

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWS JUNE 2002

WHY DOES MY PET NEED AN ANNUAL EXAM?

A yearly visit to your veterinarian for your pet is the equivalent of you visiting your physician every 7 years! That is why we feel an annual exam is important for your companion. The information we gather at each exam becomes part of your pet's medical history and can be evaluated on a yearly basis. This information can be helpful when an emergency or sudden illness arises.

When we perform an annual exam, we do the following;

- Check for significant weight change because it can be an early warning sign of disease. Obesity can lead to other diseases, so we like to monitor weight gain.
- Assess the condition of the legs, hips, joints and spine through observation and palpation if necessary.
- Assess the hair and coat, and look for external parasites (fleas, ticks, lice, mange). The hair should appear healthy and well groomed. Dull, dry, oily, or brittle hair and hair loss may indicate an underlying illness.
- Palpate the abdomen for abnormal masses or pain.
- Listen to the chest for heart murmurs, irregular heartbeat and abnormal lung sounds.
- Examine eyes for cataracts, glaucoma, or inflammation.
- Examine ears for mites, infection, or inflammation.
- Evaluate nose and nasal passages for signs of upper respiratory disease.
- Check the teeth for tartar, gingivitis, and periodontal disease. As many as 95% of all pets two years or older have periodontal disease. We evaluate your pet's teeth, and check the color and condition of the gums. We can also provide you with ideas for better dental care for your pet.
- Palpate lymph nodes to check for tumors or inflammation.

It probably does not always look like we do all these things when you are in the room talking with us. But we are! Next time, watch closely and see all that we do. We are only interested in keeping your companions healthy!!

TICKS are one of the most common parasites we deal with as pet owners in Wisconsin. They can carry several diseases that affect both dogs and cats. Lyme, Ehrlichia, Tick bite paralysis, and Babesia. We won't go into detail about these diseases, but will cover the life cycle (see picture) and the prevention.

The six-legged larvae of the Brown Dog Tick emerges from its egg, feeds on the animal for a few days, drops off, and then molts to the eight-legged nymph stage in the environment. Then the nymph jumps on the passing animal (usually in the tall grass or woods), feeds for about a week, drops off into the environment and molts in an adult. Female ticks are fertilized on the animal, feed for 1 to 3 weeks, becoming greatly engorged with blood before dropping off to lay its eggs. A clutch of tick eggs yields 2000-4000 eggs, which hatch out several weeks later. The complete cycle requires 2-3 months to complete.

The deer tick (*Ixodes* sp.) differs in that the larvae and nymphs feed off the white-footed mouse and on the white tail deer as an adult. On occasion the adults will feed on dogs, cats and man.

To prevent tick-borne diseases, check your pets daily and remove ticks when you see them. There are several ways to remove them. We recommend using a tweezers no matter how you decide to remove them. To facilitate removal of the mouth parts (no, it is not the entire head!), you can place either Vaseline or a drop of alcohol on the tick before attempting removal.

Monthly application of Frontline® kills all stages of ticks within 24 hours of application. In addition, it also kills fleas. You may still see the occasional tick, but it should either be dead if attached, or not attached at all. Frontline® is absorbed through the skin and is spread over the entire body of the dog or cat. It is safe in puppies and kittens as young as 8 weeks and is water proof.

Be sure to ask us if you have questions about tick control for your pet.

COULD YOUR PET HAVE FOOD ALLERGIES?

Itchy skin is often more than just a minor annoyance. Red, oozing bald patches, rashes, and scratches are markers of very real discomfort for which a cause should be sought and specifically dealt with. Although inhalant allergies are the most common form of allergic conditions in the pet, there are often multiple factors involved. Most people assume that itching due to food allergy is caused by a recent diet change. In fact, the opposite is true. Food allergy requires time to develop. Most animals have been eating the offending food for years with no trouble. How can we tell if food allergy is present? We look for one or more of the following signs: Facial itching, foot or limb chewing, belly itching, recurrent ear infections. We rule out other causes such as fleas, mites, thyroid problems. Then we can do a food trial. Feeding a “novel” protein diet such as Fish & Potatoe or Kangaroo & Oats (ingredients the animal has not been exposed to before). We need to give the diet 8-10 weeks to work, often we see results in 6 weeks.

If you have questions about food allergies, please give us a call. There is also good information at the following website, www.vin.com/petcare. Look in the pet health library for information on many different diseases.

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY SUMMER – GOD BLESS AMERICA!!

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