Winter Newsletter 2020

As the holidays approach, while everything else in our lives has been altered, many of the pet hazards remain the same! It is important to ensure their eating and exercise habits are not altered. In particular keep your pets clear of toxic plants, xmas and holiday decorations, and some out of the ordinary “treats”.

The xmas tree should be anchored to prevent fall injury as well as spilling tree water; especially containing fertilizers. The stagnant water is a breeding ground for bacteria, easily upsetting stomachs if consumed.

A reminder to kid proof the house, any small ornaments can become ingested by a pet leading to gastrointestinal upset, or in the worse case scenario, result in emergency foreign body surgery.

Consider silk or plastic plants, or a pet safe bouquet from the florist. Mistletoe and Holly can cause stomach upset, the former may even lead to cardiovascular problems. Note many lilly varieties can led to kidney failure in cats.

If you are lucky to have a feline friend give you a kiss, you are aware of the roughness of their tongues. When licking linear objects; tinsel, yarn, string,ribbon or even dental floss, they can swallow them and potentially lead to obstruction and possible surgery. Be particularly aware of stringlike hazards this time of year.

Lit candles should be placed on a stable surface. I have a number of realistic flickering candles, a safe replacement when knocked over.

Electrical wires, batteries and broken decorations should be kept out of paws reach. Animals can burn their mouths or cause damage to their mouth and digestive tracts.

Human foods can pose risks as well. Avoid high fatty contented foods; gravies, meats and NUTS that can cause life threatening pancreatitis. Ensure compost is sealed and safely stored. Keep coffee and chocolate out of reach. Xylitol, used to sweeten many products is a common toxicity. NO BONES PLEASE.

COCONUT OIL in small amounts may cause stomach upset, or diarrhea. Coconut water is very high in potassium and should never be given to a pet.

Grapes and raisins are toxic leading to kidney failure. Onions, garlic and chives can upset gastrointestinal irritation and can lead to red blood cell damage. These are especially toxic in cats. Large amounts in dogs put them at risk.

MILK should NOT be fed to dog.s or CATS. Dairy based products can cause diarrhea and vomiting, and are a common food allergy.

Raw/undercooked meats, eggs and bone

Worth repeating, raw diets are not a nutritionally balanced diet, especially of concern in young growing animals or in the elderly. Bacteria such as Salmonella and Ecoli pose a risk not just for the pet, but for the people living with them. Raw eggs can interfere with Biotin absorption and lead to poor skin and coat problems. Bones, cooked or uncooked are a health risk to your pets. They can choke, or have potentially fatal bowel perforations.

Alcohol and marijuana products should always be kept out of reach.

To spoil or not to spoil? Spoil!! Toys should be basically indestructible. Kongs that can be stuffed with healthy treats and snacks are an excellent stocking stuffer. Kitty cats would love a ball, too big to swallow, a stuffed catnip toy, or my favourite the cat dancer.

Lastly, ensure, as in the rest of the year that medications are kept safely locked away. Human medication consumption is one of the most common toxicities now presented to emergency clinics.

Despite our best efforts, our sneaky pets can get into things. If you suspect that your pet has ingested something poisonous, please call us immediately. Our number, the emergency clinic number and poison control number should be on the fridge. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is open 24/7 and their number is 1-888-426-4435.

Marijuana Toxicity in Dogs

Marijuana toxicity usually happens after consumption of a ‘stash’, I have seen several dogs who ingested infused brownies. Symptoms occur within 30-90 mins. Symptoms include incoordination ,listlessness, slow heart rate and possibly urinary incontinence. The effects can last for several days as it becomes stored in fat deposits within the body.

If less than 30 mins have passed, there may be some benefit to induce vomiting. Once sedation is on board, it may be dangerous to try and have them vomit, running the risk of aspiration pneumonia. Activated charcoal is often used with poisoning to coat the whole intestinal system trapping toxins so they are eliminated when the charcoal is passed. Supportive treatment including fluid support and maintaining body temperature are carried out. In most cases a full recovery is expected.

The use of CBD oil in pets for medical purposes has not yet been studied to discover benefits or any side effects. Hence, products that are already FDA approved and have proven to be both effective and safe will always be recommended. It is currently not legal for a veterinarian to prescribe any of these products. Note there is always a potential for drugs to interact so ensure that we are aware of any supplements being given to your pet.

**Tick/Flea preventatives should be used 12 months/year in Newmarket.** We have the tick that carries lyme disease. On those winter warm days above zero, the parasite is both out and capable of transmitting disease. Currently heartworm preventative is only recommended during mosquito season June-nov in our area. If travelling outside Canada during the winter months please discuss your pets requirements.

**Allergies.Probably the most common, frustrating and expensive disease we encounter.**

Most allergic pets have some combination of food, parasite or airborne allergies. The first basic recommendation is to not feed people food, avoid plastic food and water bowls, and ensure regular flea and tick preventatives are used 12 months/year.

If a pet consumes a product with an ingredient to which they react, the residual allergic effects can last for several months. There is no accurate food allergy test. It is trial and error. To evaluate a pet for a food allergy, they are put on a prescription novel protein diet for a minimal 3 month period. No other treats or food should be given during this time. If they inadvertently eat something else, the 3 months should start again. Only 80% of pets with food allergies will respond favourably to a food trial. It is especially important that food trials are carried out with prescripltion veterinary diets to ensure consistent and predictable ingredients.

The most common environmental allergy is dust house mites. We can’t ever eliminate this allergic response, but there are some things that will help your pet. Dust mites live off dead skin from animals and humans so are most commonly found in bedding or pet sleeping areas. They prefer to live in high humidity environments. How can their numbers be reduced?

1. Ideally keep pets off bedding. If not possible, cover mattresses with plastic or impermeable barriers and wash and heat dry (use sanitization cycle) bedding weekly.
2. Avoid feather pillows and bedding.
3. Wash pet bedding weekly. Replace bedding every 6 months. Cover bedding material with plastic.
4. Choose furniture that does not easily retain dust. Ie a closed bookshelf versus open one. Use washable drapes versus blinds. Wooden versus uupholstery etc.
5. If a pet is lying on an upholstered chair, consider using a plastic /anti bed wetting mattress pad.
6. Launder toys weekly
7. Frequent dusting and vacuuming. (try and do so when pet is not present ).
8. Change furnace/air conditioning filters frequently. Try and keep humidity of the housrehold keep pets out of high humidity areas including bathrooms, basements or laundry rooms.
9. REGULAR USE OF FLEA CONTROL PRODUCTS on all pets in a household is recommended. This has been associated with lowering the level of house mites.
10. Remove carpets, keep animals out of carpeted rooms. Use rugs that can be cleaned weekly and heat dried.

Diets and heart disease in pets.

Cats fed exclusively an all fish diet were found to develop heart disease. It was discovered that cats require taurine supplementation to stay healthy as they are not able to make their own. Today with the commercially available diets this is rarely found unless a cat iis fed a unbalanced or vegetarian diet.

Surprisingly some breeds of dogs have been found to develop cardiac disease as a consequence of taurine deficiency.. Dogs are actually known to be able to make taurine from other sulfur containing amino acids in their diet. Taurine is usually recycled in their small intestine however some various dietary factors could affect this process. With supplementation of taurine these breeds improved.

Most recently Golden Retreivers have been recognized to be developing cardiomyopathy?? Taurine blood levels of some of these dogs has been within normal reference range. The common link appears to be grain free diets with lentils and peas (lentils) as their base ingredient. There are NO PRESCRIPTION THERAPEUTIC VETERINARY DIETS (Hills, royal canin purina), often used for allergy patients, that have been associated with the development of cardiomyopathy in this breed. There is no specific benefit to having a grain free diet. The prescription diets ingredients are not chosen because they are grain free. **The ’grain free’ label is for marketing purposes only.**

Although not routinely done, if a pet known to be at risk is fed a grain free diet (American Cocker Spaniel, Golden Retreiver, Newfoundland, Dalmation) consider switching to a veterinary therapeutic diet or a commercially available grain diet.

NO BONES ABOUT IT.

Lots of bone products have been marketed towards animal consumption. Processed bones have been smoke dried, baked or seasoned. They have been associated with choking, gastrointestinal upsets, blockage, cuts, bleeding from the rectum and DEATH. Uncooked butcher bones pose the same risk. Bones should never be fed to pets.

Anal Glands. These are two sacs found on either side of the rectum. The dead fish smelling contents are usually expressed during stress and with normal bowel movements. Both cats and dogs have these glands. Bacteria can build up creating an infection within the sac. As the anal glands swell, the pet is painful and may be seen licking the area, or dragging their bum. A reluctance to defecate, inappetence, crying or constipation can develop. . As the pressure builds, the anal gland can actually burst. Underlying allergies may play a role in the development of anal gland disease. Anal gland abscesses should be treated immediately. Treatment involves anti inflammatory medications to reduce swelling and pain. Antibiotics and recheck evaluations to look for concurrent illness or recurrence.

Although the glands are not required for your pet’s health, surgical removal is a last resort for chronic anal gland abscess animals. Many of these animals are recognized to benefit from a veterinary prescription diet formulated for allergies.

SEPRATION ANXIETY AND COVID

Our lives and those of our pets have been drastically changed over the last 8 months. Many families have brought in new pets, and others have become comfortable with having a new routine with someone always at home. Pets will have their worlds upturned with the return of kids to school and parents to work. For some this will mark the first time alone in a long timer or ever. Animals may experience separation anxiety and the associated perception of being abandoned. Although the animals that develop separation anxiety are unpredictable, there are certainly higher risk patients.

Senior animals like people become less tolerant of changes. Sudden or frequent variations of their routine are stressful.

Newly adopted animals may have a higher rate of separation anxiety. This could be a pre existing behaviour leading to their surrender, or whether the upheaval of their lives plays a role. The presence of an owner may help a pet with pre existing behaviour issues settle or cope.

Puppies can benefit from learning to be comfortable being left alone. Crates can be the pups den or safe space and offer comfort.

What can be done now??

Consider leaving the home for short periods, gradually increasing the length of time. Note a pet will associate you picking up keys, purse , coat etc with leaving the home, mix this up. Each and every time a pet is left alone, regardless of for how long owners can off er a special treat. Ideally lasting longer for your departure. Stuffed or frozen kong contents or food puzzles may be of benefit.

Many of you have used Feliway the happy cat pheromone to help with anxiety in cats. There are also DAP or dog appeasing pheromones available. They are available both a plug in diffusers, but also as collar.

We should gradually adjust our schedule to a realistic one that can be continued when life returns to “normal”. For instance, maybe that morning walk will get shorter, and the evening one longer.

Older animals should be brought in for an exam, and any necessary geriatric diagnostics carried out. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate pain from anxiety. Pain can lead to anxiety. It is important that age related pain, common with osteoarthritis in older pets, is managed before other stressors are placed on a pet.

For pets with a history of anxiety, that have appeared “better” since they are accompanied, consider videotaping a pet when you are out of the house (set up your smart phone). If signs of anxiety are present; salivating, pacing, barking, or panting consider the use of a nutraceutical calming agent. (zylkene or anxitane which are mild and trypsin based products). While the owner is still at home, try and determine the combination of pheromones, nutriceuticals and medications and their doses that might be required. Remember that most animals are resilient to change, but for those who have concerns prompt action is required.

Without intervention separation anxiety will worsen with repeated experience. The longer it occurs the more difficult it becomes to treat. The problem can severely impact a pets health and well being and needs to be recognized. Veterinary behaviourists are available for consultations to offer individual councilling.

COVID WHAT IT MEANS TO US

Our current guidelines continue to client access to the veterinary hospital. The quality of the care our pets receive is not compromised. Upon arrival to the veterinary hospital please be aware of clients, staff and pets in the parking lot. PLEASE SLOW DOWN WHEN ENTERING THE PARKING LOT.

Call and notify us of your arrival, our staff will obtain a quick history and bring your pet inside. Our veterinarians can contact you via phone to ensure all your questions and concerns are addressed. Our front examination has a huge window to which you are welcome to look. Less plausible as the weather turns colder…

The veterinarians will communicate any examination findings and any treatment or diagnostic recommendations. The staff will bring any food, medications and the pets back. Payment can now be processed outdoors.

As a consequence of COVID and the higher staffing requirement, we have shortened the hours slightly. We will still accommodate animals being brought to the clinic and left for an examination at no additional charge. When the veterinarian has accessed the animal, they will call with any recommendations. Please ensure an updated contact number where you will be at has been provided.

When convenient the pet can be picked up later in the day.

**CLIENT SERVICES WE OFFER**

**Webstore** ; thousands of products available througha veterinary group purchasing at discounted pricing.

Can automatically re order some foods with further discount applied. Ensure that diets are always available when you need them.

NOTE DURING COVID EXPECT 2-3 BUSINESS DAYS FOR FOOD DELIVERY

For orders over 125.00 can be delivered at no additional charge to YOUR door

**PETDESK APP.** We have purchased an app for our clients. Download onto your phone to allow connection to the pets medical history. All reminders, medications and lab results will be accessible. In an emergency all doses and medications are viewable. Vaccine history is available for the groomers.

You can also receive text reminders and request food or medication renewals.

**Gorham animal website**; petcare information. Number of pet related articles written by our veterinarians on commonly seen illnesses including osteoarthritis and allergies.

We have purchased the **lifelearn** client educational articles to allow clients to search for specific topics.

**OWNER ABSCENT APPOINTMENTS are available during the day when your schedule doesn’t allow you to be present, or your pet needs to be seen today and we have no “available” appointments.** The animal is left for a medical examination and the owner ensures a contact number is left with us. After the examination is performed, the owner will be called with treatment and any diagnostic recommendations. Pick your pet up during our regular business hours when its convenient for you.

**HOUSECALLS** have been suspended during COVID and the winter weather.

If you have any questions or require any assistance accessing any of these services, please feel free to contact us at 905 895-4552.

I and my staff have had additional demands placed upon us both during COVID as well as a consequence of the shortage of qualified veterinarians and registered technicians. I thank our clients for their understanding. I am thankful for the assistance of several locum veterinarians in the short term. To ensure my mental health, I will be taking 4-6 weeks of holidays over the next year, and may not be able to find veterinary coverage at our clinic. I will have arranged veterinary coverage to ensure the continued care of your pets with the veterinary referral center. Jaime and Mikayla, my registered veterinary technicians, will still be available to assist you.

The projected dates are listed below, please plan accordingly. Prescription renewals should be done in advance of these dates.

Our orders are not as predictable, so please allow for 2-3 days delivery for most items. Pre-order items required over the holiday season.

A big thank you to my staff Mikayla, Julie (yes she is new), Jacob and Lindsay for all the additional hours worked and flexibility shown. Very much appreciated. We look forward to having Jaime return in the new year from her maternity leave. Hannah has brought much joy to her parents.

Our Holiday hours are as follows.

In the event of an emergency outside of our hours please contact the

404 vet referral emergency

Animal health partners

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