



Governor's Avenue Animal Hospital Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 3

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Summer 2011



GAAH donated a gift basket to the 4H Basket Auction on March 25, 2011.

Dr. Meryl Kern gave a talk and demonstration about **acupuncture** in animals to the **Mispiration Kennel Club** on June 7, 2011. As a thank you from the kennel club they donated \$50 to a charity. Dr. Kern had the money donated to CCI (Canine Companions for Independence) because that is where her dog, Verdi came from!

Senior Pets On The Move

Jan Sosnowski, DVM

The average dog, excluding the Giant breeds, lives about 14-17 years. Arthritis is one of the most common ailments affecting our pets as they age. Among the medium and larger dogs the inability to move around (specifically get up and go out to the bathroom) is the most common reason for putting our older pets to sleep. Hips, elbows and stifles (knees) are the most frequently affected joints. As a general rule a dog that is reluctant to go up the stairs is sore in the hind limbs while one that is slow coming down the stairs hurts in front. Don't forget the cats. They get arthritis too.

Animals often do not show actual "lameness" until it is too late to make significant improvement in their condition. By the time we see evidence of "osteoarthritis" or boney changes on the x-rays, there is little we can do. Cartilage is the compressible cushion on the ends of the bones. It does not show up on an x-ray except as a "black space" between the bones. One of the things we look for is a "narrowing" of the joint space which tells us the cartilage in that joint is wearing or thinning and is one of the earliest signs of joint disease.

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Heat Stroke

Pam McGinnis and Chrissy Smith

Animals have a higher chance of developing heat stroke if they are young, very old, or overweight. There are also several breeds that are predisposed to this life threatening episode. Breeds that have a short or flattened nose such as, boxers, bulldogs, boston terriers, lhasa apso, shih tzu, and pekingese. Dogs with dark coats and dogs that have respiratory problems are very prone to heat stroke. Dogs need to pant to keep cool. A normal temperature is 100.0 F to 102.0 F. They have sweat glands on the pads of their feet and on their nose, as a dog runs and plays the pads are unable to sweat to cool their body down. Dogs are simply more susceptible to heat exhaustion than humans. Too much heat exposure can cause a dog to suffer significant brain and organ damage and even death.

Symptoms of heat stroke:

Excessive panting
Dark or bright red tongue and gums
Staggering
Stupor
Seizures
Bloody diarrhea
Vomiting
Coma
Confusion
Weakness
Shaking



*Picture to right:
Chloe Monster
Owned by Dr. Kern*

Any animals showing these signs need immediate veterinary intervention. In a very short amount of time, your pet's temperature can soar to 109.0 F which is fatal.

What you can do prior to transporting pet to the veterinarian:

Eliminate the heat source – (put your pet in cooler environment)
Use cool water on the dog not COLD
Use a fan
Shade

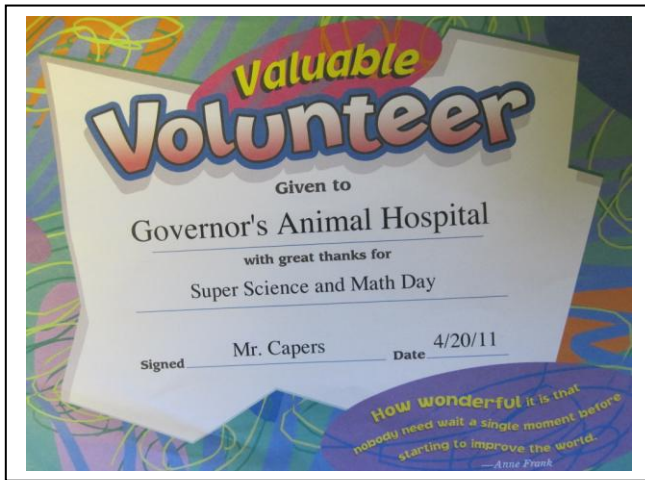
DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS IN A CAR.

**MAKE SURE OUTSIDE ANIMALS HAVE SHADE ALL DAY AND LOTS OF FRESH COOL WATER.
KNOW WHAT THE TEMPERATURE IS BEFORE WALKING YOUR DOG.**

Raffle Winners!

Our monthly raffle winners are:

- March 2011 winner is Patricia Buchman and she selected a dog bowl.
- April 2011 winner is Elaine DeBiase and she selected a chihuahua figurine.
- May 2011 winner is Michael Morgan and he selected a dog bowl.



**Towne Point Elementary
Super Science/Math Day
April 20, 2011**

Certificate of Appreciation to GAAH for having
Dr. Sosnowski give a talk to the kids!

Continued from page 1 – Senior Pets on the Move

So what signs do we look for to tell us our pet may be starting to feel some joint pain?

- Stiffness when first getting up after lying down for a while
- Sitting with one hip cocked to the side instead of evenly on both seat bones
- Moving one hind foot forward slightly before sitting down
- Reluctance to go up or down stairs (in the earliest stages it may only be a slight hesitation)
- Stiffness after exercise, sometimes immediately but may be the next day
- Loss of muscle mass which is usually most noticeable in the hind legs but can be found in the front limbs when you know what to look for
- Cats may start missing the litter pan because it hurts to climb the high walls of the pan.
- No longer jumping onto the bed, couch or other sleeping place

What can we do to prevent or minimize arthritis?

There are a lot of “joint supplements” on both the human and veterinary market now. These supplements are basically “herbal” remedies and as such are not regulated by the FDA for either people or pets. These supplements are not pain medicines per say. You do not give one like aspirin and expect immediate relief. They need to build up in the joint to do their job so all of these recommend a “loading dose” for the first 4-6 weeks. Then they do relieve pain by making the joint fluid thicker so it is a better lubricant and by removing the toxic by-products of joint inflammation. These supplements have been used in horses for close to 30 years now and are rapidly gaining popularity for dogs and cats. They come in many forms; liquid, pills capsules, chewables and injectables. They come separately and in combinations as well as various strengths.

In a double blind study several years ago on the human side, they could not show any measurable effect by these supplements but overwhelmingly the people on the supplements reported less pain and greater ease of movement. This has also been our impression with animals.

Another study (again on the human side as they have more money for research) looked at over 40 brands of supplements and found that only 2 had the amount of active ingredient claimed on the label. This has been a hot topic because with no FDA oversight on the “nutraceuticals” more expensive does not necessarily mean better or stronger.

Our recommendations:

- Start medium to large breed dogs on a joint supplement at age 5-6.
- Start small dogs and cats on supplements around age 10.
- Start any pet that has had a fracture into a joint at the time of the injury.
- Start any pet with a diagnosed joint problem on supplements at the time of diagnosis. (hip dysplasia, Legg Calve Perthes)
- Any active hunting, field trial, agility or working dog should be on supplements when put into training. (The Dept of Agriculture beagles at the airport may be the exception as they are well adapted to walking around sniffing out food. Sorry beagle owners, I couldn't resist.)
- Maintain regular exercise although you may have to slow it down. Walking and swimming are both good forms of low impact exercise.