

Tails from the Dog House

The Quarterly Newsletter from the
Sardis Animal Hospital



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New Canine Influenza Jumps the Fence From Horses

We have in past editions published a number of articles about the alarming frequency with which our world is hit with new plagues both animal and human. For example, SARS and similar respiratory viral diseases, Mad Cow and Avian Influenza which rears its ugly head from time to time. The latest is a type of Influenza virus that has jumped the fence from horses to dogs. Confirmed reports originated in late 2004 from Florida where racing greyhounds were first diagnosed with the highly contagious respiratory illness. Since then the virus has been found in dogs from California, Oregon, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Washington DC. There are no reports that we are aware of from Canada, but only a small number of Canadian dogs have been tested. The dog flu virus has been identified as Influenza A subtype H3N8. The parent Equine Influenza virus in question has been known for over 40 years.

Viruses tend to be quite host specific, infecting only a certain species or closely related species. For example, Canine Distemper will also infect foxes, wolves and coyotes, but not cats. Feline Distemper may infect your kitty as well as lions and tigers, but not dogs or people. Rabies on the other hand, can infect many mammalian species. Host specificity is a function of the genetic make-up of the particular virus. When a virus jumps across its usual species boundaries, it is generally due to a mutation in the viral genes that govern host specificity. In the case of the Dog Flu virus, the mutation is thought to occur in the hemagglutinin gene, which codes for the viral amino acid sequences that determine species specificity. What triggers the mutation is not known.

The new Dog Flu is reported to be highly contagious. Symptoms are a low moist cough (similar to kennel cough), fever, and a thick nasal discharge, similar to that seen in canine distemper. The initial outbreak involved 88 dogs, 2 of which died of secondary pneumonia. Treatment of infected dogs involves supportive care and isolation from other dogs.

Flu viruses in nature are highly adaptable, contagious and can mimic other respiratory conditions. Every fall and winter we get warnings about flu cases spreading quickly. Funny thing, I've just come down with a bit of a "cold", and I'm feeling a little *horse!*





Staff News

We did it again!!



Sardis Animal Hospital Passes AAHA Inspection

On September 18, your animal hospital was inspected by the American Animal Hospital Association, and once again passed the rigorous certification process. AAHA member hospitals are inspected every 3 years to ensure compliance with the high standards of the association. Submitting to the inspection process is voluntary. We participate in order to keep up with the ever changing expectations of our profession.

The AAHA has pioneered the inspection and certification process for animal hospitals and is recognized internationally for its high standards. In order to certify as a member hospital, each facility is checked for its adherence to the practice standards laid down by the AAHA. The requirements include standards for housekeeping, physical facilities, surgery, anesthesia, laboratory, dental, radiology, pharmacy, medical records, office organization, safety, and continuing education. The standards far exceed those required by provincial or state veterinary licensing bodies. The inspection process evaluates not only the physical issues, but the quality of the work being done in the hospital. For example, radiographs need to be submitted to a Board Certified Veterinary Radiologist to certify that films are properly taken and are of diagnostic quality. Medical records are randomly checked to ensure compliance with current standards. This year the inspection involved an 88 page detailed list of items to be evaluated.

Certification by the AAHA is an honour and is a message to pet owners that the doctors and staff of a member hospital care enough about their work and their work environment to go to extra lengths to assure their clients that their hospitals are properly constructed, well equipped and that up to date, quality work is being done behind the scenes. The AAHA logo displayed on our front door may be small, but its significance is large. Out of the approximately 450 veterinary practices in British Columbia, 25 are certified as AAHA member hospitals.

The Sardis Animal Hospital is proud to have maintained AAHA certification continually since 1982.

More In- spections



Radiology Department Receives Passing Grade in Provincial X-Ray Inspection Process.

The Sardis Animal Hospital has recently passed the Provincial Radiation Safety inspection of our X-ray department required by the BC Veterinary Association and the Workers Compensation Board. Radiography equipment is required to pass certain standards for X-ray shielding and accuracy of radiation output.

ed note: This is a good place to remind pet owners that continually ask us to X-Ray their pets without sedation that in so doing you are asking us to compromise our safety! Working around ionizing radiation is serious business and when we have to wrestle with a struggling pet to get proper positioning we risk getting too close to the x-ray beam. Your pet will get exposed on one visit, but we have to work with X-rays every day or our working lives. That puts us in a whole different category of health risk! Please be considerate of our safety. In addition, struggling pets often require retakes due to motion. This increases radiation exposure to the pet and staff. Costs also increase as more materials are consumed.



Medical Miracles - "Casper" Earle



Casper jogs with Brian Earle at recent Terry Fox Run

"Casper" a friendly 9 year old Golden Retriever is back to normal after a long battle with a life threatening blood disorder. It has been nearly two years since Dr Connie Stevenson diagnosed Immune Mediated Thrombocytopenia, a rare blood clotting disorder affecting platelets.

Casper and his owners, Bonnie and Brian Earle, bravely fought the nasty condition with a long course of immune suppressive drugs, numerous vet visits, blood tests and consultations with specialists. Through out the ordeal, Casper faced his challenges with courage and an intense desire to please that Golden Retrievers are known for. Casper is a regular fixture at the animal hospital now. He just trots in to his home away from home, wearing a fashionable scarf and proceeds to locate every staff member to say "Hi" and get a treat.

It's very rewarding for us at the animal hospital to watch such a lovely dog respond to complex treatments and to see the love, dedication and commitment of his owners to seeing things through to a happy conclusion.

Mistletoe and Holly can be Dangerous for Pets

Keep pets away from holliday ornamental plants. Some are toxic, not only to pets but to humans too, particularly small children.



Seasonal Issues

Holiday
treats can
make pets
sick

Chocolate
can be toxic
in some
circum-
stances

Antifreeze
causes
kidney fail-
ure and
death



Most cases
are beyond
help by the
time you are
aware of the
problem

Keep your
pet from
wandering

Store and
dispose
carefully

Holiday Treats are not for Pets !!

Holiday treats are meant for people, not pets. Fatty foods and sugary confections can rapidly become a health problem in pets that are not accustomed to them. Some can even be toxic to pets. And as for us too, the empty calories can cause unhealthy weight gain.

Be particularly wary about chocolate. The theobromine (relative of caffeine) that is in chocolate can cause hyperactivity, irregular heartbeat even seizures in small pets. Vomiting and diarrhea can also occur, and who wants a barfing dog or a cat with the runs on Christmas morning. Avoid leaving gifts of chocolate under the tree or in other places easily accessible to a snooping canine.

The effects of chocolate on a dog is related to the type of chocolate and the size of the dog. The darker, concentrated bakers type chocolates have much higher concentrations of caffeine like substances than do milk chocolates or confections coated with milk chocolate. A two pound chihuahua who has eaten dark, pure chocolate is more likely to get into trouble than a 120 pound rottie that has eaten a few milk chocolates.

Antifreeze - a Serious Winter Hazard for Pets

Winter has not officially started, yet we have already had several cases of antifreeze poisoning admitted to the animal hospital. One dog and one cat. Both were fatal. Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol, a substance that is highly toxic even in small amounts to both humans and pets. Antifreeze is sweet tasting and pets are attracted to it. They happily ingest it from spills on the ground or from open containers. The toxin produces severe, irreversible kidney damage within hours of ingestion and the patient dies of kidney failure. Indications that the pet has ingested antifreeze are often not apparent until the pet is in kidney failure and is brought to the animal hospital because it is sick.

Most antifreeze poisoned pets brought to us are beyond help by the time we see them. About the only ones we have saved are cases where ingestion was witnessed and the pet was brought to us immediately.

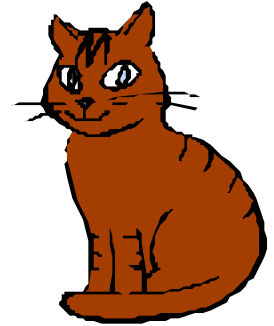
So what can you do? Preventing exposure is the only answer. Keep your vehicles in good mechanical order so dripping radiators and coolant hoses do not leave pools of antifreeze on the ground. If you change your coolant, be sure and place it in a secure closed container and promptly dispose of it in an environmentally sensitive manner. (Not down the drain!!) And most importantly, keep your pet from wandering. Most of the cases we see are in pets that leave home and visit the neighborhood. The pet who wanders into someone else's yard or workshop is generally the pet who gets poisoned. In those cases there are two guilty parties, the neighbour for leaving the stuff around and you for letting your pet wander.

Do not store antifreeze in pop bottles so children finding it will be enticed to drink it!!

Animal Trivia



Despite its reputation for being a finicky eater, the average cat will consume 127,750 calories a year, nearly twenty eight times its own weight in food and the same amount in liquids. A Cat is a true carnivore and cannot survive on a vegetarian diet



"Is this another chicken joke?" -
Joanne Whorley,
Rowan and
Martins
Laugh-In



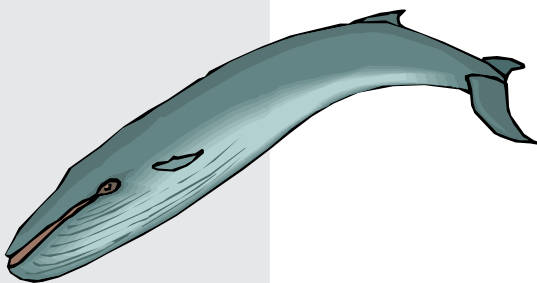
Brown eggs come from hens with red feathers and red ear lobes. White eggs come from hens with white feathers and white ear lobes. Egg colour is determined by the breed of hen and has no effect on quality, nutrients or flavor

Feeding certain dyes to hens can produce eggs with yolks and chicks of different colours.



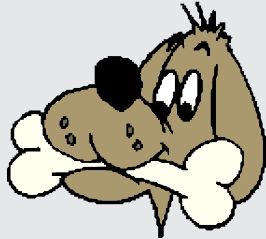
Camels have three eyelids to protect their eyes from blowing sand

Some frogs can be frozen solid and when thawed come back to life.



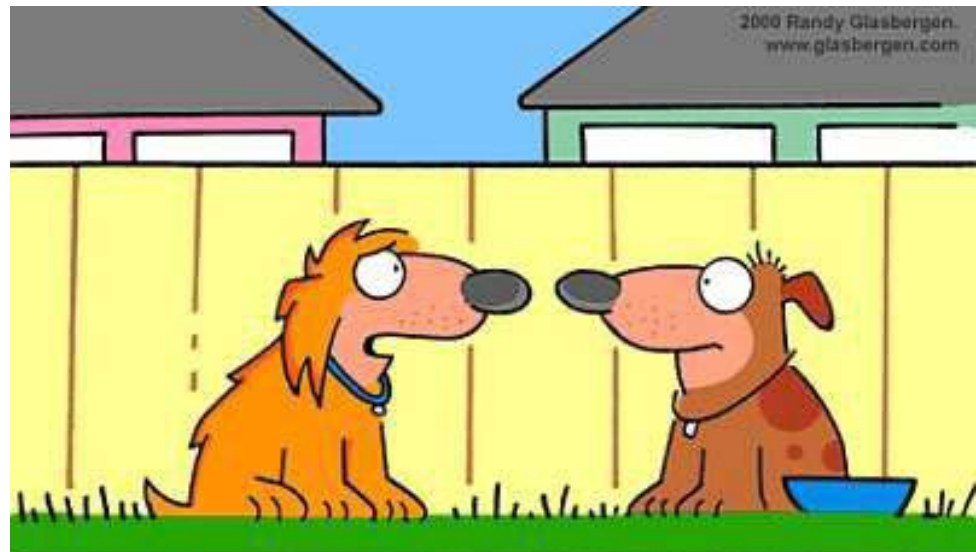
The Loudest Animal on Earth is the Blue Whale. It's extraordinarily loud whistle reaches 188 decibels and can be heard underwater for hundreds of miles

**Animal
Crackers-** a
place for
animal humor



Cyber-Mutts

Even Dogs Do IT...



"I MET SOMEONE WONDERFUL IN A CHAT ROOM...
AND THEN I FOUND OUT SHE'S A CAT!"

**New Dental
friendly diet
for cats**



Featured Product- New!!

Medi-Cal Feline Dental Formula

MEDI+CAL®



This excellent product from the Medi-Cal people has just been introduced to the line of veterinary prescription diets that we carry. It is intended to reduce plaque and tartar accumulation while providing excellent nutrition for adult and mature cats.

Cat's have a substantial collection of very nasty bacteria that live in the gum pockets around their teeth. These bacteria not only cause serious wound infections and abscesses when a cat bites but also contribute to gum disease, tooth decay, pain and loss of teeth. Plaque on the teeth becomes a breeding ground for these nasty and destructive germs.

The ability of a diet to substantially slow the accumulation of plaque and tartar is largely a function of the consistency of the crunchies. Newer pet food processing technology and dietary research has led to the development of diets such as this one.

Preventing tartar development completely or expecting diets alone to prevent every and all dental problem is not to be expected. Nor will existing dental disease disappear by just by changing the food. However, we believe products such as this are useful in slowing down the process and can recommend it as a long term preventive strategy. Its the next best thing to brushing and flossing your cat's teeth!!