

Blood Pressure Measurement

High blood pressure in our pets can be just as dangerous to them as it can be to humans. An increasing number of dogs and cats are being diagnosed with this silent condition. The older a pet gets the more likely they are to be predisposed to high blood pressure.

Pets that have been diagnosed with other medical conditions such as kidney failure, liver problems and endocrine disorders, like feline hyperthyroidism and canine hypothyroidism, are more likely to have blood pressure abnormalities and therefore their blood pressure should be monitored more closely.

As part of our regular screening of older pets we have offered blood pressure screening; however, we have now begun emphasizing pre surgical blood pressure testing. The test is fairly quick and inexpensive. If we find high values on initial testing we recommend that the patient be boarded for the day and repeated measurements be taken to rule out stress related pressure changes.

Just as in people high blood pressure is treated with medication to prevent the long-term deleterious effects of elevated pressure like heart failure, stroke, kidney complications, vascular compromise, and ocular changes.

When elevated blood pressure is detected in your pet it warrants further investigation to identify the cause. A diagnostic workup includes blood work, radiographs and a urinalysis.

If a specific cause can't be identified, medications are administered to moderate the pressure and routine monitoring is recommended. ■



Ticks, Ticks and more Ticks

Ticks continue to be a vector for disease, with Lyme disease being the most notable problem. Other emerging problems associated with ticks are Ehrlichiosis and Anaplasmosis, both blood born diseases.

Currently, we test for Heartworm Disease, Lyme Disease, and Ehrlichiosis on a yearly basis, however in the near future we will expand the test to include Anaplasmosis.

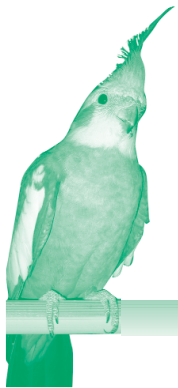
Although we are concerned about tick born disease in our pets, an additional concern is the spread of these diseases from ticks to humans. Ticks brought into our houses on our pets serve as a source for human transmission.

Over the past few years we have emphasized year round tick prevention as an important part of our preventive health care program. Our recommendations include the use of Frontline topical and Preventic Collar. Call our office for special offers. ■

Health Maintenance Plans

Health maintenance plans have gone through the roof. We couldn't be more pleased with their success. The addition of a semi annual examination as an included benefit increased their value. We routinely schedule the semi annual examination at the time of annual vaccinations, however in the event it is missed we will send you a reminder the month that it is due so you can call and make an appointment.

The semi annual examination is an integral part of our preventive health program. Pets live shorter life spans than people, so twice a year examinations are strongly encouraged. This has led to the identification of numerous problems that have been treated successfully. ■



Hyperthyroidism in Cats



Hyperthyroidism is a well-recognized syndrome in felines. Most patients are 10 years or older and present with a history of eating well, but losing weight. Often a thyroid mass (tumor) can be palpated on physical examination. Patients also tend to have a very elevated heart rate. The condition is confirmed by blood work identifying high thyroid levels and concurrent elevation in liver enzymes.

Once identified, routine treatment involves administering methimazole, an oral medication that inhibits the excessive thyroid hormone. Periodic monitoring of blood levels is necessary to ensure proper treatment. Once treated, patients begin to put weight back on and their liver enzymes and heart rate normalize. Unchecked, hyperthyroidism leads to progressive weakness and death.

For patients who are difficult to give oral medication an ear gel can be used which is accepted more readily. For a definitive cure, radioactive iodine therapy can be administered at a specialty practice. This requires several days of hospitalization, where the patient is monitored closely and contaminated waste products are collected.

We have patients that have been treated by both methods and most do well. The decision to pursue the iodine therapy is often based on the age of the patient and cost. ■

How cold is it?



I'm often asked if our pets can be outdoors during the winter. The answer for the most part is a qualified yes. For short periods of time, even in the bitter cold our pets should be ok for the purposes of brief exercise and elimination, but like us they need to be provided protection from the wind and elements if left out for extended periods.

When the temperature approaches freezing shelter from the wind and rain and bedding needs to be provided along with a non-freezing water source. For our short-haired patients many fashionable coats can be purchased for just this purpose. If your pet will tolerate the coat, it can provide significant protection. ■

Emerging Disease

We are happy to report that concerns over Avian Influenza, West Nile virus, and Mad Cow Disease have not become a significant concern for our pets. We need to remain ever vigilant against these threats, but for the meantime it's business as usual. ■

Kennel Cough

Kennel Cough (Tracheobronchitis) is an infectious disease of dogs. It is not transmissible to humans and can run a course of 6-8 weeks to clear up. It can have viral or bacterial causes. We typically vaccinate all dogs against this disease and our hospital requires it for boarding purposes.

Symptoms usually start with a hacking cough and may progress to a gagging cough, sounding like a dog with a hairball. Coughing can get worse for about a week and then tends to dissipate. Antibiotics and anti-tussives can help shorten the course of the disease, but are not always indicated as it tends to run its course after the initial symptoms subside. In severe cases it can progress to pneumonia. ■

