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# Pet Care News

Spring 2008



## The Persian Cat



Persian cats belong to some of the oldest cat breeds, coming into Europe from Persia (now Iran) in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Persian cats are known for their long flowing hair coats, well-rounded heads with a flat nose, and their large round eyes. They have a gentle temperament, and while playful they are less likely to engage in naughty acrobatic activities such as scaling your curtains.

There are many varieties of Persian cats based on colors and patterns. The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) accepted the calico pattern in the mid 1950's. Calico pattern is defined by red and black spots on a white background. Bi-colored Persian cats were later recognized in the 1970's by the CFA. Many color varieties now exist.

Persian cats do require a little extra care than the domestic shorthair. The coat of hair has a long silky topcoat with a cottony undercoat and requires routine combing. During summer months, an easier upkeep could be provided by having a groomer clip the Persian cat's coat into a "lion's cut." The Persian cat's eyes may produce a watery discharge and usually require daily washing with a soft cloth. Some Persian cats may have overly stenotic nares (small-sized nostrils) which can lead to breathing difficulties. If the nostrils are very small, a surgical procedure may be necessary to enlarge the nostril openings.

In summary, if you are looking for an elegant, docile feline companion and you are willing to spend a little extra time on daily care, a Persian cat may be just the breed for you.

*— Information obtained from Caroline Tanner, Cat Fancy, February 2008, pp 22-25.*

## Dog Training and Socialization



One of the leading reasons people surrender pets to shelters is for behavior problems. Many behavior issues could be avoided by beginning proper socialization and training as soon as a pet arrives at his new home. Young puppies learn very quickly if they are rewarded for appropriate behaviors with positive reinforcement. (praise, play, treats, etc.) For even young puppies, work on teaching commands of sitting, coming, and staying, along with housetraining. Guide puppies away from jumping or nipping behaviors since these behaviors become more problematic as dogs grow and develop.

While punishment is rarely effective, another training method of ignoring or not responding to unwanted behaviors may quickly extinguish a bad behavior such as jumping up on people. After ignoring the unwanted behavior, wait until the puppy sits at your command, then reward him for the wanted behavior.

Puppy kindergarten classes help to introduce young puppies to social situations with other dogs and unfamiliar people such as children. Helpful guidance from the class trainers can be sought for any unwanted behaviors that your puppy might be exhibiting. Continued training at home and in more advanced classes reinforce the good behaviors and make your pet a happier family member.

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Whether you choose to pursue one of the many fun canine sports with your pet or simply want a happy, well adjusted canine companion, good behavior is required for all dogs. It is never too early or too late to train dogs of all ages.

## Thyroid Disease in Cats and Dogs

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Thyroid disease is common in both cats and dogs. The thyroid glands are located in the neck, lying next to the windpipe (trachea). The glands are small and not easily detected in normal animals. Middle aged and older animals are most often affected with thyroid disease.

In cats, hyperthyroidism (over-active thyroid) is the predominant disease. Senior cats, age ten years or older, are those most commonly affected. The symptoms include weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, vocalizing, and poor hair coat. Secondary heart disease with rapid heart rate and heart murmurs may occur. Diagnosis is made by blood tests along with the typical clinical symptoms described above. The disease can usually be treated and managed successfully, but treatment must be continued and monitored for the rest of the cat’s life.

In dogs, hypothyroidism (under-active thyroid) is most common. It is believed that an autoimmune reaction causes destruction of the thyroid glands in affected dogs. Some breeds appear to be more prone to this problem (Golden Retrievers, Dachshunds, Cocker Spaniels, Irish Setters and others). Symptoms usually include weight gain with normal or even decreased appetite, lethargy, poor hair coat with a symmetrical loss of hair (alopecia) over the trunk of the body, and slow heart rate or a difficult to hear heartbeat. Secondary skin infections may occur in affected dogs. Diagnosis is usually made by blood tests along with the typical symptoms described. The majority of dogs do well when placed on thyroid hormone supplementation. Again, treatment and monitoring by periodic blood tests must continue throughout the pet’s life.

More rarely, cancerous thyroid tumors is another type of problem that can develop in both the feline and canine species. The most common symptom is a firm thyroid mass. Sometimes that is the only presenting sign of a problem. Diagnosis requires a biopsy of the mass and treatment usually requires surgery or other treatments available through a veterinary oncologist (cancer specialist).

## Warning to Our Clients

Buying pet meds online might save you cash, but you could end up with one sick puppy, says Douglas G. Aspros, D.V.M. of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Some online pharmacies sell meds without prescriptions or dole out counterfeit drugs. And some are outside the country, so they’re not regulated.

– *Information from Reader’s Digest Magazine*

## Pampered Puppies



Americans are spending money for hydromassage baths (\$18 to \$45), lavender aromatherapy, sparkly pedicures (\$10) and massages going for \$130/ hour for their dogs, but hesitate to spend money for a yearly physical exam with their veterinarian. Ron Faoro, DVM, head of the California Veterinary Medical Association, says “Animals handle stress much better than humans. It’s important that people don’t just think, “Oh, my dog’s limping—I’ll take him to the doggy spa.”

– *Laura McClure - Reader’s Digest Magazine*

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## Winner of the 2008 Westminster Dog Show

"Uno" was the 2008 winner of the Westminster Dog Show. He is a 15 inch high beagle and the first beagle to win in over 100 years.



## National Pet Dental Month

February was National Pet Dental Month. Make sure your pet gets regular dental check-ups.

## Reminders!



- . Call ahead for prescription medications
- . Call ahead for prescription food orders

**Do you have topics or questions you would like to see addressed in "Pet Care News"?  
Email your question to [actonanimalhospital@comcast.net](mailto:actonanimalhospital@comcast.net).**

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