

## Mountainview Animal Hospital

### SUMMER NEWSLETTER

### The bottom line

Although preferred by most cats, clumping litter is best avoided in young kittens and elderly or debilitated cats. Young kittens may eat the litter and become obstructed. Older cats with health problems that cause them to urinate more often get clumps of litter stuck in their paws, causing infection.

Cats have a very keen sense of smell; a dirty litter box to them is like a rancid out-house in the middle of July to us.

What we think smells good, may not be so pleasant to our cats. The heavy perfumes in scented litters are often overwhelming to cats.



**SORRY!**

### SCOOP THESE RULES

One of the most frustrating consultations that occur between veterinarians and their clients concerns the house soiling cat. House soiling is when a cat urinates or defecates outside the litter box. Understandably, a very annoying behaviour. Unfortunately many pet owners, either through embarrassment or misinformation, spend many weeks or months attempting to resolve the problem themselves, often unsuccessfully. Eventually, when they feel everything they have tried has failed and they see no other resolution, they come to us to have their cat euthanised. Fortunately this drastic option is very rarely necessary, but convincing a frustrated and discouraged "dirty" cat owner is a challenge; particularly when we cannot offer a magic pill or quick fix. Believe it or not, the reasons a cat may urinate or defecate around the house are very complex. This is not to suggest that we cannot resolve the problem, in the majority of cases we can, it just may take a little time.

There are a number of problems, both physical and behavioural that can cause house soiling. These may include bladder or kidney disease, bowel problems, stress/anxiety disorders, osteoarthritis, hormonal diseases, marking behaviour, social conflicts, and litter box related problems. Often, many of the physical diseases can be diagnosed by a simple blood and urine test. The behavioural problems may require a bit more detective work; come prepared to answer a lot of questions regarding your cat's and your family's lifestyle.

Don't worry though, we won't make you lie on the "shrink's sofa".

Treating house soiling can involve simple changes to litter box hygiene, medication or diet changes for certain medical conditions, or more complex life style changes. In all cases, the first diagnostic and treatment step is to talk to your veterinarian early, as soon as the problem starts. Please do not wait until you and your family are so frustrated that you can no longer cope with the situation.

Interestingly, it is often the mistakes we are making with our cat's litter boxes that either causes or worsens the house soiling problem. Those of us that have cats will not be surprised to know that cats have rules and they are not very tolerant of insubordination, particularly where their litter box is concerned. Remember the saying, dogs have masters, cat have servants; no kidding!

So if the first step to resolving your cat's house soiling problem is talk to us, the second step is to exam your compliance with your cat's toiletry rules. The rules according to cats on litter box hygiene are listed below.

While many of us already follow most of these rules, most of us are breaking them somewhere. You would be surprised how small changes can go a long way with our finicky felines. Remember, if you are following the rules and your cat isn't, call us, we are here to help.

## The bottom line

Careful, some "unscented" litters still have an odour that may be offensive to your cat.

Do not use ammonia based products to clean up an accident, to a cat this smells very similar to urine. There are many good odour and stain removers available. We would be happy to recommend some for you.

Some cats have a substrate preference, meaning they like to urinate more on certain materials than others. Dirty laundry, plastic bags or hockey equipment are popular with cats. One of my cats loves to pee on leather. I cannot leave my brief case or leather jacket lying around.

Although Nike has never urinated outside her litter box at the clinic, she used to act like she might. To mark her territory Nike used to back up to the walls and cabinets, lift her tail and wiggle her rear end as if to spray urine. Fortunately urine never came out. She seemed to be satisfied with the threat of spraying.

## THE RULES ACCORDING TO CATS ON LITTER BOX HYGIENE

- Provide at least 1 litter box per cat, plus one.
- Cats like privacy so keep the litter boxes in quiet areas of the house.
- Do not place the litter boxes next to the washer, dryer or furnace. These appliances can be startling to a cat when they suddenly start to run.
- The litter boxes should not be all in one area, spread them around the house, particularly in multi-cat households. Cats are very territorial; some cats may not cross into the other cat's territory to use the litter box.
- For older cats with possible health problems and for kittens just learning to use the litter box, keep it close to their sleeping area. Expecting these cats to walk across the house and down 1 or 2 flights of stairs to use the litter box is unrealistic.
- Most cats prefer open litter boxes over the covered boxes.
- Use **unscented**, fine-grained type litters. The clumping litter seems to be preferred.
- Scoop the solids out of the litter daily.
- Change the whole litter frequently; as often as every 4 - 7 days. Even if it is clumping litter. Not changing the litter often enough is the most common mistake people make with their litter box hygiene.
- Clean the litter box with soap and water. Avoid using harsh chemicals with strong odours.
- Try to avoid anything unpleasant from happening to your cat near the litter box; it is important for your cat to feel comfortable where he/she eliminates.

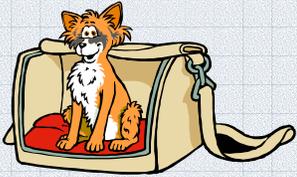


## LIFE ACCORDING TO NIKE

Speaking of rules and servants, we already know that Nike considers the whole staff of Mountainview Animal Hospital, including the doctors, to be her servants, and we had better follow her rules. The price to be paid for insubordination, a feline temper tantrum, complete with whining, complaining, sulking and even the dramatic throwing of the body to the ground in defiance; just like a two year old child. But believe it or not, she used to show her distress by urinating around her previous owner's house. Fortunately when we met Nike for her terrible pee pee problem, the clinic had just opened and we did not yet have a resident cat, so we were able to adopt her. What a lucky day for all of us. Now Nike has nine people and a big German shepherd (who likes to eat her poo) to scoop her litter box for her. Enough servants for you Nike?



## The bottom line



Traveling with pets has become so popular that the American Automobile Association (AAA) now publishes 'Traveling with your Pet lodging and activity book' on an annual basis. This book lists almost 1000 Canadian pet-friendly lodging facilities ranging from B&Bs to major hotel chains.



Never use sedatives or other medications to calm your pet for travel without discussing it with your veterinarian. Many of the medications that are safe for us can be very dangerous for your pet.

## TRAVEL TIPS FOR YOUR PET

Over the years pets have increasingly become an integral part of our families. It is no wonder then that many of us wish to include them in our vacation plans. This trend has become so popular that many hotel chains have become pet-friendly, not only allowing pets to join us in our rooms but they will also provide treats, toys/gifts, pet sitting and/or walking services, a pet menu, food and water dishes, pet sheets and pillows, pet beds or other services. But before you pack Fido or Fluffy's suitcase, consider if your pet will make a good travel companion. Some pets lack the good behaviour or 'petiquette' to travel, while others will simply find the trip and change in environment too stressful. Remember, it is not a vacation for them if they do not enjoy it; some pets are best left with a family member, friend, neighbour or boarding kennel.

If you choose to travel with your pet, here are some tips to help make your trip more enjoyable.

- ☺ Be organized, inform yourself and plan ahead.
- ☺ Ensure that your pet is healthy enough to travel. A trip to your veterinarian first may avoid some unwanted problems. Also discuss with your veterinarian what to do if your pet becomes motion sick during the trip.
- ☺ Bring your pet's health record, vaccination certificate and veterinarian's name and telephone number. It would also be wise to enquire about the location and availability of veterinary facilities at your vacation destination.
- ☺ If you don't already have a first aid kit for yourself, now would be a good time to get one. Adding a muzzle (an injured pet may bite), latex gloves and blanket to your existing kit would suffice.
- ☺ Make sure your pet is welcome at your destination. Not all hotels, resorts, campgrounds, etc. are designed to accommodate pets.
- ☺ Pack enough food and water for the trip, as well as enough food for the entire vacation. This is particularly true if your pet is on a specialty diet or if you are traveling out of town. Some foods are not readily available everywhere.
- ☺ Don't forget the food and water bowl. If your pet eats canned food, pack a can opener and plastic can lid too.
- ☺ Feed your pet two hours before the trip and only small amounts during the trip if necessary.
- ☺ Pet ID tags should be worn at all times. It may be a good idea to include the telephone number of your destination on the tag as well.
- ☺ If your pet is traveling in a crate, it should be large enough for him/her to stand up, turn around and lie down. Make sure there are no interior protrusions on which your pet can become injured.



### Traveling by car

- ☺ Pets traveling by car should be secured by a seat belt or inside a crate. The crate should also be secured by a seat belt. Pets not accustomed to these restraints should be trained to accept them long before the trip begins.
- ☺ Don't forget the litter box, extra litter, pooper scooper and bags.
- ☺ Paper towels and stain remover may come in handy for those accidents.
- ☺ Dogs should be leashed whenever outside the vehicle. A leash and harness for the cat is a good idea too.
- ☺ Never leave your pet in a parked car during extreme weather. During the summer or very cold winter days, you will not be able leave your pets in the car to enjoy sit down restaurant breaks; pack snacks for yourselves or do the fast food thing.
- ☺ Pet toys will give them comfort and keep them occupied during the trip.

## The bottom line

A microchip is a tiny computer chip, the size of a grain of rice, with a programmed identification number.

Once injected by a veterinarian under the loose skin over the shoulder blades, it becomes a permanent and safe identification for your pet. Recently, a Boston terrier named Mickey was reunited with his family after missing for 4 years because he was microchipped. He was found 1,100 miles from home.



As of July 15, 2007 Air Canada will no longer accept pets as checked luggage on any domestic passenger flights. In the future, pets will have to be shipped on cargo flights. The reason for the ban is related to 9/11; since the new security measures forces more of our luggage to be checked, there is less room to transport our furry friends.



## Traveling by plane

- ➔ Contact the airline you are planning to travel with and request complete information on traveling with pets. Some airlines will not transport pets at all.
- ➔ Try to book a direct flight. If plane transfers or layovers are required make sure you can check on your pet's condition during these stops.
- ➔ In the winter it is best to travel during the day when it is warmer, and in the summer traveling during the cool night hours is best.
- ➔ Be sure to ask about the airline's rules for pet carriers and crates.
- ➔ Make sure the crate is made of strong, crush proof plastic. The crate should provide ventilation from two or more sides and should have a leak-proof bottom with plenty of absorbent material.
- ➔ Label the crate "Live Animal" and include arrows to indicate the upright position of the crate.
- ➔ Don't lock the door in case of an emergency, but consider adding a snap closure for security.
- ➔ A container for water should be secured to the inside of the carrier and positioned so that it can be filled without opening the cage. A drip bottle is preferable to an open bowl, but your pet must be trained to use it first.
- ➔ Some airlines will allow a limited number of pets to travel in the cabin with their owner if the carrier can fit under the seat in front of you.
- ➔ If your pet is traveling in cargo as checked luggage be sure to arrive early to ensure space for your pet.
- ➔ Many people request sedation for their pet prior to traveling. Keep in mind that sedation may lead to serious complications. Sedation may inhibit your pet's ability to regulate body temperature or depress breathing and heart rates.
- ➔ Inform the flight attendants that you have a pet on board, especially if your flight is delayed.

## Traveling across borders

- ☺ Before transporting or shipping animals to another country, contact the embassy or consulate of the destination country to find out what permits, regulations and documents are required. Inappropriate documentation may result in your pet being returned to Canada or euthanised.
- ☺ Vaccinations and health exams will need to be current.
- ☺ Remember customs may not allow you to take pet food across the border; it is best to inform yourself in advance and make a plan for a diet change should that become necessary.
- ☺ Inquired about any additional fees that may be charged for obtaining and handling the documents.
- ☺ Insurance is often overlooked.
- ☺ Some countries require photo ID and microchipping.
- ☺ Some countries require your pet to be quarantined for a period of time, make sure you know the rules.
- ☺ If you are not traveling with your pet, make arrangements prior to departure for someone to process the documents upon arrival and to transport your pet to temporary accommodations or a boarding facility. Consider the arrival time as not all facilities are open 24 hours.

