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# Pet Prints

The Pet Health Newsletter of Arroyo Veterinary Hospital

Summer 2006

## Dear Clients ...



**"... I am amazed at the constant change we have witnessed and the progress we have made, not only in veterinary medicine, but all medicine."**

...Twenty-five years of veterinary medicine has given me an education far beyond my 4 years of vet school. I graduated from The Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine this week in 1981. I was full of excitement about finally being able to start my career and scared beyond belief of actually having the responsibility of so many lives in my hands. I'm sure all new graduates experience the same fear or wonder about how competent of a practitioner they will be.

On reflecting back, I am amazed at the constant change we have witnessed and progress we have made, not only in veterinary medicine, but all medicine. When I graduated, my first job was working as an emergency vet in Akron, Ohio. This clinic serviced a large area around greater Akron. Typical of those times our clinic was owned by 24 Veterinarians who shared a vested interest in the clinic and referred their cases after hours. We were open from 6 PM each night until 8 AM the following morning and 24 hours on the weekend and holidays. Typically they would hire new graduates because we would work those crazy hours and they would not work them because they already had worked a long day and didn't want to work 24/7. The clinic had one doctor and one technician. We worked a one-week-on one-week-off schedule. The reason I mention is because it shows how dramatic the changes have been since I graduated. Nowadays, the emergency facilities available are amazing. They have a large number of support staff and



*Dr. Rhonda Stallings*

also a number of specialists that service these hospitals. The majority of these facilities are open 24 hours every day, of the year.

Other amazing changes in the field are the number and variety of specialists that exist now.

When I first started practice we would be expected to do all types of medicine. A general practitioner that can do everything including orthopedic and soft tissue surgery, cardiology, neurology and the list goes on. Today, many veterinarians go on for an additional two to three years to become board certified in a chosen field. We now have a large number of specialists right here in Sonoma County including ophthalmologists, neurologists, cardiologists, orthopedic and soft tissue surgeons, radiologists, Internal Medicine specialists, oncologists and even a reproduction specialists.

As advances continue in human medicine they continue in veterinary medicine as well. Cat scans and MRI's are now available as well as new and constantly improving equipment to help with anesthesia and surgery.

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## Dr. Stallings, cont'd . . .

But it's not enough to depend on the advancement of technology. We as veterinarians and staff have to stay current with advances in research leading to better techniques and approaches to medicine. We spend many hours each year attending conferences and workshops to continue our education allowing us to offer our clients the best medicine and care we possibly can.

*Dr. Rhonda Stallings*

## When is it time? . . .

*Sara Mooney, Client Services Representative*

... Along with the joy of pet ownership comes the heartbreak of loss. The decision to euthanize a pet is never easy. Here are some questions that can help give perspective when a beloved pet's time is near. Using a scale from one to ten, ten being the best, you can rate each category to help make your decision.

**Hurt** - How painful is your pet? For example, not being able to breathe is ranked at the top of the pain scale. It is important to call your veterinarian if you think your pet is in pain. There are several medications that can help and your veterinarian can help you find one that is right for your animal.



*Sara Mooney*

**Hunger** - Does your pet eat willingly? Will your pet eat if you hand feed it, or do you have to force feed? You can use a blender or a liquid diet to help supplement your pet's nutrition and to help increase your pet's caloric intake.

**Hydration** - Does your pet drink enough water? Does your pet look drawn? If so talk to your veterinarian about giving your pet fluids "subcutaneously" meaning using a needle to insert fluids underneath the skin. Does your pet look healthy or dry and bristly?

**Hygiene** - Can you brush and wash your pet? Is your pet's fur matted? Can your pet move away from its eliminations? Is your pet being socially rejected by their family members because of smell?

**Happiness** - Is your pet able to experience any joy or mental stimulation? Is your pet willing to interact

with the family and be responsive to things that are going on around them? Does she enjoy the attention from family members? Can the pet's bed be moved closer to family activities and not left in an isolated area? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Has your pet, who previously showed no aggression, tried to bite you when startled or woken?

**Mobility** - Is your pet able to move around enough on its own to satisfy its desires? Does the pet want to go on a walk? Does the pet stumble or have seizures? Can your pet be taken to the litter box or outside with assistance? Will a harness, sling or cart be helpful? Is medication helping? Would the mobility problem be solved with a limb amputation?

**More Good Days than Bad** - Are there more good days than bad? Is the pet "turned off" to life? Do your pet's eyes still have "that spark" or does your pet seem to look through or past you?

**What will happen to my pet?** - When the time comes for a beloved pet to be euthanized it is important to know what is going to happen. There are a few different options, you can arrange for a doctor to come to the house or to bring the pet to the hospital. The pet will be given a sedative to help keep them calm and relaxed. The doctor will let you sit

*Continued next page...*

## Good Sam Gets a Logo . . .

...We asked our "adopted classroom", Mrs. Weis's 4th grade class at El Verano, to design the logo for our Good Samaritan Fund. What we got back was a whole bunch of great drawings of people and animals

from which we selected one we thought had just the right feel - a big heart! So thank you all you talented 4th graders (now 5th graders!) from Mrs. Weis's class and especially to Tommy Jordan who submitted the winning design! Tommy and his class received a cash prize for their efforts. We're told the pizza was very good.

In addition, we're happy to report that we raised over \$700 at our recent Good Sam Rummage Sale.



## Barbecue bones and other obstructions . . .

Dr. Josephine McGrane

Well summer is here again and that means barbecue time. What does that mean for our four legged friends? Do they get the bones or not? I would like to tell you about the dangers of bones and other foreign bodies.

*Bones* - I always hear, "I give them to Fido raw so they don't splinter." It is true, cooked bones can be a problem due to splintering and getting lodged in the throat or the esophagus but raw bones can also cause problems. They can give dogs salmonella or other bacterial diseases. Bones in general can cause obstruction of the gastrointestinal tract (GI tract), gastritis (inflammation of the stomach), enteritis (inflammation of the intestines), pancreatitis (inflamed pancreas that can be life threatening), colitis (inflammation of the colon), intestinal perforation, broken teeth (that need to be removed) and other problems. Bones are the number one cause for obstruction of the GI tract. Even small bones like chicken ribs or clavicles can get stuck in the throat and require sedation or anesthesia to be removed. I know that dogs love to eat them, but you need to know the risks. I don't give bones to my dog and I don't recommend giving them to your dogs either.

*Fish hooks and sewing needles* - I know it sounds weird. Why would your dog or cat eat a needle or a hook? I think the hooks smell like fish which makes them tempting. Hooks can get stuck in the lips or get swallowed and cause obstruction or GI perforation. Ingesting needles is actually very common. Cats playing with string start to eat it and at the end of the string there is a needle! They are already committed to eating the string so down it goes - needle and all. Sometimes the needle can get stuck under the tongue, in the GI tract, or at the exit of the stomach causing an obstruction called a "linear foreign body" that



Dr. McGrane

without prompt surgery may result in an infection and is life threatening. So keep the sewing kit and the tackle box closed and away from your pets.

*Raw Hides and Greenies* - There has been a lot of talk lately about Greenies causing GI obstructions. It can actually happen with anything your pet eats. If you have a dog that swallows things relatively whole or in large chunks, then I would not feed him Greenies. The Greenie label does state an appropriate size for different size dogs and also states that dogs that gulp should be fed the "Lil'Bits" or the very small size. Greenies do not break down very quickly in the GI tract which is why they can cause an obstruction if eaten in large chunks. Rawhides can cause GI obstructions and also choking. Dogs should

be monitored while eating any treat or food.

We have also seen GI obstructions due to balls, toys, fruit pits, squeaker (from inside toys), rocks (actually very common), redwood bark, clothes, strings, cassette tape, grass, brushes, and shoes - so please watch your pets closely!

The most common symptom from obstruction is vomiting. Other symptoms are diarrhea, gagging, drooling, anorexia and just not acting right. When we see these animals we often recommend radiographs and blood work as a first step. A lot of foreign bodies do not show up on radiographs because they are the same density as soft tissue. If that is the case and we suspect a foreign body further diagnostics like a barium study (An upper GI in human medicine) may be needed. If something is seen or is questionable then an exploratory surgery may be indicated. An obstruction of the GI tract is a serious condition and without prompt attention and treatment can cause death.

Still want them to have those bones?

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## When is it time?, cont'd . . .

with your pet for as long as is needed. Then the doctor will come and give the pet another injection and the pet will slowly become unconscious. The anesthetic gently shuts down brain and heart function. Every animal is different and most people who have witnessed a euthanasia have

described it as "peaceful, calm, and tranquil." Every pet has certain needs that should be recognized and respected. By asking ourselves these questions we can make sure that our pets can live a dignified, happy life. Please feel free to contact our office with any questions you may have about euthanasia.



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## Pet Loss Support Group ...

...Rebecca Kuga, Marriage and Family Therapist, will be facilitating a support group session for those who are dealing with the loss of a pet or anticipating the loss of a pet. The session will be held at Arroyo Veterinary Hospital the evening of **Wednesday, July 26, from 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm**. Please call Rebecca at 415/898-0504 or here at the hospital, 996-1054 to reserve a space. The size of the group will be limited.

## Listen to Pet Talk ...

... Not only can you catch Dr. Rhonda Stallings hosting "Pet Talk" on KSVY, 91.3 FM, at 1:00 pm on Thursday, but now you can also download any of her shows from January 1 and later. You'll be surprised at the variety and breadth of topics on the show including interviews of guests from the Snow Leopard Conservancy, Wildlife Rescue, Three Dog Bakery, Canine Companions for Independence and Assistance Dog Institute. Pet Talk is a show that celebrates not only pets but animals in our lives. Callers are welcome!

## Pardon our dust! ...

...While we get our web site up and running. It will include lots of preventive healthcare information as well as news on upcoming events and links to many useful pet related sites. Look for us at **www.avhsonoma.com** sometime this Summer. We're also converting to a paperless record system to please bear with us while we work out the kinks.

## Cocoa Mulch Toxic to Dogs ...

... It's recently come to our attention that Cocoa mulch can be very toxic to dogs. According to the manufacturer, Hershey's, "...50% of the dogs that eat Cocoa Mulch can suffer physical harm to a variety of degrees..."

## Raffle Winners ...

...Congratulations to Mark Foote and Suzanna Bon, the winners of our Good Sam Raffle. They each won an iPod Shuffle. Also Congrats to our own Sara Mooney for winning one year's supply of Flea/Tick prevention and to Beryl Nicoson for winning a six month supply.

