



Wolf River Veterinary Clinic Newsletter Summer 2018

Inside this issue:

- *The Positive and Negative Roles of Pets*
- *From Dog Mom to Daughter Mom*
- *30 Years*
- *Summer, Mosquitos, Heartworm*
- *The Rising Costs of Drugs*
- *If Animals Could Talk*
- *The Dog Days of Summer*
- *Attention Cat Owners*
- *Fun Cat Facts*



The Positive and Negative Roles of Pets

Dr James Ziegler

When I started veterinary school, one of our professors told our class, “Animals must play a positive role in people’s lives. If they do not, then they need to ask the question as to whether they should be a part of their life.” Why this has stayed with me for over thirty-four years, I am not sure. Perhaps it is because it is true. Perhaps because I see people defy this all the time.



For the most part, I believe that pet owners, overall, enjoy their pets. However, in some cases, this is not so. We see people who are unhappy with their pets, are mentally stressed by them, and perhaps even financially challenged by them. The original pet owning experience may have started out as a positive one but morphed into something negative. Pets can develop behavioral issues that can be very challenging. A pet might develop a medical or surgical problem that gets out of control, and owners can get trapped into more caregiving and financial responsibility than they anticipated. Many owners come to feel trapped by their commitment to their pet. Owners can literally center their lives around their pets, living for them.

The problem with many of these situations is that the “perpetrator” does not see the problem. It is often the outsider looking in who recognizes the unhealthy situation. Even if the pathology of the situation is pointed out to the owner, it does not mean that they are capable or willing to

take that critical look in the mirror.

As veterinarians, we frequently find ourselves playing a counselor role as well. We talk about protecting the “human-animal bond” all the time. Maybe, instead, we should be referring to the “healthy human-animal bond”. In our counseling of clients, this should be our focus.

I remember an appointment with a client who was dealing with two geriatric pets. She was dealing with pets being blind, deaf, incontinent, senile, immobile, etc. Pet care for her was an unrewarding job. After listening to her, I finally asked if she derived any pleasure or happiness from her pets anymore. After a short pause, the answer was “no”. The solution was obvious. She just needed to hear it from the right person.

I do not have easy answers to all the problems we face with clients who are unhappy with their pets. Every situation is unique. Every situation needs to be dealt with differently. The solutions are always there, but it is a matter of finding a solution that serves everyone (including the pet) the best. Even if a decision is hard, it needs to be made.

It needs to be emphasized that all relationships have their ups and downs. That is just the way life goes. You cannot bail out of a commitment the first time something goes wrong. Very often, working through

those bad times ultimately makes the relationship stronger. Sometimes I think our pets challenge us to make us better people. But they should not bring us down and make our life a shamble.

This is a tough topic filled with varying emotions. I simply hope if there are pet owners who are not happy with their pet that they will reach out to someone about the situation. That is the essential first step, and we at the clinic are always willing to help.



From Dog Mom to Daughter Mom

Shaunna Ferge

I've always had a strong passion for animals for as long as I can remember. Even as a young girl I loved the outdoors, wildlife and most of all my horses and dogs. I have been a proud dog mom of 3 happy pups for the past 4 years. They bring so much adventure, laughter and excitement to my life. It's because of them that I decided to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. Shortly after graduating in 2013 with a degree in Wildlife Ecology and Biology, I began my Veterinary Assistant career at Wolf River Veterinary Clinic. Working in a Veterinary clinic has been an extremely rewarding and fulfilling career. I truly enjoy what I do, and I get to help people and animals every day. I can even bring my fur babies to work with me!

But that's not to say that it doesn't have some downfalls. It can be very physically and emotionally taxing as well. The days and weekends can get long, as in any medical field. Days can quickly turn for the worst. No one wants to walk through the exam room door into a euthanasia or be there to tell a client devastating news about their pet and family member. Doing these things day in and day out has a way of changing people. We become numb and compassion fatigued from dealing with these negative events on a daily basis. No one ever wants to admit it, but it has happened to all of us.



But everything changed for me about 6 months ago. Going from dog mom to daughter mom changed my life completely in every way, but I could've never imagined how it would affect my career...in a great way. I was off work on maternity leave for about 2 weeks before I begged Dr. Ziegler to let me come in to work a few hours a day. Six weeks just seemed like way too long to be away from the clinic!

Shortly after I returned to work I could tell that things were different. The ability for me to connect with clients on an emotional level has been amplified tremendously. I suddenly found myself becoming extremely emotionally involved with sick and dying patients as well as their owners. I feel all the emotions and sadness from clients. I always could, but not like I do now. It's very hard to explain and I often wonder if other women with children have experienced this the way I have. Even if I don't know a certain client or their pet, the empathy I feel for them during their hardships is overwhelming. At first, I thought maybe I was just undergoing postpartum hormonal changes, as all mothers do, but my emotional connection with people and animals only grows, just like my baby girl.

Even though I can't explain this new-found characteristic, I can say without a doubt that it has changed me and made me a better veterinary assistant. I create better connections with my patients and more importantly, their owners. I find it much easier to put myself in their shoes. It makes me want to do all I can for them and help in any way possible, despite the craziness the day can bring.

Going from "Dog Mom" to "Daughter Mom" has been the best transition my life has yet to make. I hope my daughter grows up with the same passion and love for animals and wildlife as her mother. It brings me great pride knowing I have a career where I can help people and animals, and this allows me to be a great role model for her. Because of her I am a better person and because of her I am better at what I do every day...helping people and helping animals.



30 Years

Dr Mark Baetke



I will have been practicing veterinary medicine for 30 years in June. Practicing is the key word. Veterinary medicine is always changing and progressing and that is what makes it so interesting. There have been many improvements in medications and equipment since I graduated.

One area is vaccines. When I graduated there were occasional cases of distemper reported and still some outbreaks. I luckily have not seen a case and hopefully never will. The vaccine is that good. Parvovirus was relatively new. There was a very good vaccine and those animals that were vaccinated were safe. Early in my career we still saw quite a few cases in unvaccinated puppies. If we saw them early they had a chance with treatment. Unfortunately, many puppies died. Their life could have been spared with a simple vaccine. I have not seen a case of parvovirus in many years now and hope not to see another. Distemper and parvovirus are considered core vaccines. Every dog should get them because they are highly effective in protecting against deadly disease. Other vaccines are considered non-core. These are usually based on the life style of the pet and are less likely to cause death like Bordetella (kennel cough). One vaccine is becoming what I would consider a core vaccine in this area and that is the Lyme vaccine. When Lyme disease first started appearing it didn't seem that big of a deal. If a dog got it, you treated it with antibiotics and they got better. They developed a vaccine for it but at first, we didn't push it that hard since the disease was easy to treat. The vaccine would also interfere with the test at the time. The vaccines have improved as have the tests. Then things changed. Dogs started to develop Lyme nephritis. Their kidneys would fail and there was nothing we could do at that point. They would die. These were young dogs and it was tragic. Our best defense was to start vaccinating all the dogs that would be spending time in the woods or hunting. Since we have pushed for more dogs to be vaccinated we have seen a decline in cases of Lyme and Lyme nephritis. Now as more information comes out and the climate changes we are seeing even city dogs are at risk. I have had small dogs that never left their yard contract Lyme disease. That is why I feel the vaccine should be a core vaccine in our area. I personally vaccinate my dog as well as use a flea and tick product.

Another area that has seen a giant leap in the last 30 years is equipment. While the scalpel hasn't changed, and we still use it, most of the surgery I do now is with a laser. I remember early in my career having to hand develop x-rays, now we have a digital machine. The x-rays we get today are much better than even the ones at the university when I was in school. When I took my radiology course in school the university had recently got a secondhand ultra-sound machine from a human hospital. The only people allowed to use it were the board-certified radiologist. The students could hold the animals and watch. Now we have an ultra-sound machine in the Clinic.



The most interesting thing about being in practice for so long is the fact that pets will still surprise you. After 30 years you would think you would have seen everything and yet something will come in and you must admit to the owner that this is the first time you have seen this. Living things never seem to follow the books. It's even more interesting when you ask the other doctors and none of them has seen it either. That is why they call it practice. There is always something new to learn and apply.



Summer, Mosquitoes, Heartworm

Dr. Kyle Ruedinger

Summer brings back many of the fun outdoor activities people love with its warmer temperatures and absence of snow. Time outside, boating, fishing, grilling, gardening, all the good things! But it also brings back many of our forgotten friends in full force spreading disease: ticks, fleas, and mosquitoes. The bugs have been out in swarms for several months already. Hopefully your dog is on prevention, and if not get started right away. We highlighted fleas, ticks, and Lyme disease in spring and now will talk about heartworm in more detail.

First, we have some basic information and interesting facts. Heartworm disease (*dirofilariasis*) most commonly infects dogs, although it can also infect cats. Heartworm is vector borne which means it is spread by mosquitoes. Left untreated, it is deadly. Adult heartworms may live up to 5 years in dogs (2-3 years in cats), if the patient survives. The female worm can reach lengths of 12 inches or more. The female produces countless 'babies' called microfilaria. These are the little larvae that we often find in infected dogs' blood. The lifecycle of heartworms is quite complicated and has stages from small to adult denoted with various larval stages up to adult. Microfilaria take 5-7 months to mature into adults. Humans cannot 'catch heartworm' from their dog as it must be in the mosquito to complete its lifecycle (there are very rare reports of humans having heartworm disease).

Dogs sick with heartworm disease will display general signs of illness such as cough, shortness of breath, weakness, and lethargy. Once adult worms are present in the heart, the dog is usually sick and advanced treatment with expensive medicines is needed. Long term damage to the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys are all possible. A simple blood test is used to check for heartworm disease, but it may not show up positive for 5-7 months after infection. Any positive is confirmed with further testing and more diagnostics are performed before treatment. Treatment is expensive, time consuming, and the dog must have many injections, medicines, and cage rest. This is truly one case where an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure! The most common prevention is a monthly tablet given to your dog, most of which also include prevention for various intestinal parasites.

Myth: Wisconsin does not have heartworm.

Fact: Heartworm has been diagnosed in all 50 states. We have had several cases at the Wolf River Veterinary Clinic this year already, including 2 diagnosed in less than 24 hours in May. It is true that the majority of cases are in the south and along the Gulf Coast, but heartworm is very much a nationwide disease that must be taken seriously.

Myth: We do not need to test for heartworm disease because our dog is on preventative.

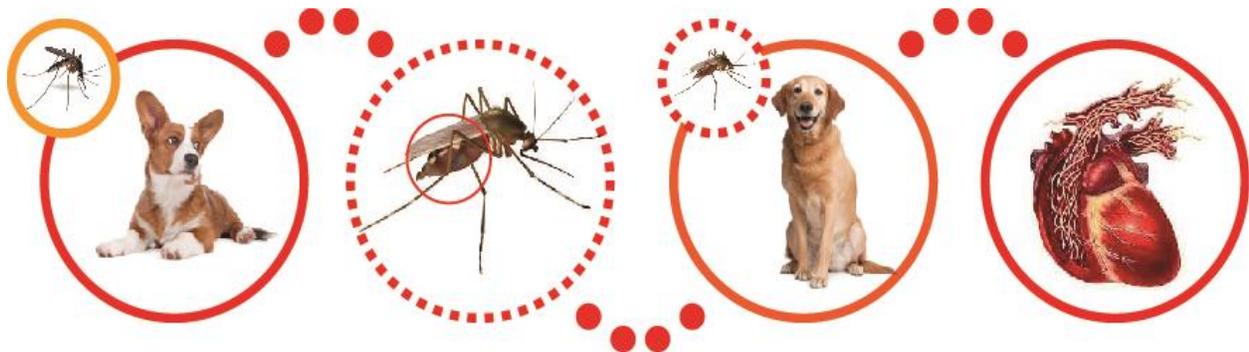
Fact: Annual testing is the standard of care and is recommended by the American Heartworm Society and veterinary medical specialists. Despite prevention, dogs still acquire heartworm disease. A few reasons include: partial year usage, missed doses, dogs throwing up a dose, and even dogs that take the pill from their owner and then spit it out elsewhere!

Myth: Mosquito season is May-October, so we only need prevention for heartworm then.

Fact: The heartworm lifecycle is very complicated and takes months to finish. Breaks between prevention allow larvae to complete their life cycle before the next dose is given leading to an adult infection. Preventatives are *prevention* and do not kill adult worms directly. Every dog, every month!

Heartworm is a terribly debilitating disease which can largely be prevented with a monthly tablet. Do not take the chance with your dog.

For more information check out the American Heartworm Society: <https://www.heartwormsociety.org>



A mosquito bites an infected dog and ingests tiny heartworm larvae.

These larvae develop into their infective stage.

The same mosquito bites another dog, the larvae infect the healthy animal.

Without preventive, the larvae continue to develop, eventually reaching the heart and lungs.

The Rising Costs of Drugs

Dr James Ziegler

We all know that pet care is becoming more expensive. Statistics show that the cost of pet care is rising more rapidly than the cost of inflation. And I am not just talking about veterinary costs. Veterinary costs only account for about one quarter of all money spent on pets these days. Go out and price a bag of premium (or even above average) pet food. It has gotten very pricey. It is pretty much the same across the board for pet products and care.

One area we are constantly being berated for is the cost of drugs. Unfortunately, we often hear the complaint, "Every time I come in the same drug costs more!" And that is the truth, but do not shoot the messenger. If we pay more for a medication every time we order it, which happens often, we either mark the cost of the medication up appropriately to make up the difference, or we take a loss. Taking a loss is not the best option. Much to the consumers opinions, veterinary medicine is not all that lucrative to the point that we can sell products at a loss (Costco, Walmart, Shopko, etc. and can bury the profits in sales elsewhere. This allows them to underprice certain items).

So why do drug costs go up? Honestly, I have no idea. We have seen relatively inexpensive medications skyrocket in cost virtually overnight. Within just a several hour time frame, a "shortage" can develop which no one had any warning or insight into. Most companies increase the price we pay for medications at least 6% a year automatically, with no reason or justification. If I could do an automatic increase of 6% a year, I would be retired by now.

Quite honestly, as an old timer, I am getting more and more concerned about what it costs for pet care. When do we hit a breaking point? When does pet care become unaffordable? When do health care choices decline due to cost? In my opinion, we are already there, and if another recession would hit soon, which could happen, I am intimidated by what the results may be.

Hard to know where it is all going to end up. I do wish that clients would appreciate the fact that so much of this is out of the control of us in private practice. I feel bad when a receptionist or a technician is criticized for the cost of a medication. It is something that is totally out of their control. It is unfair to shoot the messenger. Unfortunately, it is a trend that is not going away.



If Animals Could Talk

Dr James Ziegler

One of the attributes a veterinarian is recognized for is his/her ability to figure out what is wrong with an animal given that they cannot talk to us (at least in the form of speaking words). It is up to us, as professionals, to figure out where a pet hurts or what the source of their illness is. The same applies to behavioral issues—we need to try and figure out what a pet is thinking since they cannot directly communicate with us. It does represent a certain challenge.

Frequently, a pet owner will comment about their pet and say, “Don’t you wish that they could talk?”. My comment is always, “No, I do not wish that they could talk, and I am glad that they do not.” It is not that I would not like my job to be easier, but if pets could talk, they would not be pets anymore. They would be people, and then, why would we want them?

Years ago, Gary Larson provided us with endless entertainment in his “The Far Side” cartoons. Frequently, he gave animals human attributes, one of which was communication. He made it all very funny, but if it were real life, it would not be funny at all. It would be obnoxious. Worse than endless barking, endless chatter from our pets would make us not like them very much. We would rather put up with the barking (or meowing).

I look at my interactions with my dogs, and one of my endless pleasures with them is one of silence. Can you imagine a long walk in the woods with endless talking amongst the dogs versus silence? Can you imagine a long car ride with multiple dogs shooting the breeze? What about a quiet evening at home versus every mutt speaking his mind? It is unfathomable and unwanted. Think “Planet of the Apes”.

I actually enjoy the challenge of figuring out where a pet hurts, what they are thinking, and what’s making them feel poorly. It is what we do as a profession, and I would not have it any other way. It does make us wrong sometimes, but that happens more in human medicine as well.

Conversations with animals are meant to be one sided, and that is OK. That does not mean that we do not have the skills to communicate with them, though. We always need to try to communicate with them, whether it is “listening” to them in certain ways, or in how they are interpreting what we are doing and saying. There is a relationship there that we must foster, and that takes a certain skill set. Communication comes in many forms other than verbal.



Donning his new canine decoder, Professor Schwartzman becomes the first human being on Earth to hear what barking dogs are actually saying.

It does make you wonder, though. One thing I am always yelling at my barking Border Collie is, "Bella shut the h*ll up!". If she could talk, I wonder what her response would be. Better not to know.



The Dog Days of Summer

Chandell Dain, CVT



The summer months are finally upon us. With warmer weather comes outdoor activities: camping, swimming, outdoor sports, fishing, and many more. If you are at all like me, I tend to include my dog Mossy in all the summer fun. We all know while enjoying the weather we also become warm,

sometimes hot enough to feel ill. Imagine how that feels then amplify that with an additional layer of fur with the only physical ability to cool off through panting and paw pads. Makes me feel uncomfortable just thinking about it. So, if you are including Fluffy in your summer time fun, or even letting Fluffy outside when it is sultry outside, keep an eye out for these signs that he may becoming overheated and nearing an emergency:

1. Heavy Panting: Panting is a normal way for a dog to cool off. However, when a dog is panting with his mouth fully open and tongue swollen and hanging to one side-you should be concerned. If you see this get your dog inside with air-conditioning or in a cool shady spot immediately and offer fresh water.
2. Excessive Drooling: This may indicate that your dog is having a hard time cooling off. Your dog may be creating more saliva in an effort to cool off.
3. Frequent Breaks and Lying down: While you are outside for a stroll or enjoying time outside and your dog frequently lies down to take a break, they are more than likely feeling the effects of too much heat. Bring him inside to cool off immediately and offer fresh water. HOWEVER, if your dog collapses from the heat wet his coat with cool (not ice) water and bring him to your veterinarian as soon as possible.
4. Fast or Irregular Heartbeat: This is another sign that your dog may be overheating. An increased heartrate is a way that the dog's body works to pump the overheated blood to the extremities and away from vital organs where there is an increased chance of damage. Immediately rush your dog to the veterinarian.
5. Other Signs: Severe lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea (especially bloody), lack of appetite, or neurological signs like stumbling or seizures after exposure to heat could all be signs of damage already happening from overheating. Contact your veterinarian and bring your pet in immediately.

There are ways to avoid overheating or any of the above issues while still enjoying the summer months with your pooch. Give your dog many breaks from the heat throughout the day. Wait until the evening hours to take Fluffy for a walk and bring along fresh water to offer throughout the walk. Keep in mind that as the air temperature rises, the temperature of the asphalt/cement you are walking on rises as well. If it is too hot for you to walk barefoot on, don't allow your dog to either. Supervise your dog when they are outside in the heat-that way you can interpret their behavior and make sure they are staying cool and always provide fresh water!

If you do notice any of the signs of overheating in your dog contact your veterinarian immediately. You can also soak your dog in cool water (not ice water, which could have the opposite effect due to the body's normal response and prevent heat loss) in the mean time before transporting him to your veterinary clinic.

If you have any other questions, feel free to contact us!



Attention Cat Owners

Dr Pete Gasper/Dr James Ziegler

Veterinary clinics have recognized for years that when it comes to veterinary visits, cats are often “second class citizens”. Many pet owners will bring their dog(s) in on a regular basis, but many cats are only seen when there is a problem. Routine, annual visits seem to not be important to many owners. It is not uncommon to be talking to a dog owner only to find out that they have a cat or cats at home whom we have never seen, or maybe only saw as a kitten, and never saw again until they were older and not doing well.

According to worldatlas.com, there are an estimated 76.5 million pet cats (versus 73 million pet dogs) in the United States*one in three households own a pet cat, with an average of 2.2 cats per cat-owning household.*

Cats and Veterinarians:

*In the United States, there are more cats as household pets than dogs, yet dogs are receiving more frequent veterinary care than cats. Owners avoid taking their cat to a veterinarian. Sixty percent of owners reported that their cats hate going to the veterinarian. **Thirty nine percent of owners reported that they do take their cat to the veterinarian, or only when it is sick.** Thirty eight percent of owners feel stressed even at the thought of having to take their cat to the veterinarian. Therefore, our feline patients are not visiting the veterinarian as often as our canine owners and they are receiving less veterinary care.*

The Top Five Reasons We Can Help Your Cat(s):

1. Cats Age Much More Rapidly Than Humans.

A cat reaches the approximate human age of 15 by his first birthday and then the approximate human age of 24 by his second birthday. Each year after, your cat ages approximately *4 cat years* for every calendar year. So, your 8-year-old cat would be 48 in human years. Annual veterinary care is crucial because a lot can happen in a *cat year*.

2. Cats Are Masters at Hiding Illness.

Cats are excellent at hiding signs that they are sick or in pain. Your cat could develop a health condition before you notice anything is wrong. We are trained to spot changes or abnormalities and detect many problems before they advance or become more difficult to treat.

3. Your Cat May Be Overweight.

Over 50% of cats are overweight or obese. We will check your cat's weight at each visit and provide nutritional and enrichment recommendations to help keep your cat at an ideal weight. Just an extra three pounds can put your cat at risk for diabetes, heart, respiratory, and kidney disease, and more.

4. Preventive Care Is Better Than Reactive Care.

During a regular check-up you share information with us about how your cat behaves at home. This history along with a thorough physical examination, allows us to create a plan to help your cat remain healthy. Regular check-ups can help avoid medical emergencies by detecting conditions or diseases before they become significant, painful, or more costly to treat.

5. Kittens Have 26 Teeth, While Adult Cats Have 30.

That equals a lot of dental care! Periodontal disease is considered the most common disease in cats three years of age and older. Often there aren't any obvious signs of dental disease. Most cats with dental disease still eat without a noticeable change in appetite. We will examine and discuss your cat's teeth/oral hygiene at their annual check-up.

In the Meantime?

Below is a diagram with some suggestions for your next visit.

The Wolf River Veterinary Clinic is always interested in ways to serve cats and cat owners better.

YOUR ROLE IN YOUR CAT'S VETERINARY VISIT



5 Things to Do



1

Get your cat acclimated with her carrier. Keep the carrier out in a common area where your cat spends a lot of time and use familiar bedding.



2

If your cat is stressed by going to the veterinary practice, ask your veterinarian about anti-anxiety medication that you can administer before your visit.



3

You should withhold food from your cat for several hours before your appointment to avoid motion sickness.



4

Bring a favorite toy or familiar smelling clothing or bedding to help your cat feel more comfortable.



5

Bring your cat's favorite treats with you, so you or a veterinary team member can give her a treat as a reward or distraction.



Fun Cat Facts!

1. Cats sleep 16-18 hours a day
2. Calico cats are almost always female
3. Cats can jump approximately seven times their height
4. A group of kittens is called a kindle, and a group of cats is called a clowder
5. Abraham Lincoln domesticated four cats while in The White House
6. Napoleon and Julius Caesar were both extremely afraid of cats
7. 10% of a cat's bones are in the tail
8. Cats have approximately 100 vocal sounds
9. Cats have 24 whiskers
10. Cats can gauge their owner's moods and change their mood to match
11. The scientific name for a hairball is a trichobezoar
12. In ancient Egypt, people would shave their eyebrows as a way of showing grief of the death of a family cat.
13. Cats can only move their jaws up and down, not side to side.



216 W. Wolf River Ave
New London, WI 54961

Phone: (920) 982-2733
Fax: (920) 982-3112

411 S. Bridge St
Manawa, WI 54961
Phone: (920) 596-3311

<http://www.wrvet.com>

Visit us on Facebook!