



Gorham Animal Hospital Newsletter

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2021 Winter
Newsletter Topics

Fear and Anxiety

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(fear of being alone)

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Winter 2021 newsletter

Covid and the inherent isolation have affected both our physical and mental health. Many of us have experienced the changes in the human healthcare system. Not being present to advocate for loved ones, or in the worst case scenarios not being present to support them. Advocacy and informed decision making for families is more critical than ever.



I appreciate how difficult it has been for clients to drop off their pet without being present for their appointment. Please ensure that you have made staff aware of any concerns with your pet, your feedback is important. Any changes in behaviour or appetite, unexplained weight loss, increased urination /drinking, vomiting diarrhea or itchiness are amongst the symptoms a ill pet may show. We are trying to ensure clients are sent home with both verbal and written communications. The latter take a bit longer but I think are very helpful.

Please ensure that you **download the pet desk app**. It connects up to our computer ensuring you have access to your pets vaccine status, as well as any recent lab tests, and medications; both frequency and dosing.

What's up with the testing???

A full physical examination and a pets' history can help us identify any areas of concern. Identifying diseases in the early stages can often lead to a more positive outcome. Diagnostic tests may be recommended to help us do this.

Not all blood tests are the same. A basic wellness blood is used for an animal perceived to be healthy. This type of test may be recommended prior to a general anesthesia or to establish "normal" values in a pet. More extensive blood tests are used for an ill or geriatric patient.

There are two main components of blood, the first evaluates organs ie: kidney, thyroid, pancreas. The second refers to the cbc portion of the bloodwork . This portion checks for changes in an animals red cell counts. Lower counts or anemias can be identified. The white blood cell portion may be elevated providing us with evidence of infection or an inflammatory process.

These diagnostic tests may point us in a direction to choose appropriate further testing, or may indirectly hint at the etiology responsible for a pet's illness. As with our own health, the blood tests may not give us answers but rule things out. I always suggest a minimum data base for each patient should include a urinalysis. It can quickly identify underlying health issues and is a simple test to evaluate a pet's health. Alongside bloodwork it is used to support a diagnosis of diabetes or kidney disease.



It is more cost effective to run a full panel (blood profile, cbc and urinalysis) at the same time. Adding on additional tests later is expensive and we can miss something by trying to compromise on the tests that should be run.

I can't believe I ate the whole thing....Foreign bodies and toxicities

X-rays help us to further identify internal structures including arthritis, foreign bodies and organ size.

Each year one of the veterinary magazines shows some of the more interesting x-rays. Sadly they contain a predominance of labs whom have eaten things; golf balls, pins and even the end of a fishing rod! Not all foreign bodies are visible on a plain x-ray. X-rays may pass through objects that are porous like a peach pit, but suggestions of gas pockets or intestinal bunching may lead us to still suspect our babies have eaten something and are starting to regret it.

Cats, with their rough tongues are not able to spit out linear objects. Hence their foreign bodies include elastics, hair ties, yarn, dental floss and tree tinsel. Please ensure that these objects are not available for a pet to chew on.

Xmas with decorations, trees and gifts under them pose risks to pets. Remember chocolate is toxic for pets. My sister is having a difficult time with her puppies chewing the electrical cords outside with her x-mas lights. Her family has made the wise decision to just put them away.

Amongst the more common toxicities seen now is the consumption of human medications.

Please keep them out of reach of our children and pets. In the event of an ingestion of a potentially toxic substance, seek veterinary help **immediately**. Inducing vomiting immediately may remove much of the drug and potential hazard.

Fear and Anxiety

Fear and anxiety are influenced both by genetics, socialization and environment. **Worth repeating, punishment is never appropriate, more so in a pet experiencing anxiety or fearfulness.** Our pets are 'in tune' with our feelings. If you are showing anxiety, your pet will likely pick up on it.

There is no one single factor that can explain these anxieties, just as there is no one treatment. I can comment that medications alone will not resolve the issue. An anxious or excited pet is not dissimilar to a young child in a park. You do not have their undivided attention, and they are not in an ideal situation to learn anything.

Having an animal calmer whether through training techniques (mat training see vet partners website), or a combination of conditioning and reward alongside medications helps them learn. One of the basic thoughts for a pet is that they thrive on routine and regular exercise. A routine minimal 20 minutes of exercise or walking morning and night should be established. The Ohio State University, indoor cat initiative is an excellent resource for environmental enrichment for cats.



Thundershirts and DAP/Feliway products are drug free options to aid in anxieties. The former hugs them; the latter is a "happy pheromone"

therapy. There are a number of medications that have been studied for both safety and efficacy in the management of anxiety. Trypsin or green tea based products have also shown some efficacy with some pets with anxiety.

The importance of socialization in young puppies and kittens cannot be emphasized enough. Have them exposed at a young age to children, baths, car rides, loud noises; thunderstorm tapes or fireworks, people of different size and colour, masks, hats and even knapsacks. Mimic a regular physical examination which includes handling their face, ears, mouth and feet is also essential. Nail trimming should be attempted with a person offering support and restraint, and the second person handling feet and working up to a nail trim. Do a few nails, and work up to doing more at the same time, as you and your pet become more confident. Please ask for assistance from us if you need help!

Smart dogs will start to scream over things that they don't like. If you cut my nail and I scream and you stop....great I am going to keep screaming and train YOU. If there is no blood, you have not likely hurt them, but are being trained. Chihuahuas, Jack Russell's and Beagles are notorious for doing this. Be aware in elderly patients with arthritis that an odd position during a nail trim may indeed hurt.

Separation Anxiety (fear of being alone)

During COVID many families have been able to work from home and took the opportunity to add to their family by obtaining a furry friend.

As I have expressed previously, **those pets adopted during the pandemic are at a greater risk to developing separation anxiety** when and if their normal routine is abruptly changed with the return of their family to school and workplaces. An illness or death of another family member or pet can also contribute.

Dogs are highly social animals. Many of these dogs have a strong attachment to their owners. When separated from their owner they have a "panic attack". Excessive barking, howling, crying, urinating/defecation and in some cases destructive behaviour is exhibited. This behaviour is associated with a client's departure. Dogs can see the routine; grab keys, coat etc and they know you are leaving. Left untreated, it will get worse. I tell people it is like me being put in a room full of spiders. All common sense is literally gone.



Often other behavioural problems exist and can make the diagnosis more complicated. Try obtaining a videotape of your pet upon your departure.

Treatment often involves a combination of medications and behavioural adjustments. The earlier the treatment is started the more successful treatment can be. Medication alone will never lead to a cure.



Medications are used to put your dog in a better emotional state whereby they can learn and cope better. A combination of long-term and short term therapy is usually required. The long term drugs (Prozac or clomicalm) may take as much as 2 months to reach therapeutic levels. Short acting medications are used to help in the interim.

Avoid leaving a pet alone until the medications have time to work. Avoid repeated departures. Group together errands and if you forget something in the house leave it. Do not have a departure ritual which they associate with your leaving.

Distractions including food dispensing and puzzle toys can reduce a dog's stress level. Feeding them from these devices at other times ensure that they don't start to associate them with your departure.

It is essential to create a relaxing and safe environment and for a pet to learn both independence and to be able to soothe themselves. Mat training or creating a safe haven helps them feel safe and tranquil. Some pets respond to soothing music.



If your pet is not previously crate trained, do not try and leave them in a crate. Some dogs become more anxious in a confined space. I have seen pets become very destructive chewing on the cage, leading to injuries.

Pets thrive on routine. Exercise daily and include exercise with time for exploration and sniffing and games including finding hidden treats or toys. This helps with stress reduction as well as positive bonding with their family. Be firm and consistent with your training to reduce anxiety, and again avoid punishment.

Punishment can include yelling, spraying water, hitting or holding a dog down, bark or shock collars. Some dogs are more sensitive to punishment, and their reaction will let you know their perceptions. A pet that is destructive, eliminates or barks while you are out is not consciously vindictive, they are likely anxious.

It is very important that patience is used during this process, moving too quickly will get you back to square one. We are very fortunate; there are several veterinary behaviour specialists nearby. It may very well be worth a consult for help and direction from a specialist. Again, early intervention is more successful.

Why am I writing this? Well I hear the possibility of people returning to work and school. Consider minimizing the changes in your household ahead of time. Start a routine that will be possible when you return to your pre-covid life. Consider the additional help that may be required; a dog walker, doggie daycare etc. **Medications can take up to 4-8 weeks to have some effect, start them in advance.**

Prior to covid, statistically most pets surrendered to shelters were **for behaviours previously noted**, but as they reached a larger size or needed the financial commitment of neutering/spaying they were abandoned. Early intervention and training positively affect the bond that we have with our pets.

Arthritis in Pets

Arthritis has always been associated with aging. However we can now see arthritis at any age, and conformational changes or injury in some pet's mean they are starting with abnormal joint stress from day one. **Degenerative joint disease is the number one cause for chronic pain in cats and dogs and hence a common factor in euthanasia decisions.**

As the disease progresses cartilage, normally absorbing shock in the joint, is worn down leaving bone exposed. The subsequent pain is manifested as limping, stiffness or the inability to get up and down on stairs and furniture. X-rays may be suggested to confirm the diagnosis. Cats in particular are often affected but not recognized or treated. We can greatly improve the quality of a pet's life by addressing arthritis discomfort.



There are a number of modalities of arthritis management, including physiotherapy, joint diets and weight loss. Physiotherapy and regular exercise aid a pet in maintaining muscle strength, flexibility and blood flow to an area. Ensure that they are at an appropriate weight to maximize the time we get to have them, and minimize their joint stress.

Ensure that they have good footing. Keep their nails short, and provide non slippery rugs, or non slip socks (Not on a pet that is prone to eating weird objects please.) Provide support under them when climbing or standing up or ramps to make it easier for them to do so.



A number of pharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals have been shown to help with the pain and inflammation of arthritis. Using a multi modal approach means we obtain positive results by using different approaches/medications concurrently. This often means lower levels of medication can be used, and hence less potential side effects. **Nutritional supplements are only required to be shown safe, not effective.**

NSAIDS are quick acting and effective anti-inflammatory pain relief products commonly used for arthritis. They can potentially affect circulation to the gut and kidneys. Initial and subsequent blood/urine screening is recommended. Newer products have a shorter half-life, so a pet can clear them faster in the event of potential side effects. **Warnings to immediately stop these medications should a pet develop any vomiting or dark stool are important.**

Cats are extremely sensitive to NSAIDS, and their liver processes them very slowly putting them at risk to developing higher blood levels of these drugs and potential side effects or overdose.

DO NOT ADMINISTER medications to your pet without veterinary guidance. Please advise staff if you have given your pet any medications at home, some with interact with or overlap putting a pet unnecessarily at risk.

I will mention gabapentin, as we use it a lot. It seems to be of use particularly for neurologic/spinal pain. It seems to be well tolerated, and dose adjustments may be required if a pet is overly sedated while on it.



WE often send elderly patients home with an omega 3 fatty acid

supplement. The anti-inflammatory benefits help with both arthritis and allergies, and have been associated with cognitive support. Flax seed oil which is converted to omega 3 fatty acids in people does not get converted in pets. An ideal ratios of EPA to DHA (3:2) has been shown to be of benefit.

The use of CBD has not been studied in pets. Some products can affect the liver reducing the efficacy of other drugs. At this time we are still advocating using medications that have been studied for both safety and efficacy. In Canada, veterinarians are not able to prescribe CBD or any of its derivatives.

OUT OF COUNTRY ADOPTIONS

With Covid, and a sudden demand for pets we have seen a rise in pet adoptions from out of the Country. I was surprised to find that rabies is the ONLY disease to which imported animals are regulated. These pets can carry zoonotic parasites and tick borne diseases, many of which have not previously recognized in Canada and yet are not stopped or screened prior to entering Canada. “Rescue” groups continue to bring in pets at a profit, with little regard to the ongoing health requirements of the pet or emotional stress and financial burden placed upon clients.



Unfortunately some of these pets have not been socialized and have pre-existing behavioural issues. As with any adoption, once we have committed to a pet, we are emotionally bonded within minutes of seeing them. Guarantees and warranties really don't mean much. Be prepared to provide for both emotional and financial support for the new addition.

Shortages

We are currently experiencing a shortage of veterinarians and support staff in veterinary clinics across North America. It has been progressively more difficult to refer an urgent case to a referral center as most are already full. We may have to drive a bit further or wait a bit longer for those specialist appointments.

We continue to try and ensure that clients that call with an ill patient during regular office hours are seen. Frequently we are working through lunches to accommodate this. As always, **if an appointment time is not available, consider leaving your pet with us for evaluation.** Communication will be made as soon as possible outlining and treatment and diagnostic recommendations.

If your pet is ill, please ensure that it is brought to the clinic. Call and make an appointment, or in the case of an emergency tell the staff and provide an approximate time of arrival. Please DO not just leave a message for a doctor to call you, it may be hours before it is returned, often out of hours. If the emergency involves exposure to a product, or ingestion bring the product container with you whenever possible.

Emergencies

Emergencies include any pet that is bleeding or having difficulty breathing, A male cat that is vocal, straining, frequenting the litter box, or noted to have blood in its urine and may be 'blocked'. These cats are unable to urinate and will die without intervention. Other emergencies include a pet that has consumed a potential toxin, a pet that is experiencing pain or any animal that you think it is an emergency. If the emergency is outside of our normal hours, please call the emergency clinic directly. Advise them of the nature of the emergency, and your potential arrival time.

Gorham Animal Hospital (905) 895-4552

404 Emergency (905) 953 -1933

Animal Health Partners (416) 380-7400

Toronto Veterinary Emergency Hospital (416) 247-8387

WEBSTORE

HEAD TO OUR WEBSITE and Click on the webstore tab and follow the link to gain access to thousands of veterinary/pet related products. If you would like to ensure that your items or food are available consider ordering them online at your convenience! Free Delivery is made to the clinic for convenient pick up. Free delivery to your doorstep is available for orders over 125\$.



If you sign up for automatic food reorder some diets qualify for a 10% discount from the supplier! Please call if you have any questions or require assistance.



PetDesk® Pet desk app has been purchased on your behalf. Please download the app to allow our clients to access parts of their pets medical information. You will obtain copies of recent lab tests and have proof of pet vaccines (groomers)at your fingertips. In the event of an emergency you have a listing of your pets' medications, including strength and frequency prescribed.

XMAS PHOTOS!!!!



My favourite time of year is upon us. XMAS pet photos. Please call and make an appointment with the staff for your pet photos. Donations put in the change for change account. This is used to aid clients and their pets in need of financial assistance.

Christmas ; may it be filled with laughter, happiness and joy.

We wish you and your family a very healthy and happy holiday season. A special thanks to my staff whom have worked alongside me through many lunches, stood outside in rain and snow (literally) and have continued to work so hard especially with the additional demands Covid have placed on us.

Gorham Animal Hospital Holiday hours

Thurs. Dec. 23	9am -6 pm
Friday Dec. 24	9am-noon
Sat. Dec. 25	Merry Xmas (closed)
Sun. Dec. 26	closed
Mon. Dec. 27	closed
Tues Dec. 28	9am- 6 pm
Wed. Dec. 29	9am- 5pm
Thurs. Dec. 30	9am -6 pm
Friday Dec. 31	9am – noon
Sat. Jan 1	Happy new years (closed)
Sun. Jan. 2	closed
Mon. Jan. 3	closed
Tues. Jan. 4	9 am -6 pm