



# WRVC NEWSLETTER WINTER 2017

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# Staff Pet Poll

By Heidi Jacobson

Being the animal lovers that we are by day, we thought it would be entertaining to know how many pets are in our lives after we leave the clinic. We polled our staff of 24 employees to find out just how many pets are in one's household. These are how the numbers stacked up:

Dogs – 35

Cats - 36

Horses – 2

Exotic Birds - 3

Chickens – 43

Ducks - 3

Goats – 4

Rabbits - 1

Mouse – 1

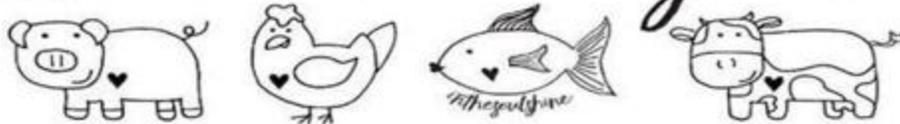
Hamster – 1

Bearded Dragon – 1

Crayfish – 1

And last, but not least.... a bunch of guppies!!

**BE kind TO every KIND**



## What's That Smell?

Dr. Mark Baetke

This is the time of year when we spend more time inside. We sit on the couch and our pets snuggle up to us. That's when we smell "That" odor. At first, we can't figure out what it is, then we realize it's our pet's breath. As you get stuck inside during the winter do yourself and your pet a favor and have its teeth cleaned.

As well as making its breath smell better, there are other benefits to a clean mouth. A clean mouth reduces bacterial load on the body. Excess bacteria will put stress on the immune system. Bacteria can also colonize other areas of the body leading to possible infections of the kidneys, liver and heart valves. A clean mouth preserves teeth. When pets develop tartar they also have periodontal disease. Periodontal disease leads to gum recession and bone loss. This leads to teeth loosening and eventually falling out. A clean mouth stops pain. As teeth get periodontal diseases they also become painful. You may not realize your pet is in pain because it still eats. Eating in a pet does not mean it is not in pain it just means the pet doesn't want to starve. I get many people who tell me after their pet's teeth are cleaned how much better it eats (even though we may have pulled multiple teeth) and how much more active and alert their pet is.

If you want to give your pet a present this holiday season, have its teeth cleaned. Even if you think the teeth aren't "that bad" if your pet is over 3 years old there is an 80% chance it has some tartar and gum disease. Prevention is always better and cheaper than waiting until the teeth can't be saved.



## Welcome Ivan

Dr. Ziegler

While the WRVC takes in stray pets for our area, for over a year now we have had the policy that we do not take in healthy adult cats. There are several reasons for this that I will not delve into at this time.

One day an individual came in carrying an adult male tom cat. She had found the cat hanging around the neighborhood and brought him in as a stray. I explained that we could not accept a healthy male cat as a stray. After some bantering and arguing, I elected to take him in with the idea that I would neuter him, vaccinate him, tip his ear (the universal sign of a feral cat) and release him back into the neighborhood. At least he would not be breeding any more females and producing more unwanted litters.

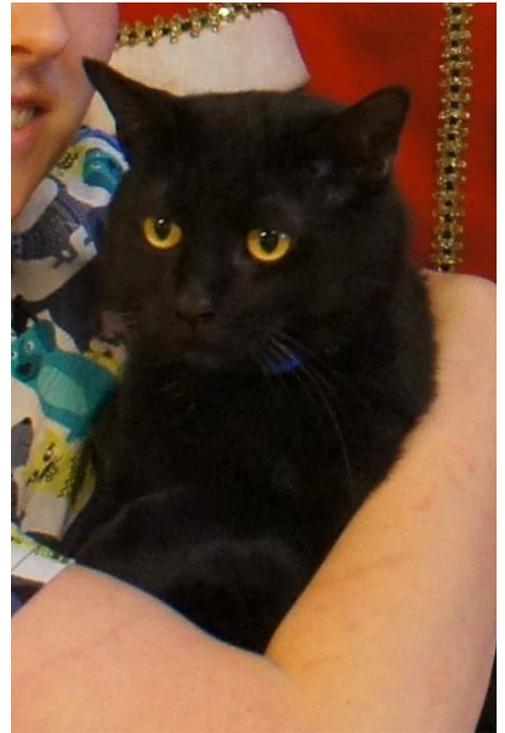
During his neuter, I was palpating his abdomen only to discover a very large bladder indicative of a urinary blockage. We alleviated the blockage and hospitalized him. The next day, he was blocked again and had to be sedated and catheterized again. Since then he has been doing well, but had the blockage not been treated, he would have died a slow, painful death.

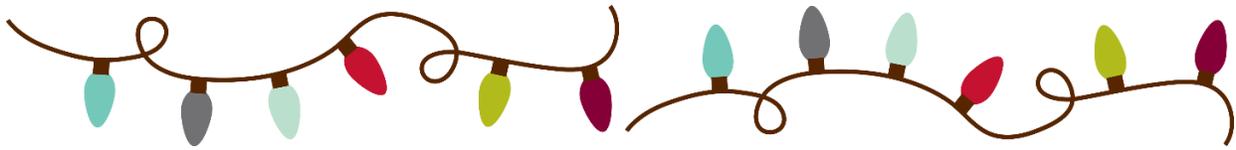
Ever since our beloved clinic cat, Tia, died many years ago, we have thought about getting another clinic cat. Ivan quickly proved to be an easy going gentle cat, and the decision was made to make him our next clinic cat. While he is not at the front desk in the lime-light like Tia was (he prefers to hang around the back part of the clinic, often napping in one of the doctor's chairs), he has become a welcome member of the clinic.

It is nice to have a clinic cat again. Everyone enjoys him, and he acts as a stress reliever as he enjoys being petted, and purrs contentedly when given attention. We hope that he will be with us for many years to come.

It is bothersome to me that he could have suffered a horrible death. Random circumstances prevented this, but I wonder how many animals out there do not get the break that he did. I am sure that there are many. This is sad. You wish you could save them all, but you cannot. You save the ones you can.

Ivan was one that we could help.





## Holiday Wishes

Dr. Ziegler

The winter newsletter would not be complete without extending our best wishes for a happy holiday season and an offer of gratitude to those who have cared for their pets needs over the year.

The holiday season is a strange time. We all know that it has morphed into everything it should not be—chaos, commercialism, greed, and everything else contrary to the true intent of the season. Yet we continue to do it. I hope that there are at least a few out there who, at the end of the year, feel a sense of peace with where they are in life, as well as a sense of hope for the future of mankind. Other than that, the holidays end up being hollow. It all comes down to a personal choice.

Despite this seemingly negative attitude towards the holidays, I sincerely hope that everyone has a great season and a blessed year ahead. I also need to thank all our clients who have cared for their pets and believed in the clinic enough to trust us with their pet's wellbeing. This is the ultimate compliment, and I do not want our appreciation to go unrecognized. We could not exist without our clients concern and compassion for their pets.

One of the most amazing things about looking ahead to the new year is that I have absolutely no idea where it will be taking me, or anyone else. It is all a great mystery that will only unfold with time. I accept this as part of life's challenge. In the meantime, I hope to relax and enjoy the holidays. I like to sit and stare at the Christmas tree while listening to classical Christmas music (church music as my wife says). It is a time to reflect and think about where I have been and where I am (hopefully) going. I try to put life's events into perspective which is, at best, a daunting task. But it is an essential task, and I enjoy it.

With best wishes and gratitude—Happy Holidays to all!

*happy  
holidays*

## The Pet Care Price Tag Crisis

Dr. Ziegler

One of the criticisms of veterinary care is that the cost of it in recent years had been increasing at a rate that far exceeds inflation. Pet owners are very aware of these increasing costs, and in some cases, this can make pet care unaffordable. One of the concerns the veterinary profession has is that client/pet visits are on the decline, and cost of care is one of several factors that is a part of this trend.

So, what has driven up these costs so dramatically? To a large extent, it is technology. It is a rare clinic these days that is not heavily invested in technology. Whether it be the computer system for the business, diagnostic equipment such as x-ray equipment, ultrasound, or surgical equipment, overhead costs for clinics have skyrocketed, and this unfortunately must be reflected in price. This, along with the never-ending escalation of the cost of drugs are a large reason prices have gone up so much. Unfortunately, there will be no going back to the way it was. The only hope is that the price of technology will moderate and that drug manufacturers quit playing the games they do.

The next question is what to do about it? The veterinary profession is very aware that price sensitivity is an issue and is not going away. To see this result in a gap in care is frustrating and is not a good thing at all. Veterinarians are going to have to evaluate their recommendations and protocols based on current science to not “over sell”. (I can remember many years ago when some vaccine protocols went from every year to every three years. Clinics gave up a lot of income with this change, but it was better science and better medicine.) Changing protocols will be a part of the future of pet care.

From a pet owner perspective, clients need to focus on a few areas:

1. Preventative medicine. The cost of preventative medicine has not risen as much as the cost of sick and injured pet care. At the same time, many pet owners are opting away from preventative care, which makes no sense at all.
2. Payment strategies. The old concept of ‘saving for a rainy day’ largely does not exist anymore, but it should. Planning for any expense is always a good idea. Pet insurance is getting more popular, and if started early in a pet’s life, can be a great thing. Many clinics are also offering payment plans in which health care costs (largely preventative) can be spread over monthly payments. Care Credit, a payment system for pet care, is a very similar, popular option. We have had, in the past, clients simply put a certain amount of money every month on their account, essentially acting as a savings for the future. Whatever method, it is simply planning ahead.
3. Live within your means. Many pet owners have multiple pets. Multiple pets cost more money. This seems obvious, but to some, it is not. We see many pet owners overextend themselves with simply too many animals. In many situations, as the number of pets increases, the level of care decreases, which is unfortunate.

While these may seem like easy answers, they are not. Cost will always be an issue for a segment of pet owners. We know that 40% of the pets out there never receive any veterinary care. We also know that 20% of pet owners provide veterinarians with 80% of their work. These are very skewed statistics, and the question is whether these can be adjusted more in favor of more pets getting care? Time will tell. I do not

have the answer at this time, but it will be an interesting challenge for both our profession and for the changing perception that pet owners have regarding pet care. I certainly hope that we will find ways to make pet care better rather than making it a luxury item for the select few.

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## Winter

Dr. Ziegler

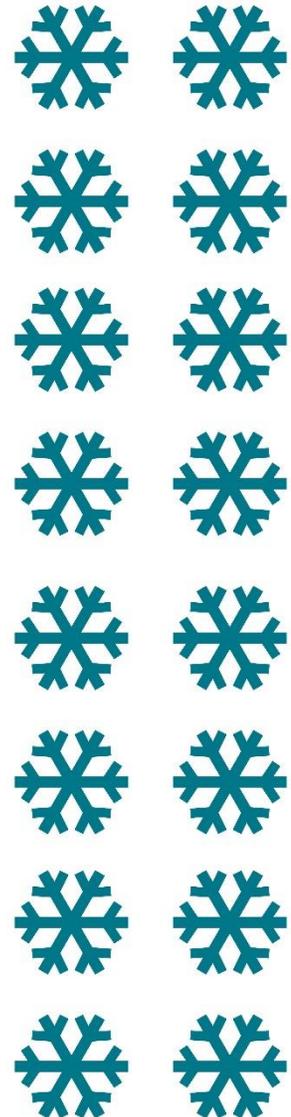
After a very warm Fall, the weather has finally cooled down, and the prediction is for a colder than normal winter. Time will tell. Forecasts rarely seem to be correct, and the weather will do what it will do. At the same time, I do hope for a colder winter with decent amounts of snow. To many, this is blasphemy, and most cringe at the thought of adverse weather.

I enjoy winter for a variety of reasons. I do not like the heat at all, and I simply feel better when it is cold. I also hate bugs, and winter is a nice reprieve from the world of insects (this can be a health benefit for our pets as well as it breaks the transmission of many vector borne diseases). I also find the snow entertaining. Having grown up in Michigan's Keweenaw peninsula, winter was a way of life. Winter meant endless hours outdoors snow shoeing, skiing, skating, shoveling snow, etc. You either loved it or you suffered for many months.

The other thing I love about winter is that it takes us out of our comfort zone. It challenges us in many ways to essentially be better, stronger, tougher, more creative, more tolerant, and so on. Getting out of a comfort zone is not a bad thing at all, and it seems to be becoming less common in our society. People tend to like predictability, stability, and ease. It makes life easy, but to me it also makes life boring and unchallenging. I like to be challenged at times (not all the time however), and I do believe that we all need to be challenged on a somewhat regular basis if we are going to be the people we should be. It all goes back to the argument that suffering in some capacity is an essential part of life. Life needs perspective.

Global warming scares the daylights out of me for many reasons. One of those is that it is taking winter away from us. I am not one of those who will celebrate that fact. I heard a saying once that "up north is getting farther up north every year." This is an unfortunate truth to that statement.

In the meantime, I will continue to do what I love, and will be in my glory every time it gets cold and snowy. There are certainly others like me out there. While others may think us to be crazy. I would prefer to think that those of us who enjoy adversity are actually the sane ones. Let it snow!



## No Fleas Please

Dr. Ziegler



One of the things we deal with at the clinic on a surprisingly regular basis is fleas. You would think that with all the medical and surgical conditions presented to us daily that there would be other things that take precedence. Yet, August through February (or later), we deal with flea infested pets daily.

This, to me, is amazing for a variety of reasons. We typically see three scenarios of pet owners with fleas. The first are those who are very aware of the problem and are looking for help. The second are those who have no idea that their pet has fleas, but wants to assign some blame. I could not tell you how many people claim, “My pet never had fleas until they come into your clinic!” Yes, we do have a bucket of fleas in the entry way that we hope will infest every pet walking into the clinic (this is sarcasm, obviously!). The most common scenario is the client who simply has not clue at all. A physical exam reveals fleas and flea dirt, and the client is surprised at this revelation. The discussion of flea control ensues in every case.



The thing that amazes me is that flea control is so easy. There are more than one hundred flea control products on the market. Most are readily available over the counter, and a select few are restricted for sale by the veterinarian. While some certainly work better than others, the point is that control products are readily available to everyone, and most are reasonably priced (this is, of course, a relative thing).

One thing that I have observed on a regular basis is clients attitude towards flea control. Many do not think that they need anything (a dangerous attitude). Many are concerned about introducing chemicals onto or into their pet. Others want nothing to do with fleas and use preventative products on a regular basis. In this latter category, many get their products over the counter from big box stores. Many get them from their veterinarian. I will tell you, at the risk of sounding biased, the happiest group of clients (and the most flea free pets) are those who involve their veterinary clinic in their flea treatment or prevention. It is what it is. I am not making this up.



The bottom line is that fleas are a pest out of control. It does not have to be this way—not at all. I am baffled as to why, so many pet owners accept flea infestations the way that they do. I am surprised that, so many pet owners do not recognize flea problems. In the end, it is like any other infectious condition—fleas are completely preventable—if you choose that option.



## The Muddy World of Supplements

Dr. Ziegler

These days there are supplements for virtually everything. On the animal side the most popular of these are products for joint health. However, there are many others for all sorts of things—curing memory loss, preventing urinary tract infections, resolving anal gland issues, calming the agitated pet, making a diseased liver better, making a mouth filled with dental disease spotlessly clean, clearing cataracts, and on and on. I could not even begin to guess the amount of money spent on supplements, but I am sure it is unbelievably high.

For as big as this industry is, there is actually very little to show that any of them work. None of these products are FDA regulated, which means that relatively few standards must be met to produce them. Technically, any one of us could create and market a supplement for something. I have often joked that I could collect zebra mussels, grind them up, dry them up, and sell them as a supplement for something. Might not be a bad idea. Maybe we can do the same with Asian carp! Might not cure anyone of anything, but it might help control the invasive species.

Does this mean that all supplements are a hoax? I do not think so. Some companies are very good at policing their quality control, assuring that their product is at least what they say it is. There are some products that may not heal a pet and make them whole, but can at least help manage some conditions. Some arthritic pets will benefit from a good joint supplement, and some pets with liver disease will benefit from the use of a liver supplement. Some pets with chronic urinary tract infections may respond to a supplement, and some anxious dogs will calm down with the right supplement. Note the word “some” is used in all situations.

So, what is a consumer to do? I personally am no expert on supplements, but I have opinions that I am happy to share. Every veterinarian is this way. The point is that pet owners should probably ask questions versus just buying something randomly off the shelf that may make ridiculous claims. (I am not going to buy a bottle of Super Beta Prostate from the infomercial without asking my doctor first. Even if I get a second bottle free if I call within the ten minutes!)

It is a muddy world with many lofty promises. It is easy to get sucked into the world of miracle supplements. The manufacturers of these products have a way of making us believe, and we all want our old arthritic, incontinent pet with stinky breath to be young again. False hope is still hope.

Supplements! Interesting stuff. Navigate this world carefully.





Quotes Provided by Dr. Pete Gasper

*"There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music and cats"--Albert Schweitzer*

*"I have lived with 5 Zen Masters, all of them cats."--Eckhart Tolle*

*Native peoples say that a long time ago on the earth a chasm opened up separating animals and humans. As the chasm got wider and wider, the dogs jumped across to be with the humans. Today, when you hear wolves howling in the night, they're crying out for the chasm to close."—Kling*

*"Are cats lazy?  
Well, more power to them if they are.  
Which one of us has not entertained the dream of doing just as he likes, when and how he likes, and as much as he likes?"  
—Fernand Méry*

*"Cats seem to go by the principle that it never does any harm to ask for what you want."—Joseph Wood Krutch*



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