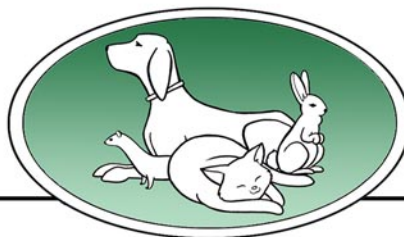


EAST VALLEY

5049 Upper 141st Street West



ANIMAL CLINIC

Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124



Paw Talk



A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

FALL 2015

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CONSERVATION CANINES

Around the planet, more and more species are threatened with extinction. Poaching of rhinos has increased 3,000% since 2007, and in Tanzania alone, more than 85,000 elephants have been illegally killed by poachers in the last five years, representing a loss of 60% of their population. Despite international efforts to protect these animals, they may become extinct within our lifetime.

Now, the protection efforts have turned to dogs. The African Wildlife Foundation has initiated a Conservation Canine Program to train sniffer dogs to detect illegal wildlife contraband. The dogs and their handlers are being deployed at key airports and seaports throughout the African continent in an effort to thwart traffickers before they can export their illegal contraband. Dogs can detect tiny amounts of ivory or rhino horn dust, and boast a 90% accuracy rate. Learn more about their program at www.AWF.org.

What makes a good detection dog? High drive, intelligence, friendliness to people and a strong

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Dental Health Month is Coming

February is *Pet Dental Health Month*, and we are excited to celebrate by helping keep your pet's mouth healthy! By the age of 3 years, most pets have some degree of dental disease. Dental disease can lead to pain and tooth loss, and the resulting infections can spread throughout the body and damage other organs. Regular home and professional dental care are the most important things you can do to help prevent the progression of dental disease. We are offering a discount on a dental cleaning during the months of December, January and February. Hurry and schedule your appointment, as the spots go quickly!

This year we are happy to be offering a new product that can help keep your dog's teeth healthy, Oravet Dental Chews. A totally new type of chew, this product can help mechanically remove plaque from your dog's teeth as he or she chews, and it contains delmopinol, which helps provide a barrier on the teeth that prevents plaque and tartar build up. Plus, it leaves your pet's breath smelling great!

Please stop in or call if you have any questions about your pet's dental care or to check out the new Oravet Dental Chews.



Topical Creams

Some pets like licking lotions and creams off of their owner's skin. It's a weird habit, but until recently, a harmless one.

There are currently a large number of medications that are available for humans in topical cream form. These medications include hormone replacements, acne and other skin treatments, and pain medication, to name a few. Unfortunately, dogs and cats don't care what's in the lotion and it is getting them in trouble.

The FDA has recently reported three cases of cats that have died from licking topical pain medication off of their owner's skin. These cats developed kidney failure and died despite veterinary care. There are also cases of dogs developing unusual signs from licking hormone replacement creams.

What can you do to protect your pet? Most importantly, try to prevent your pet from licking your skin, especially after applying any topical medications. Wash your hands and allow time after applying a topical medication before you touch your pet. Also, never use human medications on your pet without





Aging

For centuries, people searched for the "Fountain of Youth." As yet, no one has found it. We have, however, discovered ways to extend life and increase the quality of life for both humans and pets. Pets are now living longer than ever, thanks to increased owner awareness, improved nutrition and advances in veterinary care.

As mammals age, many physical changes occur. Our skin becomes less elastic, eyesight, hearing and even sense of taste decreases, our immune systems become weaker and we become less tolerant of stress.

Pets age more quickly than humans. There are no hard and fast numbers, but in general, cats are considered seniors around age 10 or 11, small dogs around age 9, medium dogs at age 8, large dogs at age 7, and giant breeds are considered senior as early as age 6. While disease can happen at any life stage, seniors are at higher risk for a number of health issues, including:

1. Arthritis
2. Cancer – responsible for more than half the deaths of dogs over the age of 10.
3. Dental disease
4. Heart disease
5. Kidney disease
6. Hyperthyroidism (cats) and hypothyroidism (dogs)
7. Cognitive dysfunction

Many conditions can be managed, treated and sometimes cured when caught early. There is no substitute for regular preventive care, because it allows your veterinarian to detect illness before outward signs appear. These days, longevity and high quality of life are attainable goals for most pets.



Quality of Life

A high quality of life is usually the primary goal we have for our beloved senior pets. Luckily, there are a number of simple things you can do to help ensure your pet's comfort and happiness.

- Keep your pet pain free. Arthritis, dental disease and itchy skin are among the problems associated with aging that can cause pain and discomfort. Regular veterinary care can help ensure your pet is comfortable.
- Exercise, play and mental stimulation remain important aspects of senior life, but you may need to modify routines to accommodate your pet's physical restrictions.
- Provide a warm, comfortable bed in an area that is free of drafts.
- Skin and coat changes are common with aging, and senior cats are sometimes unable to groom themselves efficiently. Regular, gentle grooming sessions will benefit both dogs and cats by stimulating the skin and removing excess dirt, dander and fur.
- Vision changes can make negotiating your home a challenge for senior pets. Consider a nightlight for your cat if her vision is fading. Don't change litterbox or furniture locations. If your pet is blind, be sure to talk to her to let her know you're coming before picking her up.
- Pets are masters of observation, so hearing loss may not be obvious until it is quite advanced. Consider teaching your dog some hand signals, especially for sit, lie down, stay and come. Try not to startle your deaf pet.
- Mobility problems due to arthritis and other causes are common in older pets. Be sure food and water bowls are easily accessible. Be aware of slippery floors and stairways, which can be treacherous for arthritic dogs. Consider putting litter boxes on each floor of your home, and use litter boxes with low sides so your cat can easily climb in and out. Consider a ramp or stairs to your cat's favorite perch. Ramps are also helpful for dogs to get in cars. If possible, teach your dog to use a ramp before she needs it, otherwise, begin training your dog to walk on it with the ramp flat on the ground before using it to access your car.
- As they age, pets' nutritional needs change. Diet plays an important role in skin, kidney and heart health. Discuss nutrition with your veterinarian, and ask if any supplements, such as fish oil or glucosamine, may promote better health.

■ Obesity exacerbates many health conditions. Studies show that healthy weight dogs live an average of two years longer than overweight dogs, and in rats, calorie restriction can double their life expectancy!

- Reduce anxiety by limiting interactions with children, puppies and kittens.
- Observe your pet's reactions to things. Perhaps she once loved the dog park, but now gets anxious among too many strange dogs. If so, find another outlet where she's more comfortable.

Pets age much more quickly than humans, and health changes can occur quickly as well. Consider taking your senior pet to the veterinarian twice per year. Many diseases can be detected early with veterinary examinations and diagnostics, often yielding a better outcome and lower cost of care.



Cognitive Dysfunction

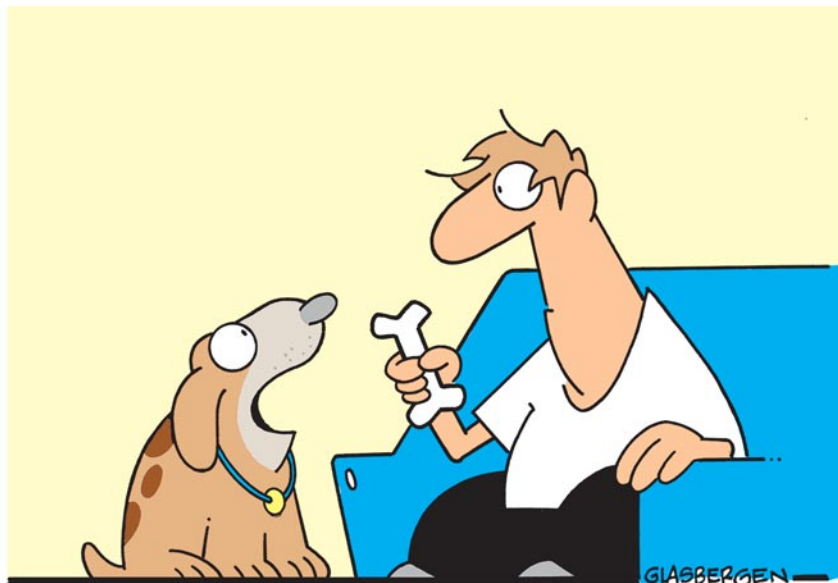
The signs may be subtle at first. Your elderly cat may wake you with an unwanted serenade at 2 a.m. Despite being housebroken, your senior dog may occasionally start to soil in the house. As with people, age-related cognitive changes can occur in dogs and cats, and they're typically labeled as "cognitive dysfunction syndrome." The five most common signs are described with the acronym DISHA:

1. Disorientation
2. Interaction changes (with people or other pets)
3. Sleep/wake cycle changes
4. Housetraining loss
5. Activity level changes (decreased or increased)

Additional signs may include increased anxiety and learning or memory changes. All of these signs can be caused by other medical conditions as well. A decrease in playfulness may be due to the pain of arthritis, for example, and thyroid conditions in dogs can lead to "mental dullness" and lethargy. For this reason, it's crucial to rule out other medical issues prior to making a diagnosis of cognitive dysfunction, and therefore your veterinarian may suggest blood tests and other lab work.

Dogs and cats don't get Alzheimer's disease, however their brain can undergo progressive changes very similar to those of human patients with early stages of Alzheimer's. Some studies have shown cognitive changes may occur earlier and more frequently than you might think; one study found that 68% of dogs aged 15-16 years had one or more signs of cognitive dysfunction, and 28% of dogs aged 11 to 12 had at least one sign. Different breeds and sizes of dogs age more quickly than others, and researchers have found some learning deficits in dogs as young as 6 years old.

The good news is that there are a number of management and treatment options that have been clinically shown to help in some cases. They include medications, special diets (high in antioxidants and low in phosphorous) and certain dietary supplements. As with most health issues, the earlier treatment begins, the better the prognosis. If you notice signs of cognitive dysfunction in your aging pet, please don't pass them off as "old age" problems that can't be addressed. Talk to your veterinarian, because these days, the golden years can be brighter than ever before for senior pets.



"You are older than I am. How come your nose isn't turning gray?"

Dementia Dogs

"Kaspa has given us our life back."
That moving statement about a Labrador Retriever is from a woman participating in a small pilot study in Scotland called the Dementia Dog Project, which is investigating whether assistance dogs could improve the lives of dementia patients and their caregivers.

Living with dementia is challenging for both patients and caregivers. The Dementia Dog Project "...aims to prove that dogs can help people with dementia maintain their waking, sleeping and eating routine, remind them to take medication, improve confidence, keep them active and engaged with their local community, as well as providing a constant companion who will reassure when facing new and unfamiliar situations."

Four dogs were trained and carefully assigned to selected patients for the pilot project. The dogs provide at least three assistive tasks, which may include reminders (such as taking medicine), support for daily routines (such as waking, eating, toileting) and "soft support" (such as companionship).

The assistance dogs have been in place since June 2013, and their progress will be tracked throughout their working lives. The stories from the initial pilot project are heartwarming, and provide a strong indication that the project is working and is worth continued study. Read more about this program, including comments from study participants, at dementiadog.org.

"Old dogs, like old shoes, are comfortable. They might be a bit out of shape and a little worn around the edges, but they fit well."

– Bennie Wilson

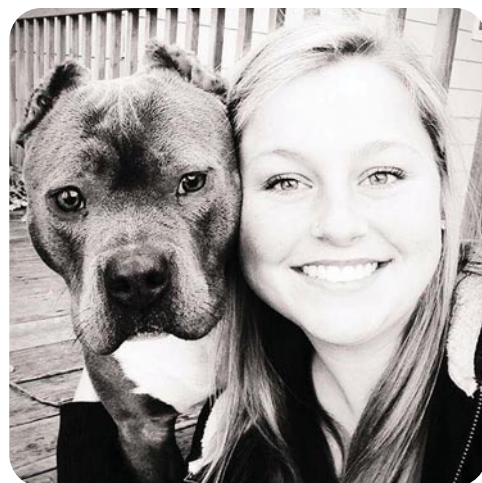


Meet Ashley

Ashley is the newest technician to join East Valley Animal Clinic. Ashley graduated from Argosy University in 2014 and also has a bachelor's degree in animal science from the University of Wisconsin River Falls. She is one of the many certified veterinary technicians available to help you and your pets.

Ashley keeps busy outside of the clinic as a new home owner. She and her boyfriend, Patrick, purchased their first home last winter. They share their home with Addie, a 2 1/2-year-old pit bull that Ashley rescued. Ashley says of Addie: "She is a sensitive soul."

When she has free time, Ashley enjoys being with her family, going anywhere on a motorcycle, and spending time walking Addie. Ashley appreciates that everyone at East Valley has been so welcoming and willing to teach her the ropes. We are excited to have her join the East Valley Animal Clinic team. Please stop by and say hello. You'll recognize Ashley by the smile she always has on her face!



Ashley and Addie



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CONSERVATION CANINES *continued from pg. 1*

desire to play are some of the critical traits. To the dogs, it's all a game. During their training, dogs learn that the reward for finding the desired scent is a play session with their favorite toy.

Other organizations are using dogs for similar purposes. Here in the U.S., a group at the University of Washington also has a program called Conservation Canines. Their dogs are trained to search for specific types of scat (feces). Scat samples are collected and analyzed, and can help researchers determine species abundance, distribution and physiological health. This program was pioneered in 1997, and since then "has been non-invasively monitoring a diverse array of threatened and endangered species around the world, including tigers, orcas, fishers, spotted owls, bears, wolves, caribou, giant armadillos, giant anteaters, pumas, jaguars, and even Pacific pocket mice."

Another remarkable aspect of the U.W. Conservation Canines program is that the dogs are all rescues. High drive dogs often end up in shelters because their owners just can't provide enough physical and mental stimulation to keep them out of trouble. Those same dogs shine in working situations, and now the exceptional trainers at this clever organization are harnessing that drive to help save other species.

Learn more at www.conservationbiology.uw.edu/conservation-canines