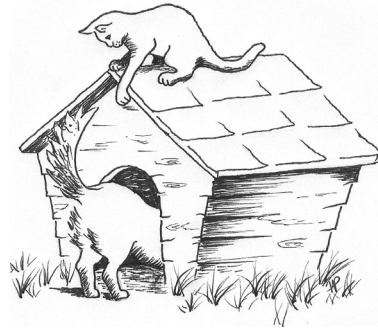


Tails from the Dog House

The Quarterly Newsletter from the
Sardis Animal Hospital



Fall 2011
Vol 9, No 3, pg 1

Are Dogs Sentient Beings?

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The longer I am around dogs, the more respect I have for the species. Each day I am awestruck at the intelligence of dogs, how they interact with us and their insight into the human equation. The domestication of dogs and our parallel development over time has created a bond that raises some interesting philosophical questions.

There is a classic episode of Star Trek the New Generation where the android "Data" is about to be impounded by a robotic scientist determined to dismantle him "for science." A trial ensues to decide if the artificial being Data is a sentient being with rights to self determination or if he is simply a machine that is the property of Star Fleet. The trial demonstrates that Data is intelligent, self aware, and has many human qualities such as courage, loyalty, kindness and an ability to gain the admiration, respect and even the love of the humans around him.

Sounds a little like a Golden Retriever, or most any dog for that matter. So what would happen if we had a trial to determine if dogs are sentient beings. How do they compare with us and what exactly is our role. Are dogs simply a chattel with which we can do as we please? Are we free to buy, sell, trade, or mistreat, dismantle and even experiment upon? Or is there a higher order of being for this noble species?

Let's be clear, I am not advocating that dogs have the right to run as they please, breed as they please and be free to live as some kind of 4 legged Hobo or run wild and live off the scraps of humanity as in some third world country or primitive society. When we humans domesticated the dog, as well as other animals, we, as a species should have assumed the role of being responsible stewards, not lord and master to do as we please. The animals that we have domesticated as pets deserve to be treated with the same dignity that a caring, responsible parent assumes for a child. Do we anything less, then we abdicate our role as caretakers and lower ourselves to some kind of feudal slave master. I do believe that our own worth is proportional to the way we treat the world around us, the animals, the planet and each other. I am gratified to see that attitudes and laws are changing in this regard. We have a growing body of laws and regulations that protect the rights of both domestic and wild animals.

So how sentient is the dog then? Is he aware of his own nature? I believe so. Is he aware of his surroundings? Certainly. Is he aware of his own distinctiveness? I think so. Can he interact in a positive way and communicate with his own species and other species (like us)? Yes. Does the dog remember his past? I believe he does to a significant degree. Can the dog show emotions? Form bonds? Most certainly! Does he understand the concept of tomorrow and is he capable of planning and setting goals? I don't think so but I have no way to test this. Then the ultimate philosophical / theological question - does the dog have a soul? This is a question I have been asked a good number of times, usually at the time that the life of a beloved pet ends. I have no solid answer for this, either for the dog or for myself.

The Star Trek trial ended with Data being proven to be a sentient being, with rights to self determination. How would the dog's trial end. If I were judge, I would say that dogs are a sentient being, but with limited rights to self determination. We need to have leash laws and fences and be caring responsible stewards of this species that we have essentially engineered to be our pets (created is too strong a word).

So in the end, I believe dogs are sentient beings. Oh, but... what about cats.....

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direct inquiries can be
made to:
staff@sardisvet.com

website:
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Welcome to Dr. Christa Dunsford

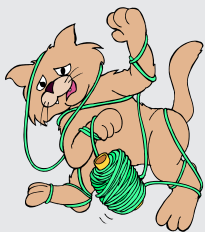
Staff News



We are pleased to introduce Dr. Christa Dunsford to our team of veterinary health care providers. Christa hails from Charlottetown and is a 2007 graduate of the Atlantic Veterinary College in Charlottetown, PEI.

Christa practiced in Cache Creek for one year after graduating. She then moved to Mission where she worked at several veterinary practices in the valley before joining our team.

Christa enjoys general practice and has a particular interest in preventive medicine. She and her husband share their home with a dog and a cat. Christa also enjoys horse back riding and has two horses of her own.



Seasonal Considerations

As cooler weather, holidays and longer, darker nights are upon us certain hazards develop for our four-legged friends. Here are some things to watch for:

- Letting the dog or cat out on dark rainy nights especially when you first come home from work. If you are not up to a walk on a cold wet evening, **MAKE SURE YOUR PET IS SUPERVISED, ON A LEAD, AND THAT YOUR GATES ARE CLOSED AND SECURE!** This time of year we see an increase in car accident cases and lost pets.
- Holiday treats and goodies. Halloween and Christmas are prime times for dogs to get into chocolates and both dogs and cats to get into left overs that can lead to tummy upsets. Be sure and keep candies (and wrappers) away from your pets. Dark solid chocolates in particular can be a problem, milk chocolates and confections are not as bad, but problems are related to the size of the pet vs the amount consumed.
- Keep decorations particularly tinsel and small objects that can be swallowed well controlled and out of reach of your cat or dog. Pets love to play with shiny objects and strings and will sometimes swallow them.

No one wants to rush their pet to the vet for emergency surgery at any time, but especially at Christmas time.

Protecting your Pets Against Theft

Keeping your Pet Safe

Pet theft is on the rise

Helpful tips for preventing pet theft



Few things disturb us more than hearing a distraught pet owner telling us that their beloved pet, usually a dog has been stolen out of their car or out of the back yard where you would think they would be safe. A recent article by Jen Weigel in the Chicago Tribune says that pet theft is on the rise at an alarming rate. According to the American Kennel Club reports of pet thefts have risen a shocking 32 percent in the last year! Whether that reflects actual thefts or just an increase in reports is not known, but such a report should get pet owners' attention.

Apparently there are unscrupulous people who think pet theft is a way to make a fast buck. The perpetrators are often petty thieves and drug addicts, but organized dog napping rings are also known to exist. Most are sold to unsuspecting buyers out of the back of a truck in a parking lot or flea market. Others are sold through brokers who advertise on line. Some stolen pets are even held for ransom. A shocking article to be sure. We have not been able to determine whether the situation is any different in Canada. We just hear sporadic reports, some of which may be unconfirmed and speculative.

However, the news article has prompted us to give some advice on how to protect your pet against such a heinous crime.

1. Do not leave a pet in the car unattended. Most thefts are from smash and grab car break-ins and the pet is gone when you return. Locking the car is little help against smash and grab crimes. A cute little dog that is highly visible in the car will attract the attention of a dognapper. Consider keeping your pet in a crate where he is less visible. Configure a lock/chain arrangement on the crate so a thief has more barriers to get through. It's less likely that a smash and grab thief would carry off a whole crate that is locked. Some pets are simply along for the ride when the car is stolen so lock your car, and use anti-theft devices.

2. Don't tether your dog outside a store or restaurant while you are inside.

3. Don't disclose too much about your pet to strangers, especially if they don't have a dog with them. If a stranger asks questions about how much a dog like yours costs, don't answer and move on.

4. Carry a picture of your pet, or better yet a picture of you with your pet to settle any disputes about ownership.

5. Microchip and/or Tattoo your pet and keep the central database current if you move. Collars and tags can be removed and are only useful for lost dogs found by honest people. Microchips are permanent and increase the chances of eventual recovery if the pet is scanned. They are also an excellent proof of ownership.

6. If you leave your pet unattended in your back yard, **put a bell on your gate** that can be heard in the house. This may also help deter prowlers.

7. Don't become part of the problem. Educate yourself about legitimate and illegitimate sources of pets. Be suspicious of people selling a dog on the street, out of the back of a truck in a parking lot or flea market. Online ads like Craig's List are fertile fields for scam artists and people selling stolen goods. Meet breeders in their homes and make a realistic assessment of who they are and where they live. If you are paying top dollar for a purebred, registered dog ask for papers and pedigrees.

8. Be as protective of your pet as you would a small child.

Weeding out sources of counterfeit drugs

Some internet
pharmacies sell
bogus drugs

The issue of counterfeit drugs sold online has once again reared its ugly head. A news bulletin from the American Vet Med Assoc that we subscribe to drew our attention to a shocking article published in a pharmacy bulletin called "Drug Store News" Here are some excerpts from the article.

"Last year, US Customs seized 5.6 million dollars worth of illegal pharmaceuticals a 175% increase over 2005. Meanwhile, global sales of counterfeit medicines were estimated to be more than \$75 billion last year."

"Authentic prescription medicines are manufactured with pure ingredients in clean facilities, under a highly regulated, quality controlled process, but counterfeit medicines are often produced in unsanitary conditions by people without and medical or scientific background. ... Law enforcement officials have found fake medicines made in bathrooms and outdoors in the vicinity of farm animals"

"Counterfeit medicines can be extremely dangerous and have been found to contain substances such as rat poison and lead paint, as well as not having the correct FDA-approved amount of active ingredient."

"Counterfeiters who sell fake medicines online prey on ingrained online buying behavior, in which consumers disregard warning signs and prioritize price and convenience. Counterfeiters sell fake medicines through deceptive practices and typically don't insist that patients provide a valid prescription which is required by law"

Beware of sources
that sell prescrip-
tion drugs without a
valid prescription

The article goes on to say that the Food and Drug Administration and it's international partners have enacted an international crackdown on illegal online pharmacies. They have targeted nearly 1,000 websites illegally selling drugs to US consumers. Things are no different in Canada.

Veterinary medications are also caught up in this shameful business. We see ads almost daily for animal medications, dewormers, heartworm medications and flea control products, some of which are prescription products that are being sold from questionable sources with no requirements for a legitimate prescription. Our drug suppliers have warned us about bogus flea products in particular being manufactured overseas with packages that look identical to the real product. The lot numbers were found to be fake and the vials had no active ingredient in them.



Dr Jack's Wisdom

Don't sit at the sidelines of life.
get up and dance, and dance like
no one is watching.

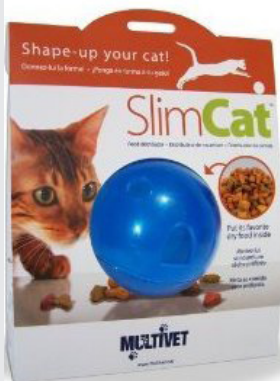
The "Fat Cat"

Kitty Capers

Obesity is as dangerous
for your cat as it is for
you

Cat's need stimulation
and exercise

One solution is food
dispensing toys to make
the cat work for his food



Feed Weight Control
Diets



Some house cats are the absolute clones of the cartoon character Garfield, a model for laziness and obesity. How many times have I followed the life of a lovely cat who weighs 9 pounds at a year of age and looks fit and trim then starts to gain weight as his comfortable lifestyle envelopes him. At age 2 he weighs 11 pounds and still looks good. At 4 years he is up to 13 lbs and is starting to look a little saggy around the midsection. At age 6 he is 15 pounds and is having difficulty grooming himself. At age 8 he is 17 pounds, and like Garfield, can no longer see his feet, jump up on the couch, or play with his toys --- and he doesn't even eat Lasagna!!! At age 10 he weighs 20 pounds and you have brought him to the vet because he isn't feeling well. The vet tells you he has diabetes, fatty liver syndrome, bile duct obstruction, pancreatic disease, or heart problems. Hmm sound like any other species you know?

A sedentary life style shapes health problems both for us and our pets. We drive to work, sit at a desk, come home mentally exhausted and sit in front of a TV with frequent "fridge breaks", go to bed, get up the next day and do it all over. In the mean time our cat sits on the couch, then makes the rounds to the food dish, then to the litter box, then back to the couch where he sleeps for 18-20 hours a day.

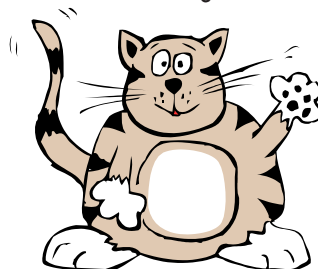
Cat's do need exercise, and just like us, it's hard to control your weight unless you get off the couch. It's hard to take a cat for a walk like you would a dog or get him to join an exercise class at the gym, so we need other ways to stimulate a cat.

When a house cat is awake, he is bored, mentally and physically unstimulated and has easy access to a full food dish. In nature, cats have to work for their food, hunting is a big part of their day. When we keep a full dish of food in front of a cat, we take hunting away from him. So, one way to stimulate a cat is to make him work for his food or make a game out of eating. Teaching your cat to use food dispensing toys is one solution. An example is the "Multivet Slim Cat Interactive Toy and Food Dispenser" It is basically a ball with holes big enough to leak out a few crunchies at a time. You simply place the crunchies in the ball and let the cat chase the ball around and work for his crunchies. He gets some exercise, benefits from the "joy of the hunt" and is less likely to consume large amounts of food at a time. Food dispensing toys are available at pet stores and on Amazon.

Another solution is to build step platforms and cat condos where the cat has to jump up and down to get to his favorite perch or a food platform.

Other ways to exercise a cat is to for you play with toy mice and feathers at the end of a stick or chase the red dot from a laser light pointer pen. Ten minutes of chase a day will make a difference to a cat.

Feeding low calorie, weight controlling cat foods also help, along with limiting human food left overs, high fat treats and "gourmet" style canned cat foods. Weight reducing and weight control diets are available at the animal hospital.



Animal Trivia - Special Focus - Rin Tin Tin

Most Baby Boomers will remember the TV series “The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin” which ran from 1954 to 1959. It was a big part of my childhood, having watched it faithfully from the time my parents bought our first black and white tube in 1957. The show featured a handsome, intelligent, well trained German Shepherd who managed feats of courage and daring, saving lives and catching bad guys. But the TV show did not feature the original Rin Tin Tin, rather one of his descendants. The history of the original “Rinty” and his progeny is most interesting.



Movie poster from Rin Tin Tin's first "Barking Talkie" film 1928

The original Rin Tin Tin was born Sept 10, 1918 in a World War I battle ground in Lorraine France. He was found on September 15, just 2 months before the end of the war in a bombed out German dog kennel by an American soldier named Lee Duncan. The newborn pup was blind, and nursing. He was named for a puppet that French children gave to American GI's for luck. When the war ended, Duncan brought him back to his home in in the USA where he trained him to do tricks. His film career started when Duncan's friend Charles Jones (who developed one of the first slow-motion cameras) filmed Rinty at a dog show doing a 12 foot leap.

His fame grew and eventually he found himself in early Hollywood silent films, often standing in for a wolf. He eventually landed starring roles and made about 20 films before his death in 1932. The popularity of his films reputedly saved Warner Brothers from bankruptcy. A Hollywood legend claims that Rin Tin Tin had the most votes for "Best Actor" at the first Academy Awards held in 1929. The award was actually given to Emil Jannings. Rinty is honoured with a star on Hollywood's "Walk of Fame" on Vine St.

The story of his death is also surrounded by legend. Popular belief is that he died at Duncan's home in the arms of screen star Jean Harlow who also owned one of Rinty's offspring. Actress Greta Garbo and breakfast cereal baron W.K.Kellogg also had one of Rinty's pups. Following his death, Duncan arranged to have Rinty's remains returned to his birthplace in France. He is buried at a famous pet cemetery, *Cemetiére des Chiens* which is located in a suburb of Paris.

Lee Duncan very wisely preserved Rinty's blood line and direct descendants have made their mark in films, television, dog shows and public appearances to this day. The blood line has been continued by a succession of breeders originally endorsed by Lee Duncan, who died in 1960. The rights to his name are copyrighted by Rin Tin Tin Inc. More details and historical information can be found at his website www.rintintin.com.

A recent book "Rin Tin Tin, the Life and Legend" by Susan Orlean is an interesting read, but according to the website, contains some historical errors.

The fame of Rin Tin Tin and his legacy over the last 90 years is largely responsible for the popularity of the German Shepherd Breed.



The current "Rin Tin Tin"

Feature Photo

Taken at Sidney Spit Marine Park at sunset on a calm summer evening at anchor



Banjo Says:

The Dog Days of Summer is a time to be "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean" (Quote from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner)