



Acton Animal Hospital  
Acton, MA  
978/263-7477

# Pet Care News

Winter 2008/09



## Meet our New Staff Members



We are pleased to announce that Dr. Maria-Elena Cloherty has joined the staff at Acton Animal Hospital. Dr. Cloherty (left) is a graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University, and has practiced small animal medicine and surgery since graduating in 2001. She recently relocated to our area from Brewster, Massachusetts along with her family and their pets. Dr. Cloherty joined our staff this November, 2008 and will be available for appointments at Acton Animal Hospital two days a week in addition to some Saturday mornings. We welcome Dr. Cloherty to our team.

We are also happy to welcome Kelly, another new staff member, to our team at Acton Animal Hospital. Kelly has been training with our staff and will be working full-time as a veterinary technician assisting with all aspects of patient care. Kelly joined our staff in November.

## Tips for Adopting a Young Kitten



Sometimes young kittens need homes long before they are the ideal age of 12 weeks. If a kitten is orphaned or cannot stay with its mother cat and litter, it can be adopted before 12 weeks of age. Please take the kitten to your veterinarian before you bring it home if at all possible. Your veterinarian can test the kitten for diseases such as feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus therefore protecting any other pet cats that already live at your home. Your veterinarian can test your kitten's stool sample for intestinal parasites, check for external parasites such as fleas, ear mites, or for skin lesions suggestive of fungal infection and prevent transfer to other pets in your household. Vaccinations to prevent feline distemper and other feline viral diseases should commence from about eight weeks of age and should continue every 4 weeks until the kitten is 16 weeks of age.

Designate a sanctuary area for the young kitten away from other pets until he has a chance to adjust to his new environment. Be sure not to isolate the new kitten from social interaction with you and other members of the family. The new kitten will need play time, petting and handling along with his bed, food, water, and litter box. Once the kitten has been determined free of infectious disease, you can allow it to explore a larger area of the home under your supervision. Allowing other family pets to sniff at the door of the designated kitten sanctuary or to sniff around after your new kitten explores more of the house will allow a gradual transition for the newcomer kitten.

## Pet Dental Month



February is National Pet Dental Month!! If your pet is in need of a dental cleaning, or other dental procedures, please schedule an appointment early as the dental procedures become booked very heavily. Pets need to have had a physical exam within 6 months of the procedure, since the pet will be anesthetized. Pre-anesthesia blood work is recommended and should be completed before the procedure is scheduled. Dental care has been recognized as an important preventive health procedure for your pet.

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## Resurgence of an Old Pest — the Flea



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”  
small pets.*

For several years we have been lucky to have a lower incidence of flea infestations in our local area. Recently, however, we have been seeing more dogs and cats with fleas. These parasites cause various degrees of skin irritation and pruritus (itching) and can infest houses, yards, and vehicles. Animals that are allergic to flea bites may suffer severe itching, inflammation of the skin, and loss of hair coat. Fleas also carry tapeworm larvae which your pet may ingest while grooming itself.

Once a pet has a flea infestation, that pet, other pets in the household, and the entire house must be treated. Fleas jump onto the pet or a human host to get a blood meal. Female fleas require a blood meal to lay eggs. While fleas prefer to bite pets for a meal, if there is a heavy infestation or pets are not available, the fleas will bite humans. Fleas hide in carpets, furniture, cracks and crevices in the home and periodically return to the host for another blood meal.

Several applications of an effective paraciticide may be necessary to clear a severe infestation both on the pet and in the environment. Repeated vacuuming of the environment also helps to remove flea eggs and larvae. After vacuuming, the collection bag or receptacle should be emptied into an airtight plastic bag and disposed to prevent flea eggs or larvae from hatching out and reinvesting the environment.

Pet owners should know that many products that are available for treatment of the home are NOT safe to use on a pet. It is recommended that product labels are read before use. Be sure to verify the safety of the product for your particular pet. Many products that are safe for dogs are not safe for cats, rabbits, or other small pets. Also check with your veterinarian about using several products simultaneously as some flea products are not safe when combined with other paraciticides.

## Winter Care for Pets

As the cold weather sets in, it is time to be sure our pets, especially the elderly ones, are safe and comfortable. Sleeping areas should be insulated, draft-free, and padded to protect stiff, arthritic joints. Electric heating pads should be avoided due to the danger of thermal burns to dog or cat skin. Several thick towels, blankets, pet pads or washable small rugs will provide a cozy resting spot.



Proper grooming is also important to help your pet through the winter months. A clean, mat-free hair coat provides better insulation against the cold. Keep toenails clipped to prevent nails from splitting on frozen ground. Dogs with a short hair coat may need a coat for outside activities.

Road salt and sand can irritate paws and cause gastrointestinal upsets if the pet licks his feet. Some types of car antifreeze (ethylene glycol) are highly toxic to cats and dogs. Store containers out of reach of pets and promptly clean up any leaks or spills since even a few milliliters can cause poisoning.

Proper nutrition is especially important over the winter months. Cats and dogs that spend a lot of time outside may need an increase in calories just to stay warm. Pets that stay indoors and get less exercise over the winter need to have less food to avoid gaining weight. Add a fatty acid supplement with omega acids to your pet's diet if your pet's skin becomes dry or itchy during the cold weather. As home interiors begin to dry out from heating systems, try adding moisture back to the environment with a humidifier or allowing a pan of water to evaporate into the room.

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## Tidbits

- One flea can lead to 40,000 fleas in one month.
- Fleas can jump 130 times higher than their own height. Inhuman terms this is equal to a 6-foot person jumping 780 feet into the air.  
*www.sciensational.com*
- Only about 30% of lost dogs are reclaimed from shelters.
- Only about 5% of lost cats are reclaimed from shelters.  
*Veterinary Forum: October 2008*
- All ancestral roads for the modern day domestic cat lead back to the Fertile Crescent, the area around the eastern end of the Mediterranean, according to researchers at the University of California-Davis

## Bark! The Hairy Angels Sing

(sung to "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing")



"Bark!" the Labradoodles sing.  
"Look at us, the latest thing.  
Curly hair and tempers mild,  
Big and small dogs reconciled."  
"Don't forget us!" call the Puggles.  
Shorkies yap, "We're best for snuggles."  
"Wait a sec!" the mutts proclaim.  
"Neath our fur, were all the same  
Hark! Tho' wondrous breeds abound,  
Don't forsake the local pound"

*By Lenore Skenazy, Reader's Digest: December 2008*

## Reminders!

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