



Gorham Animal Hospital Newsletter
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Veterinary medicine is both a rewarding and challenging profession, each and everyday it provides us with a new learning opportunity. Medicine is constantly changing, and the internet has enabled practitioners to have the input of specialists who are at the forefront of research and new diagnostic and treatment options. Veterinary Care just keeps getting better!

Veterinary Medicine and the Veterinary Technician Programs remain amongst the most difficult programs to gain acceptance. Graduates of veterinary medicine often have both an undergraduate degree as well as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, and have made a substantial commitment both personally and financially to complete the program. Contrary to popular belief, the veterinary profession remains the poorest paid profession. My staffs are often multi-tasking, work through lunches, and have even refused to leave at the end of a shift to help attend to a sick patient.

We are seeing a shortage of qualified veterinary staff reflected in the number of new graduates who do not stay in the profession. Compassion fatigue has become a common place consequence in our profession.

Please remember to thank my team for all that they do.

A special thanks to Jaime and Mikayla, both of whom go well beyond my expectations and to Dr. Danielle Jongkind, whom I've had the pleasure of working with for over a decade. Congratulations to students; Nicole and Emily who recently have been accepted into the Veterinary Course at Guelph. Jacob, Serena and Mackenzie who are currently attending veterinary technician programs.

Winter 2019

Newsletter

Making Life Easier for Senior Pets

Is "Dr Google" Reliable?

Raw Diets

Veterinary Specialists

Pet Insurance

Webstore

Website information search



Holiday Photos!

Saturday November 30, 2019

9 am until 12 noon

(please call for an appt.)

Making Life Easier for Senior Pets

Our senior pets live with many of the same issues that we do as we age including arthritis and dementia. Pets with arthritis may not be overtly lame, watch for a hesitation when going up or down stairs, when jumping up into a vehicle or onto furniture. A reluctance to move or get up can be a signal of discomfort. There are some simple things we can do to make our senior pets more comfortable. In some cases, we may recommend the use of supplements and medications to ensure your pet retains a good quality of life. Please don't let them to suffer in silence. Dogs and cats are often considered seniors by the age of 7 years old!



Make sure they have good footing. Many homes have smooth and slippery floors making it difficult for an older pet to both get up, but as well as walk across it. Anything that aids in providing a better walking surface will help. Boots with 'sticky grips', rubber-backed mats, or even fatigue mats acting as shock absorbers can be helpful. Building ramps for accessibility and keeping nails short will help in keeping our pets mobile and comfortable as they age.

Gate off the stairs. A lot of senior pets with mobility problems slip and/or fall when on the stairs, to help prevent serious accidents, try using baby gates to keep them off the stairs. If they must do stairs, then make sure they can only go on them when you are with them. Small dogs and cats can be carried but with large dogs you can put on a leash and hold a long towel or blanket looped under the belly in your other hand. If they slip on the stairs, you can use the leash and towel to hold their weight while they get their feet back under them. Remember to provide a non-slippery surface, like carpet, on the steps, as well as good lighting.



Make sure there are pet resources assessable. Rule of thumb, one litter box per cat plus an extra one. The boxes should be located in a quiet area and if a pet is having difficulty getting into the box, consider moving it to an accessible floor. Consider a litter box with a lower lip or even cut down the front lip, just be cautious to sand down or even tape the new sharper edge. Cats generally prefer non perfumed clumping type litter. A cat with inappropriate urination or having a bowel movement outside of a litter box, can signify a health concern and they should be examined. **Any constipated or straining cat is considered an emergency.**

Keep food and water within easy reach. Elevate food and water bowls off the floor to help limit how far they must bend down. Keep these crucial resources on the main level and easily accessible to all pets will help decrease discomfort.

Keep up with regular veterinary checkups. Age related conditions include dental disease, arthritis pain, dementia, thyroid problems and failing organ systems. Early recognition hopefully ensures we improve both the quality and



quantity of a pet's life. Be sure to discuss any changes in their behaviour, including eating, sleeping patterns, and/or vocalizations. Monitor pets for changes in weight, increased or decreased appetite, changes in the amount a pet drinks or urinates, and if suspected, ensure your pet is seen by a veterinarian.

Keep their senses active. Mental decline can lead to behavior problems, like forgetting to ask to go out. Keep the minds of senior pets more active by introducing new sights, scents and experiences. Supplementation with Omega 3 fatty acids has also been shown to have some cognitive benefits.



Is “Dr. Google” Reliable?

The internet can be a wonderful resource for information on pet health, but is everything that we read accurate? Some of this information is misleading, and some of it can even be dangerous. So how can we tell what information is reliable and what is not? Where can we go online to get good information? Let's start with how to identify information that might be questionable.

Any individual posting information about pet medical care or animal diseases should have either a degree in veterinary medicine or be a registered veterinary technician. If no qualifications are given, consider their post to be their opinion, but not necessarily a verified fact. Information posted on veterinary hospital websites or veterinary school websites, (e.g. The University of Guelph's Ontario Veterinary College) should be accurate and factual. All veterinary professionals are held accountable for everything they say to the public through their provincial licensing bodies in Canada. You take your chances with websites from international veterinarians. Every country and region are different with how they monitor their veterinary professionals.



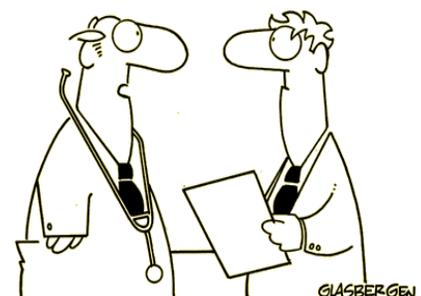
In addition, beware of posts by an individual who are extremely emotional about what they are posting about. People who are upset about something may not be as impartial with respect to the facts as we might like them to be. Consider these posts as one person's opinion only, rather than factual information.

Lastly, make sure the information makes sense with what you know already and with what your own veterinarian has told you. If someone is suggesting something that seems like it is “way off in left field”, it probably is. Please feel free to contact us for more information, websites or articles specific to your pet's needs or to answer your questions!

Reliable information should come from the veterinary technicians and veterinarians who have trained specifically in veterinary medicine. Where can you go to find reliable

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“More and more patients are going to the Internet for medical advice. To keep my practice going, I changed my name to Dr. Google.”

information about pet health topics online? Here are some suggestions:

- **Our Gorham Animal Hospital website: www.housevet.ca** . Click on the NEW client educational tab: to access client educational articles on a variety of topics. You can use the search box to search by name, or browse by species or topic to find what you're looking for.
- www.veterinarypartner.com : This is a searchable database of pet topics written by the people at the Veterinary Information Network.
- <https://www.ovchsc.ca/news/> : This is a news blog from the Ontario Veterinary College with articles about current pet health topics.
- <https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/> : The "Worms and Germs" blog is also associated with the Ontario Veterinary College and is written by Dr Scott Weese, a researcher in infectious disease.
- <https://capcvet.org> : This is the companion parasite website.

Veterinary Partner™
Trusted by Veterinarians
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- www.vohc.org: Veterinary oral health council providing consumers with an objective assessment of oral health care items.
- <https://indoorpet.osu.edu> > cats: Ohio state University, indoor cat initiative discusses cat behaviour and environmental enrichment.



CONGRATULATIONS JAIME!

We are excited to share this beautiful picture of **Hannah!!** Congratulations to Jaime and her husband Albert in the arrival of Hannah.

(This little miracle decided she couldn't wait to meet her parents)



Raw Diets

Raw diets have become hugely popular and commercially successful in recent years. **No scientific evidence has been found that raw diets confer any health benefits over cooked diets.** Marketing campaigns for raw diets claim health benefits and appeal to people who want a 'natural' method for feeding their dog.



Claim #1: There are beneficial enzymes in raw meat that are not present in cooked or processed dog food.

Facts: Enzymes are proteins and they exert their effects by changing in a very specific environment. They have to be in a place with the right temperature and pH to work. This is why animal bodies work so hard to maintain a specific body temperature and pH range. If they don't, the enzymes they rely on to maintain life will stop working. As soon as food hits the acid in the stomach, any enzymes in it stop working. Clearly claiming enzymes in raw diets have any health benefits over traditional cooked foods is false.

Claim #2: Wolves are the ancestors of dogs and they eat raw meat, so it should be good for dogs too.

There are several problems with this idea. The first is that dogs are not wolves any longer. One look at an English bulldog or a teacup Chihuahua will show you there is no comparison between modern dogs and wolves. Dogs have been domesticated for thousands of years and studies show that they now have four times the ability to digest carbohydrates compared to wolves. Domestication has given them the ability to eat a diet more similar to ours



than what their ancestors ate. Domestic dogs are also not hunting as a wolf would. The meat they eat wasn't run down in the woods. It comes from a livestock animal that was raised in intensive farming conditions and was then slaughtered in a slaughterhouse. Slaughterhouse carcasses are contaminated with

pathogenic bacteria like e. coli and salmonella. This is why we cook our meat before eating it: we don't want to get sick. If a wolf's immune system fails it and it gets sick or dies from eating

contaminated meat, nobody would ever know. When this happens to our dogs, we understandably get upset!

Claim #3: Raw diets are safe

While it is true that any pet food could possibly be contaminated with pathogenic bacteria, studies show that this is far more likely with raw diets. Even if a pet's immune system can handle the problem and they don't get sick, the pet can serve as a reservoir of infection for people. The elderly, young children, and people with compromised immune systems are the most at risk to pick up infections from pets fed raw diets.



Refrigerators, food preparation surfaces, food bowls, water dishes and utensils can also serve as places to pick up food-borne illnesses and must be thoroughly washed after every meal.

The other issue with food safety lies with nutritional adequacy. The American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) publishes guidelines for what levels of nutrients need to be in pet food so pets don't suffer from nutritional deficiencies. These guidelines have been scientifically determined, but following them is voluntary and is *not required by law*. AAFCO feeding trials are available to any pet food company and serve to prove that a food is nutritionally adequate and that the pet can actually digest and absorb the food. If a food passes an AAFCO feeding trial it will have a sentence on the bag under the chart that lists the percentage of all the nutrients in the diet. The sentence will say: Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that {insert name of food here} provides complete and balanced nutrition for {list life stage here, eg. adult dogs}. Be sure the pet food you are buying for your pet has been formulated by a company that employs a certified veterinary nutritionist and has passed AAFCO feeding trials.

We do not recommend feeding raw diets. There is no evidence they are more beneficial than cooked diets and there are health risks to feeding them to both your pet and non furry family members.

Specialty and Referral Centres in Veterinary Practice

What is the difference between your regular veterinarian and a specialist? A specialist has the same training as your regular vet but has gone on to take additional training in a specific area of veterinary medicine. This training takes years and involves a lot of hours in hands-on training, research, and academic study. To get their official certification for their specialty, the specialist must take one final examination at the end of their training. In veterinary medicine we have specialists available in the following disciplines: internal medicine, surgery, dermatology, ophthalmology, cardiology, neurology, behavior, oncology, emergency and critical care, nutrition, lab animal medicine, anesthesia, and many more, including zoo animal medicine!



Specialist veterinarians may work in academia (eg. at a veterinary college), in a private referral hospital or they may have a mobile practice where they see your pet at your regular vet office. Specialists often have access to more advanced diagnostic tools (like MRI for example) and may have 24-hour care (ICU) for critical care patients. While participating in research, they are also often the first to become aware of new and exciting treatment options for pets with health problems.

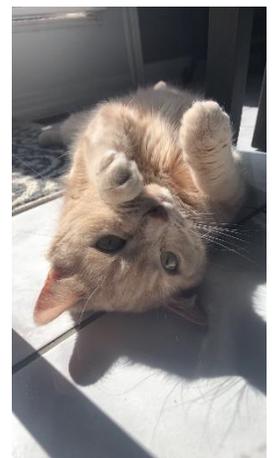
We have been fortunate to have the opportunity to consult with a number of specialists on an ongoing basis. When blood and urine are sent to an outside lab, our veterinarians often consult with the board-certified internal medicine, dermatologist, neurologic or pathologists from the lab to help determine the best diagnostic and treatment options.

Our ultrasounds are performed by a mobile board-certified internist, and or a cardiologist. They can concentrate their efforts on one patient at a time and ensure that best medicine is practiced right here in our clinic.

Whenever a second opinion, advanced treatment or diagnostic regimes are required, we will recommend a consult with a board-certified specialist. This may include referrals to referral centres. We usually obtain a quote for these procedures in advance to help an owner decide the best course of action for their family.

Pet Insurance

People are often surprised at the costs involved in diagnosing and treating a pet with a serious health problem. A very sick or injured pet may need x-rays, bloodwork, ultrasounds, advanced medical or surgical procedures and possibly even hospitalization or a consult with a specialist. This level of medical care can



strain a family's finances, so it is best to plan ahead for this possibility. It is heartbreaking to have to choose between your pet's welfare and your financial stability. Read on to discover some things you should know about pet insurance:



The time to get pet insurance is when your pet is young and healthy.

There are no pet insurance companies that will cover health conditions your pet has been diagnosed with prior to you signing up with them.

Have an empty credit card available to pay your vet bills, even if you have insurance. Not every insurance company pays the vet directly. Most

of them require you to pay your bill and they will then reimburse you for what they owe you. Most veterinary clinics require payment at the time of service.



Read the fine print. Be sure you understand what you are signing up for. Make sure you know exactly what is covered and what isn't. Call and speak to the company representative if you aren't sure. Some insurance policies change with the pet's age or with the number of claims you make. Some have payout maximums which may limit your coverage, and some have higher premiums for certain breeds.

Understand what a deductible is. A deductible is the amount of your bill you have to pay out of pocket before your insurance kicks in. Insurance companies may have different ways they apply the deductible. Some will apply it once

a year. So, in a given calendar year, you won't receive any insurance claim money until you have paid enough money in vet bills to equal your deductible. Other companies apply the deductible per condition, which means that you pay your deductible every time your pet is diagnosed with something new. If your pet develops a chronic health problem (like chronic skin or ear problems for example), this could work to your advantage because you could pay the deductible once and then never again for veterinary care for that ongoing problem. If your pet manages to get a lot of different health problems, this method of applying the deductible may not be very helpful for you. Insurance companies may also give you some flexibility for what deductible you want to pay. Generally speaking, the higher your deductible is, the lower your monthly premiums will be.

Understand what co-insurance is. Co-insurance is the percentage of your vet bill that you will cover after your deductible is paid. Most pet insurance companies cover 80 or 90% of the bill after the deductible, leaving you to pay the other 10-20%.

Here is an example calculation for a pet with a \$500 annual deductible and 80% co-insurance:

Vet bill = \$5000.00 You are responsible for \$500 and 20% of 4500.00 = \$900

You would pay your bill of \$5000 and your insurance company would reimburse you for \$3600.

Planning ahead for the possibility of emergency vet care will help you immensely if you ever need to use it!

WEBSITE SEARCH AVAILABLE (NEW)

In support of our goal to educate our clients and have them play an active role in the care of their pet through informed decisions, we have a new tool available on our webstore. Over 168 client educational articles are available, in addition to our own educational articles. Want to know more, or can't find what you are looking for. Let us know and we will do what we can to help.

WEBSTORE

HEAD TO OUR WEBSITE and Click on the webstore icon on 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! You can sign up from the Gorham Animal Hospital website, please call if you have any questions or require assistance.



From our Family to yours, wishing you and your Family a Safe and Joyous Holiday Season

