



the AMC Scoop

Our
First
Issue!!

News You Can Use from ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

Issue 1

Winter 2004 - 2005

Pets Feel Pain, Too

by Steve Zucker, DVM

Have you ever had a surgery such as a C-section or a hernia repair or have you even just had your wisdom teeth pulled? If you have had surgery or major dental work, your doctor almost certainly provided serious pain relief. You probably received IV pain relievers before, during and after your surgery for a few days and you were likely sent home with a bottle of narcotic pain relievers or a pain relief patch to wear. If it was a major surgery with a lot of pain, chances are good that for at least a few days you ran right to the medicine cabinet as soon as your last dose wore off.

Pain Warning Signs

Your pet might be in pain if he shows one or more of these signs:

- Shaking or Trembling
- Increased Heart Rate
- Decreased Appetite
- Acts Needy
- Acts Reclusive
- Acts Unusually Aggressive
- Whining or Moaning

Our pets feel pain just like we do but they can't help themselves to pain relief so they count on us to help them. At Animal Medical Center, we won't let your pet suffer in silence because we make sure to treat pain as the serious condition it is. It just isn't right to do a major operation such as a spay or neuter without treating the post-operative pain. Not only is relieving pain simply the right thing to do for our

beloved pets, proper pain relief also contributes to faster healing and happier pets who aren't so traumatized by the vet's office that they quake in fear every time you cross our threshold!

Pain control is an essential part of the treatment plan for every pet. Whenever pain is an issue, our veterinarian will develop a customized pain control plan for your pet by considering the type of surgery, the age and health of your pet and your own preferences about how you prefer to administer pain control at home. Pain medication is typically begun before the surgery starts and then continued afterwards for a few days.

For each stage of treatment, the veterinarian carefully selects the right combination of medicines for your pet from a wide variety of available drugs. Modern veterinary medicine, just like human medicine, offers a wide variety of sophisticated medicines for our pets. Sometimes your pet can be sent home wearing a patch that delivers strong pain control for several days so you don't even have to give your pet pills!

In the past, some people, (even veterinarians!) believed that pets didn't really feel pain and that pain relief wasn't important. Just a generation ago, doctors claimed that young children didn't feel pain either! It comes as no surprise to those of us who have taken our kids in for their vaccinations that science has proven that pets and children do feel pain just like us grown ups.

In fact, studies have shown that effective pain relief leads to faster healing, better outcomes and, of course, kids and pets who aren't so terrified of the doctors they depend on!

New Early Morning Appointments

With the busy schedules of many families today, it is harder than ever to get everything done. At Animal Medical Center, we hear you! To meet the needs of our busy clients, Animal Medical Center now offers even earlier morning appointments on Mondays and Wednesdays. On those days, we now open at 7:30 and begin appointments at 7:50! We also offer late evening appointments (until 8:00) on Thursdays as well as appointments every Saturday morning from 9:00 to 12:00.



Bring Along Your Vets in Training

Your children are always welcome at Animal Medical Center. Most children love to come with their pets to the vet and our new children's corner has made a visit to Animal Medical Center more fun than ever for your children.



The Veterinarians In Training center features real kid-sized AMC lab coats, real name tags, working stethoscopes, colorful latex gloves, surgery hats and masks and all the other medical supplies your

little veterinarians in training need to care for the stuffed pets waiting for their care.

Books, cars, trucks and coloring supplies are also provided for your children's enjoyment.

Artwork Wanted!

We invite your young artists to contribute a drawing or painting of your family pet for our new Young Artists Wall. We will display your children's work in the hospital, on our website and we will select drawings to include in each issue of the AMC Scoop. Drawings will be returned at your request or we will display them indefinitely. We have supplies here at AMC for your artist to work while you

are here, or they can work at home and drop off a drawing any time. Make sure to let us know when you drop off a drawing so we can thank your child and get all your contact information. All Young Artists will be offered a Clifford book as a token of our appreciation.

Needy Pet Fund Success Stories

Our Lyons Memorial Needy Pet Fund provides care to orphaned pets in need of homes and also provides life saving care to pets in need.

Our Adoption Program

This fall and early winter, we have placed many kittens and puppies with loving families and have helped

two needy pets receive critical medical care.

Between November and early January, six kittens and seven puppies were matched with loving homes through our Adoption Program. Our adoptive pets usually come to us because they have been abandoned or orphaned. One of our veterinarians always checks the pet for good temperament and health before accepting them into our adoption program. We clean them up, de-flea them, de-worm them, immunize them, take care of any other medical needs and we love on them for at least a one week quarantine. Then we find them a family of their own.



After rescuing them and caring for them, it means a lot to the entire AMC staff to know that they find happy homes. We love seeing our "AMC pets" come back in to the hospital as proud family members. These adoptees often turn out to be absolutely wonderful pets. Most of our staff members have adopted beloved pets through our Adoption Program. In fact, Dr. Zucker's dog Sweet Pea was adopted through Animal Medical Center and he has his own advice column in this very newsletter!

When your family is ready for a new pet, consider checking with us first. We usually have a few kittens and puppies available. If you let us know what you are looking for in a pet, we can even keep our eye open for you and let you know when a good match for you becomes available.

Life Saving Care

The Needy Pet Fund also helps needy pets receive life saving care. One interesting recent case was a dog, Niveah, who was hit by a car. She had a "degloving" injury which is when the skin of the paw and leg is peeled off by a traumatic injury. Dr. Zucker was able to reattach skin and repair the injury successfully and Niveah healed very well and is home with her family.

We extend our sincere thanks to the clients whose contributions support the rewarding and important work of the Needy Pet Fund. Contributions may be made at any time and go 100% towards funding care for needy pets.

Staff News

This winter is sure shaping up to be a busy time at Animal Medical Center! Dr. Casuccio visited for a few days, we've welcomed Dr Fulton back, and, fortunately, Dr. Zucker and the rest of our wonderful staff remains!

Dr. Deb Fulton returned to Animal Medical Center this fall! Dr. Fulton's extensive experience and excellent skills are a welcome addition to our staff and we know we are very fortunate to have her! Many of you know Dr. Fulton already since she began practicing in Morgantown at Animal Medical Center way back in 1990 and she has lived in Morgantown ever since! After working at Animal Medical Center as a recent graduate, she later founded a local veterinary hospital and built it into a thriving practice. When Dr. Fulton decided she needed to step off the fast track and spend more time with her daughter, she sold her hospital. She has spent the last few years focusing on her daughter while keeping her skills sharp by volunteering veterinary services in exotic locations including Mexico and attending lots of continuing education.



Dr. Fulton never missed a beat when she rejoined our staff this fall. We can all see why she had such a loyal clientele in her previous practice! Perhaps it was luck or perhaps it was divine intervention, but what ever it was, we sure are delighted that Dr. Fulton decided to get back into veterinary medicine at the same time as Dr. Zucker was so urgently looking for help keeping up with the demands of this wonderful, busy practice! Make sure to say hello to Dr. Fulton the next time you come in!

Dr. Alex Casuccio flew in from Arizona for a few days over Christmas to see clients, visit with the staff and to help Dr. Zucker get a few days off with his family. Dr. Casuccio really looks forward to his time at AMC and he loved seeing the many clients who streamed through the doors just to say hello (and of course, those of you whose pets he saw while on duty)! Dr. Casuccio reports that he is enjoying his new life in Arizona where he is keeping "as busy as he can stand it" working as a much in demand "relief" (fill-in) veterinarian. He is still trying to enjoy that slower pace of life and sunshine that drew him to Arizona. If you didn't get a chance to see him in December, you'll get plenty of other chances when he comes back to Animal Medical Center every few months. As usual, we were all delighted to welcome him back to AMC and we are looking forward to seeing him again as soon as we can talk him into another visit!

Why Ultrasound?

by Steve Zucker, DVM

How can you know for sure if a bearded dragon is egg bound? How can you know whether your sweet old dog is weak and tired from "old age", heart disease, cancer or some other problem? How do you know whether your beloved cat has a liver tumor that could be successfully removed by surgery or if the cancer has hopelessly spread throughout her organs?

Our job as veterinarians is mostly about answering questions. The fancy name for getting answers to questions is "diagnostics" but, plain and simple, it is just about finding out what's really wrong.

In the past, a lot of veterinary medicine was "best guess medicine". When a pet became sick, the vet would give his best guess, try one or two things and if those didn't work, they'd just give up. Sometimes the pet got better and sometimes he got worse. Pet owners today want the best for their pets and fortunately, veterinary medicine has come a long way in recent years. Veterinarians now use many of the same advanced tools that are used in human medicine.

To diagnose disease and injury, we use physical exams, blood and other laboratory tests, x-rays, endoscopy and, now at Animal Medical Center, ultrasound. AMC's new state-of-the-art GE Logiq Book digital ultrasound adds power and versatility to our diagnostic capabilities.

Ultrasound is the best available tool for evaluating internal organs in the abdomen as well as the heart. It is noninvasive and very safe. It takes pictures (actually movies) of soft tissue internal organs similar to the way x-rays take pictures of bones. It provides much better and more detailed images of organs than x-rays do, so it can help the doctor find a diagnosis in many cases that could only be diagnosed through exploratory surgery when ultrasound was not available.

Echocardiography (ultrasound of the heart) is an essential tool in providing appropriate medical care for pets with heart disease. Ultrasound guided biopsies and aspirates allow the veterinarian to sample internal organs

or fluids without more invasive surgical procedures. It is also used to make routine procedures such as cystocentesis (using a needle to remove urine from the bladder) safer and more reliable.

Common Uses for Ultrasound

- Bladder Stone Diagnosis
- Diagnosis of Tumors and other Disease in Kidneys, Spleen, Liver, Bladder, Intestines and other organs
- Heart Disease Evaluation and Monitoring
- Internal Injury Assessment
- Biopsies of Internal Organs
- GI Foreign Body Evaluation
- GI Disease Diagnosis

Having an ultrasound is nice, but it doesn't do much good unless the veterinarian is highly skilled. One of the reasons that ultrasound is not generally available at many veterinary hospitals is that it is a relatively new tool that requires extensive training and experience to use effectively. It is hard to "learn on the fly" because it takes a lot of specialized training and months of daily use to become proficient and, even then, not all practitioners are equally adept at the art of radiology.

Fortunately for the patients of Animal Medical Center, Dr. Zucker has an extensive background in ultrasound and is skilled in using it to diagnose and monitor a wide range of serious conditions including internal injuries, cancer, heart disease and other vital organ ailments. While many practitioners have ultrasound and can use it for simple assessments, Dr. Zucker can maximize the potential of this tool.

Back when Dr. Zucker was paying his dues (we might call it "doing his time") in suburban Washington, D.C., he did all the ultrasounds for a 7 doctor practice. So, in addition to carrying a typical case load, he also did a couple ultrasounds every day instead of the typical couple a week in a typical small practice. Dr. Zucker also took elective courses in ultrasound while in vet school and has

taken additional continuing education courses since he has been in practice. All that training and experience has paid off for Animal Medical Center because we can now provide life saving care that is often only available at referral specialty hospitals.

About that bearded dragon. . . One day in January, Audrey came in because she hadn't been eating, was lethargic and had a distended abdomen. We suspected that she was egg bound (filled up with eggs that she couldn't lay). After a quick, harmless ultrasound confirmed the diagnosis, we proceeded with treatment and sent Audrey home with her relieved owner. There's nothing that makes our day more than a healthy pet and a happy owner!

Ultrasound frequently helps us efficiently and safely diagnose serious ailments like cancer and heart disease. Ultrasound is often a critical tool to diagnose these conditions without the risks, trauma and expense of exploratory surgery.

Just like exams, x-rays and blood work, ultrasound has become a fundamental tool in providing the best medical care for your pets.

Featured Adoptive Pet



This sweet, playful and loving 5 month old female kitty is waiting for a home. She is healthy and friendly. Call AMC for more information.

Have You Visited Our Website Lately?

The Animal Medical Center website is a great resource for up to date pet care information as well as information about our hospital services and mission.

We update our site regularly and welcome your questions and suggestions for improving our site.

Look for the printable coupon for a complimentary nail trim at your next visit. It's our small way of saying thanks for visiting our site!

www.AnimalMedicalCenter.petplace.com

Oh No, Not The Sofa!

by Steve Zucker, DVM

It's easy to see why cats are beloved members of our families – they're intelligent, lovable, independent and quirky. Luckily, the most common behavior complaint about cats is preventable!

Cat scratching is a natural, healthy cat behavior that is harmless if we can only direct them towards scratching in an appropriate spot! Cat's scratch for lots of reasons – they're getting a nice stretch, marking their territory and most of all, they are wearing down those claws to prevent them from overgrowing.

No one wants their sofa shredded! The trick to keeping your cat happy and your sofa intact is to train your cat to scratch on the right things and not to scratch the wrong things! The best time to start teaching is the day you bring home your kitten, but it is never too late to teach your cat to do the right thing.

Dental Health

by Steve Zucker, DVM

Regular professional dental care is important to maintaining your pet's teeth and protecting your pet's health. Keeping your pet's teeth healthy will give your pet a healthier, happier, longer life. As an added bonus, a healthy mouth gives your pet sweet breath!

All pets need routine dental exams and most are in need of a routine professional cleaning by the age of three or four. Preventive medicine is the best medicine for dental health. We all know that broken or decayed teeth are painful for your pet and can lead to feeding or behavior problems. But, many people don't realize that an unhealthy mouth can also lead to an unhealthy body by causing grave infections. Gingivitis (infection of the gums) serves as a source of bacteria that can spread throughout the body causing potentially life threatening infections of the heart, kidneys and other organs. Nearly all adult pets who are not receiving regular dental care have some degree of gingivitis.

Dr. Zucker's Sofa Saving Tips

1. **Provide an appealing scratching post.** This is the most important cat care purchase (or do-it-yourself project) you will make! The scratching post should:

- Be in a pleasant location near the cat's preferred sleeping area.
- Have appealing texture(s) (carpet, sisal or even wood)
- Be large enough to allow the cat to stretch.
- Be enticing! Use treats, toys or even the food dish to attract your cat to the scratching post.

2. **Trim the nails every two weeks.** You can use pet nail trimmers or normal nail clippers. Do be careful of nicking the quik because it will bleed if you nick it. Ask the nurse to teach you how to trim your cat's nails next time you are in if you aren't confident. It's easy!

3. **Discourage inappropriate scratching**

- Banish the cat from the area by closing doors or putting up temporary barricades.
- Put a scratching post right there where he loves to scratch!
- Shoo the cat away with a "hiss", a loud noise (like shaking a coke can full of pebbles) or a squirt from a water gun. Try to make sure the cat doesn't realize the noise or water comes from you because if he knows it comes from you, he might just learn to avoid the sofa only when you are around!
- Cover the favorite scratching spot with a loose cloth, a piece of plastic or strips of double sided tape.
- Spray the problem spot with an aversive odor such as perfume, vinegar or a commercial product.
- Never hit! Cats don't respond well to physical punishment. They'll only learn to avoid you, not the problem behavior!

4. **Gets a Claws Consult.** If these tips alone don't solve your problem, we can help find a solution! Animal Medical Center is committed to helping you solve behavior problems. We have lots of options and endless patience. If behavioral approaches don't work, we offer Soft Paws plastic claw covers which don't stop the scratching behavior but do prevent damage from scratching while the cat is learning to behave. Just ask any time you are in for an appointment and we will help you with this issue. If you aren't due to come in for an exam soon but need help now, we offer a free Claws Consult. During this consultation, we will discuss all claw care options with you and we will even teach you how to trim your cat's nails and get them all trimmed that day.

Dental disease causes pets significant chronic pain, just as it does in people. After dental care, it is thrilling to see the dramatic improvements in pets we have treated for advanced dental disease. Their activity levels, appetite, and energy levels often improve dramatically.

What is Dental Disease?

Periodontal disease is the most common serious disease among pets. It occurs among pets of all ages and becomes more common and more severe as pets get older. This disease affects 85 percent of adult dogs and cats. Fortunately, periodontal disease is both preventable and treatable. Although unlucky genetics predispose some pets to develop oral disease,

preventive professional and home dental care can help every pet have a healthy mouth.

Periodontitis is defined as inflammation of the tissues and structures surrounding the teeth. It causes not only "doggy breath" but also pain, infection and tooth loss. It is not normal for your pet's mouth to have a severe odor. Foul breath is caused by harmful bacteria and is a warning sign of dental disease.

Dental disease generally begins with inflammation of the gums and accumulation of plaque on the teeth. Plaque is formed when bacteria combine with salivary debris. Tooth loss, gum bleeding, and pus between the teeth or at the gum line are indicators of advanced periodontal disease. A pet

with periodontitis can send a bacterial shower into the blood-stream every time it chews. This bacteria can affect the heart valves, lungs, liver, kidneys and other organs, leading to life threatening infections and other disease.

Signs of Advanced Dental Disease

- Bad Breath
- Excessive Salivation
- Appetite Changes
- Facial Swelling
- Weight Loss
- Pawing at the Mouth
- Behavioral Changes

Step 1: Professional Care

Proper dental care can significantly slow the progression of dental disease. A thorough oral exam is a very important part of our Wellness Exam. Many of our clients are surprised when we point out dental disease in their pets. Clinical signs of disease may include bad breath, excessive salivation, appetite changes, facial swelling, weight loss, pawing at the mouth, and behavioral changes.

Depending on the degree of dental disease observed during the dental exam, the veterinarian will recommend home care, professional cleaning, OraVet sealant, antibiotic therapy, special diets or other treatments when needed. At Wellness Visits, we teach basic teeth brushing techniques to all puppy and kitten owners and anyone else needing guidance.

For professional cleaning, we use a modern, safe ultrasonic scaler and polisher to clean each tooth thoroughly above and below the gum line. Dental technicians polish teeth to create a smooth, lustrous tooth surface more resistant to plaque buildup. We may also apply OraVet Barrier Sealant to the newly cleaned teeth to prolong the benefits of the cleaning. Antibiotics are often prescribed to kill the harmful bacteria in the mouth and aid in healing.

Step 2: Home Care

Once your pet's teeth are clean, you can help keep them clean with

regular home care. The first line of defense against plaque and tartar is regular brushing.

Daily brushing is especially valuable because it removes plaque before the plaque can form tartar. It takes about 8 hours for bacteria to attach to the tooth's surface, creating a slimy film called plaque. These bacteria then absorb calcium from saliva and become mineralized, forming tartar or calculus. Daily brushing breaks this cycle. If daily brushing isn't possible, it is still helpful to brush as often as you can. Do not use human toothpaste when brushing your pet's teeth because it can cause stomach upset and the fluoride levels can cause kidney damage. We recommend and sell CET pet enzymatic toothpaste.

Feeding tartar control food or biscuits can also help reduce tartar buildup. We offer Hills t/d diet as either a main diet or to be fed as treats. One favorite way to use t/d is to add a handful of t/d chunks to each meal. Don't forget to reduce the amount of your normal food!

Although regular brushing is the gold standard for home dental care, there are other home care options that can help. Alternatives include OraVet Plaque Prevention Gel, prescription antiseptic mouth rinse or dental chews, such as CET Chews and Greenies.

The best alternative to daily brushing is the OraVet Plaque Prevention System. OraVet is a two step process. First, the veterinarian applies the OraVet Barrier Sealant to the newly cleaned teeth during the dental cleaning. This creates a clear, protective barrier on the teeth.

Second, you simply rub on a layer of OraVet Plaque Prevention Gel at home once a week (using an applicator or just your fingertip). It takes less than a minute, once a week, to help maintain your pet's clean teeth. OraVet is an especially important product for those pets who tend to build up a lot of tartar quickly and so need frequent dental cleanings and also for families who just can't manage regular tooth brushing. OraVet may be used by itself, or for even better results, you can also brush your pet's teeth and/or feed a dental diet.

Proper dental care extends your pet's life by an average of about two years! Dental care isn't costly, but dental disease is.

Dear Sweet Pea

Advice for the four legged



Dear Sweet Pea,

My breath is smelly and my mouth aches all the time. I'm feeling depressed because my mom and dad won't kiss me anymore. They even kicked me off the sofa last night. What can I do?

Sincerely,
Stinky Dog

Dear Stinky Dog,

Don't worry, there is help for your smelly and painful problem! It sounds to me like you might have a broken or infected tooth or your teeth might just be really dirty with plaque and tartar and lots of smelly bacteria.

When was the last time you had a dental exam? You need to get professional help right away! Neglecting your teeth will shorten your life – by about two years on average! This is a serious problem but it is easy to fix.

Once your vet has your mouth all fixed up, he will teach your parents how to keep your teeth clean at home so you will remain kissable and comfortable!

Hang in there,
Sweet Pea

Sweet Pea is a doctor of canine psychology. He was an orphaned pet adopted through Animal Medical Center and now is a beloved member of the Zucker family.

Weigh In

Whether you are working to manage your pet's weight or working to get your pet more at ease at the hospital, feel free to stop by for a complimentary weigh-in on our pet scale. Make sure to let us know you are visiting so we can give your pet a treat. We're always happy to welcome visitors but mornings are the best time to visit since things are usually quieter then!

Proper dental care may extend your pet's life by an average of Two Years!!

Animal Medical Center's Mission

We know your pet is a member of your family. We will treat you and your pet as we would wish to be treated. We will provide you with kind, courteous, informative care for your furry, scaled or feathered pet. All members of our hospital staff will treat you and your pet with respect and kindness at all times.

Our mission is to provide the very best medical care for your pet, using modern equipment and advanced techniques with a personal, caring touch. Dr. Steve Zucker and our other hospital veterinarians are committed to providing the very best primary veterinary care possible, but we are glad to refer to specialists when needed.

Modern veterinary medicine offers many choices. We pledge to spend

sufficient time to educate you so you can understand your pet's medical condition and make informed decisions about your pet's medical care. Each family is different and each pet is unique; we will get to know you and your pet so we can provide the best care for your family.



Sally by Katie Zucker, age 8

ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER
460 Hartman Run Road
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-292-0126

Providing full service small animal medicine for cats, dogs and pet exotics.

Convenient Hours

Mon & Wed 7:30 – 6:00
Tues & Fri 8:00 – 6:00
Thurs 8:00 – 8:00
Sat 9:00 – 12:00

24/7 Emergency Service for
Established Clients

www.AnimalMedicalCenter.petplace.com

Your Pet's Second Best Friend

In this issue

Pet's Feel Pain, Too!
Needy Pet Fund Success Stories
Why Ultrasound?
Oh, No! Not the Sofa
-- Sofa Saving Tips from Dr. Zucker
Ask Sweat Pea
-- Advice for the Four Legged
Pet Dental Care
... and more news and information
from Animal Medical Center



ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER
460 Hartman Run Road
Morgantown, WV 26505

Your Pet's Second Best Friend

*The AMC Scoop is published for friends and clients of
Animal Medical Center. We welcome your comments.
Call us at (304) 292-0126*