completely eliminates the risk of testicular, ovarian and uterine cancer. It reduces the risk of prostate enlargement and cancer in males. Spaying and neutering also reduces the risk of mammary gland tumors in both sexes—by up to 80% in female dogs spayed before they enter their first estrus cycle, and up to 90% in female cats spayed before 6 months' of age. Since 50% of mammary gland tumors in dogs and

96% in cats are found to be malignant, there is a definite benefit.

- Even other pets, such as iguanas, rabbits, and guinea pigs, can benefit medically and psychologically from being spayed or neutered.

**March Special:** During the month of March, any spay or neuter patient will get half off a 24PetWatch microchip, including registration. A \$20 value.

**Upcoming Events:** Sign up soon for our **charity dog wash** to benefit Elburn Woods, our local wildlife rehabilitation center. We will be offering discounted bathing, nail trims, ear cleaning, and anal gland expression. The date is set for Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, so reserve your space now.

Also, start thinking about what costume your pet will wear to our **October Open House!** Yes, we are hosting another open house at our office, on Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>. Last year we had prizes for best costume, best family theme costumes, and a look-alike contest.

Thanks for your patronage. Next month, we'll have more information on parasites, including heartworms, intestinal parasites, fleas and ticks. Plus another special! For more information, or if you have any questions, check out 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 the Elburn Animal Hospital newsletter, please contact us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).