

Mountainview Animal Hospital

SPRING NEWSLETTER

The Bottom Line

In keeping with the recommendations from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and The American Association of Feline Practitioners, we recommend that every pet receive a complete physical examination at least once a year. Older pets should be examined by a veterinarian every six months. In the life of a senior pet, six months is about the same as two years for a person, long enough for significant health changes to occur.

A study by the Outcomes Research Team at Zoetis revealed that one out of every four outwardly healthy cats had abnormal lab results when blood tested. This tells us that cats often hide the signs that they are ill and that if we don't look for disease, we may miss an early opportunity to intervene.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

This time every year, I telephone my doctor to schedule my annual physical examination; not an appointment that I look forward to, but one that I never miss because I understand the importance of the doctor's exam. As I have become older, this annual appointment now includes routine blood work and a urinalysis to screen for more in-depth problems that may not be detected on a physical examination. It also gives me the opportunity to discuss some minor concerns that I would otherwise not schedule an appointment for; you know, the "doc it hurts when I do this" or "I get heart burn when I eat that". As I have aged, the blood work has become a bit more extensive and in a few years other tests such as a mammogram will be added to the screening procedure. Now, I know that not everyone is compliant with their annual check ups, but even those who don't see their doctors regularly agree that they should.

Going to your doctor every year for your physical is not much different than bringing your pet to your veterinarian every year for their 'shots'. In fact, it is not the vaccinations that are the most important part of that visit; it is the physical examination and the interaction between the veterinarian and the pet owner. The conversation that takes place before and during your pet's examination gives the veterinarian a lot of information about how your pet may be feeling at home. These conversations may at times seem very casual, but are filled with bits of precious clues about your pet's health. It is also an opportunity to ask all of those little questions that you may think are silly, but are actually very important.

The examination itself may sometimes seem very simple, but it is not. Often people think that, because they check their pets over at home themselves, they do not need to see a veterinarian. While it is very important to monitor your pets closely at home, it sometimes takes trained hands and eyes to pick up on those early warning signs of disease. Almost daily I detect something during a physical examination that even the most attentive pet owner was unaware of. That is what we are trained for.

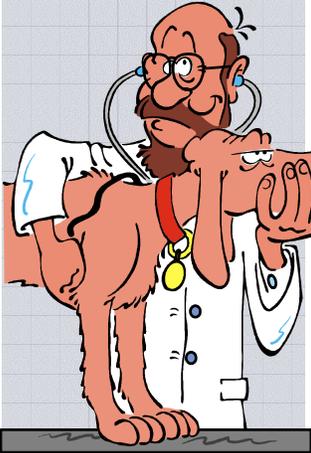
Don't Forget About Your Cat

There are many households where the family dog gets regular veterinary care while the cat gets very little. Perhaps it is their independent nature that leads us to believe that they don't need us and can take care of themselves, but in reality they depend on us just as much as our dogs. Cats just have too much pride to show us.

Remember your pets cannot tell you when they are feeling poorly and often do not complain until the disease is quite advanced. This is particularly true for cats. While we think of cats as predators when we watch them stalk and hunt their toys, they are also prey to the bigger predators like wolves and coyotes. As a prey animal, they have a strong instinctual drive to hide their weakness and as a result, communicate very little to us as to how they are feeling.

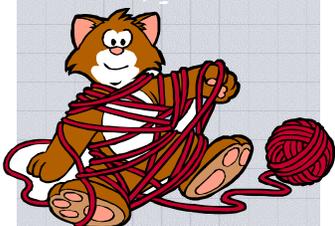
Many of our cats spend almost all of their time indoors. This certainly exposes them less to parasites and environmental hazards than our dogs. But even indoor cats can suffer from diseases such as Diabetes Mellitus, kidney disease, heart disease, arthritis and most commonly, dental disease.

The Bottom Line



TIME WITH TUX

I see Dr. Ewing has written about the importance of a physical exam. I agree, our check ups are very important and like it or not, for our own good. What's puzzling me though, is that she has written that the examinations should be annual, perhaps every six months for the senior pets. If that is true, then why do I get a physical exam every time I sneeze or just take a slightly longer nap than usual? Something smells fishy and not in a good way.



The Exam

Much of what your veterinarian does during an examination is not obvious but is never the less important and planned. During your pet's visit, every move he or she makes gives the veterinarian information about his/her wellbeing. How your pet moves or explores the room and his or her over-all appearance tells us something about them. When we touch your pet, we are not just stroking them to calm them, but we are also taking the opportunity to feel and assess the lymph nodes, the thyroid glands, the muscle mass, presence of lumps and bumps, signs of swelling and pain. When we squeeze their bellies we are palpating their internal organs and assessing the size, shape and texture of each of them. We are feeling for tumors, tenderness, organ enlargement, bladder stones, size and consistency of the stool in the colon; I could go on and on. Even when we make eye contact with a patient, we are looking for any number of abnormalities and diseases that could affect not just the eyes, but the whole body.

An unfortunate reality is that our pets age faster than we do; for every year that passes for us, 5 to 7 has passed for them. Imagine the changes that can occur in their bodies in just one year. So next time you get that annual reminder card, letter or telephone call from your veterinarian, remember it is actually a five year check up to your pet.

Wellness Testing

The purpose of wellness testing is to get a look into the body's ability to function at a level deeper than what can be accomplished by a physical examination. Wellness testing is a grouping of blood and urine tests that are designed to screen the body for disease. Generally we are looking for signs of infection, anemia, kidney and liver disease, diabetes, hormonal imbalances and electrolyte disturbances. We use wellness testing in three ways:

- To ensure good health before a surgery.
- To monitor a pet's response to certain medications. Sometimes blood tests are the only way we can make sure there are no negative consequences to the medication we are giving to our pets.
- To screen for early signs of disease in our older pets. The value of detecting these conditions early is infinite. Often early detection and intervention is the key to a positive outcome and certainly prevents our pets from suffering in silence until we finally become aware that there is a problem.

Besides, wellness testing is easy. We simply take a small sample of blood and sometimes urine, and we test it here in our hospital laboratory. We often have the test results the following day. Of course, we always hope the test results are normal. However, in the event that they are not, we now have the necessary information to bring our pets back to a healthy state.

When is the best time to do wellness testing? Anytime really, but for convenience sake we often combine it with other procedures. For example, we may recommend wellness testing for pets when they are at the hospital for their annual examination and vaccination, particularly in older pets.

It is most convenient to do wellness testing when we are already taking a blood sample for other reasons. Over the next few months we will be taking many blood samples from dogs who are having their heartworm test done. This would be a great time to consider a wellness blood test; it would cause them no extra stress to have a few more drops of blood drawn and it could give you the peace of mind that your pet is truly as healthy as you believe him or her to be.

Although cats are not having heartworm testing done, any cat that is coming in for an annual physical examination will also benefit from wellness testing.

*** IMPORTANT SUMMERTIME REMINDERS ***

The Bottom Line

An infected dog can have over 200 heartworms in the heart and adjoining blood vessels.

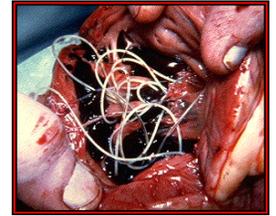
The drug companies that produce the various heartworm preventative medications will guarantee your dog's protection only if you use the medication correctly and have your dog's blood tested every year.

Caution! Some flea products marketed in the pet stores to dogs are extremely toxic to cats. Always read the label carefully; better yet, ask us about choosing the safest products for your pets.

Bordetella bronchiseptica (Kennel Cough) is a bacterial infection of the respiratory system. It causes coughing, fever, depression and loss of appetite. Vaccination is recommended for dogs going to boarding kennels, puppy classes, grooming facilities or off leash parks. If your dog is not vaccinated against Kennel Cough and is likely to be exposed, please call us to schedule an appointment.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is caused by a large worm which can live in a dog's heart and adjoining blood vessels. Permanent and potentially fatal damage to the heart, lungs and liver can occur long before there are any visible signs. The heartworm is spread from one dog to another by the mosquito. Treatment is available but is often costly and difficult. A long recovery time can be expected and often irreparable damage to the heart, lungs and liver has already occurred.



Fortunately, prevention is so easy. Simply give your dog the preventative medication once a month from June through November. There are various types of heartworm medication available; some will also include prevention for intestinal worms and/or fleas. Blood testing your dog prior to starting the medication is an important part of prevention and is strongly recommended. Early detection of a heartworm infection before your dog gets sick will not only increase the success of the treatment and ensure a complete recovery, but will also help reduce the spread of the disease.



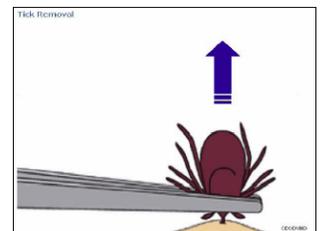
Fleas



Both cats and dogs are at risk of becoming infested with fleas during our warm summer months. Fleas are extremely irritating to your pet. Flea bites can cause itchy skin rashes and even serious allergic reactions. Left untreated, just 10 adult fleas can multiply to over 250,000 fleas in only 30 days! Your pet can come into contact with fleas on walks, at the park, or even in your backyard. Those of you who have had fleas in the past know how difficult it is to get rid of them; prevention of flea infestations is much easier, cost effective and safe. Call us to start your pet on the safest and most effective flea prevention this spring.

Ticks

The tick is also a biting insect that feeds off the blood of their host. They are most commonly found in deep bush and tall grassy areas where the ground is moist. Over recent years the tick population has been growing in Southern Ontario. The main concern with ticks is the possibility that they are carrying a number of potentially fatal diseases. Among these are Babesiosis, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis, Hepatozoonosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Tick Paralysis, Cytauxzoonosis, Lyme Disease, Q Fever and Tularemia. Many of these diseases can affect humans as well. If you find a tick attached to your skin or that of your pet's, remove it immediately. The longer the tick is attached, the more likely it is to transmit disease, if it is a carrier. Once the tick has been removed, keep it. It is important to have the tick identified and if it is the right species, tested to see if it is a carrier of disease. Ticks removed from a human should be taken to a local health unit. Ticks removed from your pet can be brought to us for testing. A blood sample taken from your dog can also be tested for tick-borne diseases.



If your pet spends time in the deep bush or tall grassy areas, talk to us about the various tick repellent products available.

OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY MAY 1ST, 2016

FROM

1 PM TO 4 PM

To show our appreciation to our wonderful community, we are having an Open House.

Everyone is welcome to attend, including your furry friends.

Why should you come to our open house?

- Meet our doctors and staff on a more personal level
- Tour the hospital
- Learn more about our various services and equipment
- Play some games and test your knowledge about pet trivia
- Learn more about important topics in pet health care
- There will be face painting, games and treats for the kids
- Enjoy food & refreshments, weather permitting we will have a barbeque



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