

Ironstone Veterinary Hospital Newsletter

Summer 2010

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. The newsletter was started earlier this year to help keep you, our clients, informed about items of interest to the animal world, both here at Ironstone as well as farther afield. Copies of our earlier newsletter can be found on our website, www.ironstone.net, or please send a request to have it emailed to you at ironstonevet@yahoo.com.

Our Staff

Veterinarians

Sherilyn Allen, VMD

Jacqueline Burke, VMD

Receptionists/Technicians

Barb Grimm

Theresa Eshbach

Jessica Scheidel

Shannon DeMas

Bookkeepers

Lou Sheehan

Connie Ames

Common Household Poisons

Do you know that many common food items or household products can sicken or even kill pets? The ASPCA maintains a 24 hour poison control hotline, which handles more than 100,000 cases of pet poisonings every year. Based on those cases, the top offenders are human medicines, insecticides, people food, rodenticides, veterinary medicines that are given incorrectly, plants, chemicals, household cleaners, heavy metals, and fertilizer.

Most people know that chocolate can be poisonous to pets, but what about grapes, raisins, onions, garlic, macadamia nuts, avocados, coffee, alcohol, yeast, and the common sugar free sweetener, xylitol, found in items such as candy, gum, beverages, and desserts? All of these items can also be dangerous to pets, so it's important not to give them to your pet as treats or to store them or leave them out where your pet may be able to get them.

It's important to keep in mind that pets are not small humans, so just because something doesn't make us sick doesn't mean that it's okay for our pets. Additionally, because pets are generally much smaller than people, what we may think is a tiny harmless amount of a food or drug can make them ill. For these reasons, you should never give your pet a medicine meant for people unless you've been told to by a veterinary professional. Many over-the-counter drugs can be extremely toxic to pets. Don't leave medicine bottles out where pets can reach them and be careful to pick up any dropped pills immediately.

Vigilance about pet poisons needs to extend to the garage, shed, and garden as well. Many lilies, flowers, and common ornamental shrubs can be toxic. Cocoa mulch, fertilizers, and compost piles are also unsafe for pets. When you're wiping out rats, mice, bugs, or weeds, be careful how you apply and store the poisons around your home. These products are meant to kill! Rodenticides, pesticides, and herbicides are very common causes of poisoning in pets. Remember, pets are curious. If something smells good, they'll eat it. If they can get into a container, they will. Be aware of what substances may be toxic to your pet, and store and use them safely.

If your pet does eat something he or she shouldn't, time is of the essence! Call us or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's hotline immediately (888-426-4435) and be prepared to describe what your pet ate, how long ago, and how much. If possible, bring in some of the substance, including any label information available, with you if you are asked to bring your pet in for an exam. *Note: when calling the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center you will be charged a consultation fee.*



Product of the Month...Composure

Composure is a calming support formula manufactured by Vetri-Science Laboratories for use in alleviating stress-related behavior problems in dogs and cats without affecting the animal's personality or energy level. It is useful for changes to the animal's environment, for when company comes or a party is held, for veterinary or grooming visits, for boarding or holidays, for boredom or separation anxiety, for moving or traveling, and for fireworks and thunderstorms. It can be used daily or when extra help to relax is needed.

Composure is packaged as a liquid or as chews that can be given as a treat. Composure contains the following ingredients: Colostrum Calming Complex, L-Theanine, and Thiamine. Colostrum Calming Complex is isolated from colostrum proteins which have been found to support cognitive functioning and support stress reduction. L-Theanine is a naturally occurring amino acid found in green tea that is a derivative of glutamic acid, a neurotransmitter in the brain. It helps the body to produce other calming amino acids such as dopamine, GABA, and tryptophan and helps bring certain neurotransmitters into better balance. Thiamine (Vitamin B1) has been shown to affect the central nervous system to help calm and soothe anxious animals. Composure does not contain any herbal ingredients (Kava Kava, Valerian, St. John's Wort, etc) or L-tryptophan. Its ingredients do not cause addiction, drowsiness, or impaired motor skills. Composure can be used either as needed for immediate support or on a daily basis for ongoing support. During times of increased stress it is safe to double or triple the suggested amounts. We would be happy to answer any questions which you may have about this product.

An Interesting Case ... My own dog!

By Dr. Jacqueline Burke

On Friday evening before the 4th of July weekend, I noticed that my dog Tess was a little less animated than normal when she accompanied me to the barn to feed the horses. She's a seven year old spayed female Jack Russell terrier, and like most Jack Russells, she's typically very active and animated. However, I was in a hurry to get the work done after a busy day at the office, and I did not examine her or worry about it any more that evening.

The next morning, however, Tess was obviously very sick. She was reluctant to move at all and couldn't negotiate the few steps leading down from the front porch. I examined her and noticed her gums were quite pale and her respiratory rate was very elevated. I took her to Ironstone where I drew blood and urine specimens to send to the lab. Suspecting autoimmune hemolytic anemia (AIHA), I started her on immunosuppressive doses of steroids.

On Sunday morning I was able to retrieve the laboratory results over the Internet. The diagnosis of AIHA was confirmed. Her hematocrit (the measure of the percentage of the blood that is red blood cells) was 16; when she had routine wellness blood testing done a month before the hematocrit had been 55! I added a second immunosuppressive drug, azathioprine, to the regimen. She continued to become sicker and sicker throughout the day. I took her back to Ironstone Sunday evening and ran a hematocrit test again. It was now 12. By this time she was extremely weak and could barely stand, let alone walk. Her mucus membranes, even her tongue, were extremely pale. She was also no longer eating.

During this time I had been doing a lot of research about advances in the treatment of AIHA, and had found that human gamma globulin had been used and advocated by specialists at some veterinary teaching hospitals. On Monday morning, I obtained the gamma globulin from Valley Central Veterinary Hospital in Whitehall and began the twelve hour infusion process. I attempted to remain hopeful in spite of the fact that the hematocrit had dropped to 6 and now Tess could barely hold up her head. The infusion ended late that evening at home. I slept next to Tess all that night, as I do every night, but that night every time I woke up I laid my hand on her to make sure that she was still alive.

The next morning Tess was slightly improved! She was able to walk a few steps and I thought her gum color was slightly slightly pink. Or was I imagining an improvement? I took her to work with me and ran the hematocrit. It was 12! The next day it was 16, then 20, then 26, etc. As of this writing, four and a half weeks after the diagnosis, the hematocrit is holding steady at 39 to 40. She is no longer on the steroids and is now receiving the azathioprine every other day. She is back to her normal behavior and appetite.

I learned a lot by handling this case. The importance of good nursing care was definitely reinforced. I needed to be very patient with Tess in encouraging her to eat when she was

at her sickest. She even appreciated help in positioning her so that she could breathe better when her hematocrit was at the lowest point. I appreciated more than ever the value of the wellness blood testing that I had done a month before so I knew what her normals were. Most of all, I appreciated being reminded how very important these animals that we bring into our lives are and how much pleasure they bring to us. Thank you Tess!

Traveling by Air with Your Pet

We receive frequent calls and questions from clients about traveling by air with their pets, usually for a long distance move. This article will attempt to address the most commonly asked questions as well as give some advice to make the trip go as smoothly as possible.

Federal regulations require that pets be at least eight weeks old and weaned at least five days before flying. Most airlines that will transport pets require a certificate of veterinary inspection (health certificate) that is issued within ten days prior to travel. Many major airlines allow cats and small dogs to travel in specially designed carry-on luggage that will fit underneath the seat. If you are traveling internationally, consult us and/or Pennsylvania's USDA Veterinary Services Area Office or the destination country's embassy or consulate about additional travel restrictions or quarantine requirements.

Whenever possible, book a nonstop flight and avoid plane changes and busy holidays. During warm weather months, choose early morning or late evening flights. In colder months, choose midday flights. Regulations associated with the Federal Animal Welfare Act prohibit airlines from accepting dogs and cats for shipment if the airline can not prevent exposure of the animal to temperatures less than 45 degrees F or more than 85 degrees F for more than 45 minutes when the animal is transferred between the terminal and the plane or for more than 4 hours when the animal is in a holding facility. However, the prohibition against exposure to temperatures less than 45 degrees F is waived if a veterinarian provides an acclimation certificate stating that the dog or cat can be exposed to lower temperatures. No certificate can be issued allowing for temperatures greater than 85 degrees F.

Reconfirm your flight arrangements the day before you leave to ensure there have been no unexpected flight changes. Arrive at the airport early, exercise your pet, personally place it in its crate, and pick up the animal promptly upon arrival at your destination. When boarding the plane, let the flight attendant know that your pet is in the cargo hold. If your pet will be traveling with you in the cabin, arrange to check in as late as possible to reduce the amount of time your pet will have to spend in the busy terminal.