

PAWS AND CLAWS QUARTERLY



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ALL ABOUT ALLERGIES

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"Suzy" Williams

Is your pet on Atopica for its allergies? You can now receive monthly rebates from novartis animal health! Visit us.atopica.com



It's midnight and all you want to do is get some sleep, but your dog is keeping you up with his constant scratching. He's miserable with itchiness, and now he's making you miserable as well. What can you do?

Your dog may have what we call allergic skin disease. Allergies are due to an "overreaction" of the immune system. Animals often show environmental allergies through their skin and not their sinuses as we humans often do. Allergic skin can be accompanied by other skin issues such as infected ears, bacterial or yeast skin infections, and even demodectic mange. Cats and dogs have three common types of allergies:

1) Flea allergy or insect hypersensitivity

This is probably the single most common allergy here in the south because of the humidity. Your animal may be exhibiting signs of a flea allergy even if you never see a flea on your pet. One single bite can make your pet so miserable it either bites, swallows, or scratches the flea off immediately, along with a lot of hair and skin. This one flea bite can make some animals itch for up to 3 weeks. A typical flea-allergic animal will have hair loss and itchiness at the base of the tail, back legs, or the back of the neck. All flea-allergic animals need to be on a consistent, veterinary-approved form of flea control.

2) Atopy

This is the name given to environmental allergens such as dust, mold, grass, pollens, and house mites. Typically, these allergies are seasonal and eventually worsen to being year-round, but initially may be worse in the warmer months. This usually develops when the animal is young. The main targets of itchiness in these animals are the face, ears, abdomen, and feet.

3) Food allergies

Animals develop allergies to things they are exposed to all the time, which includes certain

proteins in food that they could have been eating for years. Most animals with food allergies are severely itchy, especially around the face and ears. These allergies start as nonseasonal and do not respond to medications as well as other allergies. Animals can start to exhibit signs anytime during their life, from very young to over seven years of age! Most dermatologists believe the only way to diagnose a food allergy is to place the animal on a strict hypoallergenic diet, which is one that contains proteins the animal has never been exposed to before.

At our clinics, we tend to take a conservative approach to skin issues. The first time that an animal comes in with itchy skin, we may treat them symptomatically with antihistamines, steroids, and possibly antibiotics or antifungals if there is a secondary bacterial or yeast skin/ear infection. However, if flare-ups recur our approach is to start performing diagnostics to rule out allergies. If you are persistent with your flea control and are still noticing skin issues, it may be time to start a food trial as previously described. This trial must last for a minimum of 8 weeks to show any sort of positive result, and if it is concluded that your pet is food allergic, it must stay on a strict hypoallergenic diet for the rest of its life. However, if a food trial does not yield a positive result, it can be concluded that your dog or cat has atopic allergies. There are certain medications prescribed at our office that can be used to prevent flare-ups from atopic allergies. There is also a board-certified dermatologist in the Charleston area that performs skin testing and can get your animal on a schedule of allergy shots. This specialist requires a referral from our clinic. Unfortunately, atopic allergies can be rather expensive to treat.

If you have a chronically itchy pet, please call us to schedule an appointment. By singling out what is causing your pet to scratch, we can make him/her feel much more comfortable and help to give you some much needed rest!!!



The Importance of Rechecks



During your last visit to our clinic with your pet, you were given medications to treat your animal's health issues and then asked to schedule a recheck appointment. You just spent money and time on your animal this visit — is it really that important that your vet follows up on your pet's condition?

The simple answer is yes! Though it may seem like an inconvenience to you, there are several reasons why we may need to re-examine your pet after being treated for various problems. Here are a few examples:

Urinary tract infections

After completion of medications for these infections, it is important to have your animal's urine retested to make sure that all evidence of the infection has been cleared. If the first course of medication has not completely treated the infection and the urine is never retested, antibiotic resistance can occur. This can make subsequent infections much more difficult and expensive to treat.

Skin/ear infections

Infections of the ears and skin can take a long time to completely resolve. There are several different medications used for these infections; your animal may not respond as well to some medications as others. Without a follow-up exam to evaluate your pet's progress, we

would not be able to make sure the treatment implemented at the first visit is the best course of action for your animal. Also, if medications do not completely clear the infection, it can lead to antibiotic resistance as well.

Follow-up examinations could prevent further problems for your pet down the road.

Eye infections and injuries

There are many different eye medications used in veterinary medicine. In cases of infection, it is important to re-examine the eye after a course of treatment to confirm that the infection has cleared. If an injury such as a corneal ulcer was discovered on the first visit, the eye must be rechecked to determine that the injury has completely resolved. If medication is stopped before an ulcer is entirely healed, the eye can become damaged to the point of needing to be removed.



Long-term medication usage

There are many health issues that require medication to be given over a long period of time, sometimes for the rest of your pet's life. In cases such as hyperthyroidism, epilepsy, and diabetes, it is crucial to make sure your animal is receiving the proper dosage of medication. If your pet's medication is not properly controlled, it can lead to serious health problems including irreversible damage to many major organs. With certain medications such as NSAIDs for arthritis and other chronic pain, heart medications, and drugs for certain endocrine diseases, there is a small risk of liver and kidney damage with long-term usage. For these reasons we require that bloodwork be run on a regular basis in order to continue dispensing or prescribing these medications. Of course, routine examinations must also be performed in order to evaluate your pet's overall health status.

By requesting that we recheck your animal for any reason, we are expressing our desire to make sure your animal is receiving the appropriate treatment for its health issues. Please schedule a follow-up appointment if it is asked of you to ensure that your pet is receiving the best care possible!

Urinary tract infections can be tricky to treat. If your pet is diagnosed with a UTI, it is very important to have their urine rechecked after completion of their prescribed medication. This ensures that the first course of medication has completely resolved the infection. If you are asked to have your pet's urine rechecked and are able to collect it yourself, remember that the fresher the sample, the more accurate the test results will be. If you cannot bring the sample immediately to our clinic, please refrigerate it. If you are unable to collect the sample yourself, please do not let your pet urinate immediately before bringing him or her in. It is optimal to schedule a morning appointment in case your pet does not have a full bladder at the time of its visit; this way, we have the option of keeping your pet throughout the day until the bladder fills and we are able to collect urine.

Pets, Parasites, and People



Roundworms, one of the more common intestinal parasites transmitted from pets to people.



It is not uncommon for your pet to become infected with an internal or external parasite sometime in its life. Did you know that there are certain parasites that can cause diseases to be transmitted from your pet to you or a member of your family?

You can reduce the risk of a parasitic infection to your family by following a few simple guidelines:

- Practice good personal hygiene.
- Restrict access to contaminated areas, such as sandboxes, pet

“walk areas”, and other high-traffic areas.



- Only feed pets cooked or prepared food (not raw meat).
- Clean up pet feces regularly.
- Administer deworming medications as recommended by our clinic.
- Schedule annual physical examinations at our clinic, at which time we will test for several common parasites.

- Keep your pet current on heartworm prevention. The medicine in heartworm preventatives not only protects your pet from heartworm disease, but from many intestinal parasites as well. Since parasites can infect your pet any time of the year and some of these parasites can transmit diseases to people, it is important to have your pet on year-round preventative.

Visit petsandparasites.org for more information.

Introducing a New Pet to Your Household

Are you considering bringing a new pet home? There are a few steps you should take in order to properly introduce this new addition to the pets you already have.

1) Verify health status

You should always make sure your new animal is disease-free and up-to-date on vaccines before bringing it into your home. Cats should be tested for leukemia and FIV.

2) Start on neutral ground

Isolate your new pet in a neutral area such as a den or bathroom. Dogs can be crated in these areas for added safety. Cats should be able to smell each other through door cracks. Keep toys, blankets, and food and water here for your pet to be comfortable. Socialize with your new pet often while in this stage.

3) Gradual introduction

Start by greeting your original pets first and wait until they are calm. Enter the new pet's area and do the same. Put a harness or leash on your new pet; for added safety, you can do this with your original pets as well. Take the new pet out of its area and let the original ones sniff and explore him. Reward calm be-

havior with verbal and physical praise, but do not reinforce aggressive behavior by reassuring your pets that it's okay.

Can't we all just get along???



What do you think you're doing in MY house?



4) Feeding

Once you've established that the animals are calm around each other, feed them at a distance from one another. If you anticipate a problem, you can use leashes tied to furniture or door-knobs as long as you are supervising. Every

day, shorten the distance between the food bowls until they are side by side. If any animal shows aggression, separate the bowls to the point at which the animals appear comfortable, then try again. When giving treats, have all the animals sit near each other, pet and praise each one, then give treats one at a time starting with the original pets. They must all be calm around each other or they

should not get treats—do not reward bad behavior!

5) One-on-one time

Make sure to spend at least 5 minutes alone with each animal every day. This time can include grooming and playing.

6) Praise good behavior/ punish bad behavior

Reward your pets with treats and attention when they are calm around each other. Any negative interactions can be gently corrected using objects such as a water squirt gun or whistle. The offending animal should be confined and the introduction process should be restarted. Never try to physically stop a fight between dogs or cats—you WILL get hurt!

Once you have determined that your pets are acting in a positive manner around each other without any aggressive behavior on a consistent basis, you are ready to let them out of your sight. The entire introduction process can take anywhere from a few days to weeks. The important thing to remember is that you need to be patient and observant. By using these steps, you will make the transition of adding a new addition to the household smoother for everyone!

Improvements to our Yearly Visits

As your pet gets older, you may start to notice certain signs of aging, such as graying fur and decreased activity level. But what about the parts of your pet that you can't see?

Geriatric animals are susceptible to many diseases affecting many major organs of the body. In early stages of these diseases, your pet may not exhibit any clinical signs. Regular screening for common health issues associated with older age can lead to the discovery of an early



"Annie" Jackson

problem in your pet, at which point steps can be taken to treat the disease or slow its progression.



Therefore, if your pet is over 8 years of age, we are now performing basic bloodwork at his or her yearly visit. For dogs, this bloodwork will take the place of our in-house heartworm test since this test is included in the panel that we send off to our reference laboratory. The panel will evaluate major organ function such as the liver and kidneys. In cats, we

may also test thyroid function along with the liver and kidneys since hyperthyroidism is a common geriatric disease in cats.

These panels are being run on healthy geriatric pets. Of course, if your pet is exhibiting any abnormal behavior, it may be necessary to perform more in-depth diagnostics. It is our intention to provide the best care possible to your beloved friend; this includes taking a proactive approach to ensure your pet's good health.



"Pepper" Tillman





WEST ASHLEY
VETERINARY CLINIC

NORTHWOODS
VETERINARY CLINIC

MEET SOME OF OUR PERFECT PATIENTS!!!



**"Harley" Landry,
with Lesley Robb**



"Layla" Squires



"Precious" Jacoby



**"Kitty
Kitty"
Ward**



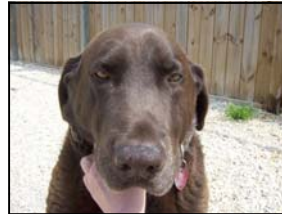
**"Sunny"
Ward**



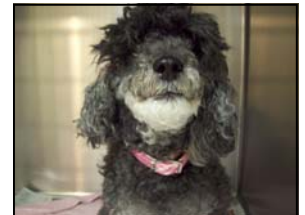
"Julia" Kemmerer



**"Baby
Scarface"
Wright**



"Buck" Giles



"Chloe" Robinson



"Ciara" Long



"Amber" Millwater



"Sassy" Bridgman



"Jasmine" Stanley



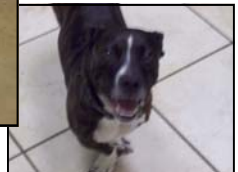
"Humphrey" Nash



"Tee" Byrd



"Jenny"



**and
"Max" Spreitzer**

Congratulations to Robyn Meyer, CVT!

Congratulations is in order for one of our veterinary technicians, Robyn Meyer, for passing her National Veterinary Technician Board Examinations! Robyn will graduate from Trident Technical College this spring with an Associate's Degree in Veterinary Technology, making her a certified veterinary technician. She will join CVT's Kate Sternberg and Heather Yilmaz at Northwoods Veterinary Clinic and Landry Brown at West Ashley Veterinary Clinic. Licensed and certified



veterinary technicians have attended and graduated from a nationally accredited college. There they learn skills needed to become proficient in all aspects of the veterinary field from client education to surgical assisting to laboratory diagnostics.

Although Robyn has been a part of our team for over a year while attending Trident, she will now be putting her skills to use as a CVT! If you see her, please congratulate her on a job well done!



Is there a subject you'd be interested in reading about? Do you have pet questions you'd like answered? Email Kate at: Kates@northwoodsvet.com

