



Dear Doctor



News, updates, and practice tips for today's veterinarian. | Vol. 1 No. 2 Aug./Sept.

A Closer Look

Pet wellness month launched at AVMA Convention

VETERINARIANS URGED TO JOIN CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE PET OWNERS ABOUT THE VALUE OF TWICE-A-YEAR WELLNESS EXAMS.

A highlight of this year's AVMA convention in Philadelphia was the kick-off of National Pet Wellness Month, a clinic-focused educational initiative to promote twice-a-year wellness exams for dogs and cats.

Sponsored by the AVMA and Fort Dodge Animal Health, National Pet Wellness Month (NPWM) will be launched in October, but it is designed as a year-round program that will expand over time.

NPWM's focus is on raising pet owner awareness of the pet (dog and cat) aging process and the importance of twice-a-year wellness exams for pets.

The program will be carried out in two parts. The first part of the program will center on the local veterinary clinic where pet owners can receive valuable wellness information, tailored to their pet, from their personal veterinarian. Veterinarians who sign-up for the program (see "Join today" below) will receive a variety of educational tools, including posters, client literature, and point-of-sale materials that help explain the pet aging process and the steps pet owners can take to enhance the quality of life for their pets.

The second part of the program will take National Pet Wellness Month and the pet aging process message to pet owners in a national publicity campaign—"Twice a year for life!" A series of national news, video, and audio releases, targeted at leading national and regional media, will direct pet owners to their local veterinarians for more information.

Speaking at the news conference, AVMA President Jack O. Walther, DVM, explained that advances in veterinary medicine have led to an increased percentage of aging cats and dogs in this country. "Unlike people, cats and dogs can't tell you where it hurts," says Dr. Walther. "An exam every six months is the best way to help ensure that any potentially life-threatening condition is caught early."

Brent Standridge, Fort Dodge Animal Health's Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, North America, said that creating greater knowledge and awareness of twice yearly pet wellness exams will have a dramatic impact on the health, quality of life, and longevity of America's pets. "The best place for pet owners to learn about the pet aging process and wellness exams is from their veterinarian," says Standridge.

Twice yearly exams offer these benefits:

- enable early detection and treatment of potentially deadly diseases or conditions, particularly for senior pets
- allow you to schedule immunizations and other procedures during two visits
- provide an opportunity to consult with the owner about the pet's weight, dental health, behavior problems, and other important health issues
- help pets live longer, healthier lives

Mike Rehm, DVM, owner of Rehm Animal Clinic in Mobile, Ala., says incorporating a twice yearly wellness program in his practice has allowed him to offer better patient and client care. "At our twice annual visits, we evaluate the pet's general health, ears, eyes, teeth, and so on," says Dr. Rehm. "It also gives us a chance to recom-

Wellness (continued)

Join today!

Join the Pet Wellness Month campaign to educate pet owners about the importance of twice-a-year wellness exams. Order a free



In-Clinic Wellness Education Kit by mailing the card on page 2 or sending an e-mail to petwellness@lpm-adv.com.

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Take Note

ProHeart® 6 (moxidectin) serves as reminder for wellness visits

We all know the difficulty in getting clients to comply with preventive health regimens. Fort Dodge Animal Health offers a solution. With ProHeart® 6, clients must visit

the clinic every six months, which offers the perfect opportunity for wellness exams. Read what these veterinarians have to say about ProHeart® 6:

“I’ve never had another product with higher compliance than ProHeart® 6. It’s a great way to help owners be more responsible, because they don’t have to remember to give a pill. It doesn’t do a dog any good if pet owners forget to give a product. ProHeart® 6 allows the veterinarian to control the product as it trav-

els from the factory to delivery to the pet. When the veterinarian drops out of that chain, compliance falls.”—*Mark Setser, DVM, MS, Village Vet Animal Clinic, Tulsa, Okla.*

“I’ve been using ProHeart® 6 since it first came out. When I started using the product, I found twice as many clients who chose ProHeart® 6 were in compliance compared with the competition.”—*Rickey Broussard, DVM, Ingleside Animal Hospital, Ingleside, Texas*

Wellness (continued)

mend services, flea control, and therapeutic diets. Twice-a-year visits give us another chance to educate clients. And more informed clients are better clients.”

“Research shows pets age faster than humans and can benefit greatly from twice-a-year wellness exams,” says Mike LaRosh, DVM, Director of Fort Dodge Companion Animal Professional Services. “Wellness exams offer a veterinarian the opportunity to evaluate a pet’s overall health, conduct risk assessments for disease and detect problems before they turn into serious illnesses. It also provides a means to address other issues that can significantly impact a pet’s health—heartworm prevention, nutrition, dental care, management of pain and chronic conditions, weight, behavior and pet owner compliance.”

Pet owners need to know about the pet aging process

Because pets age faster than people, annual wellness exams mean more than a year passes in the pet’s life between veterinary visits. (See the pet aging chart above.) “A visit to the veterinarian once a year is equivalent to people seeing their physician or dentist once every seven years,” says Dr. LaRosh. “When clients understand their pets age much more quickly than they do, they’re willing to visit more often.”

Pet owners are already taking steps in the right direction. Pet owner research conducted in 2003 and co-sponsored by Fort Dodge shows nearly two-thirds of pet owners are likely to come in twice-a-year if more frequent visits would help their pets live longer, healthier lives. The research also showed 58 percent of pet owners surveyed consider their pets family members, and 61 percent think their pet’s healthcare is just as important as their own.

Wellness exams help pets live longer, happier lives

As pets grow older, they have more opportunities to develop serious illnesses. These pets can experience a lot of pain in the long period between annual visits. Twice yearly visits give you the chance to identify and alleviate some of these illnesses earlier.

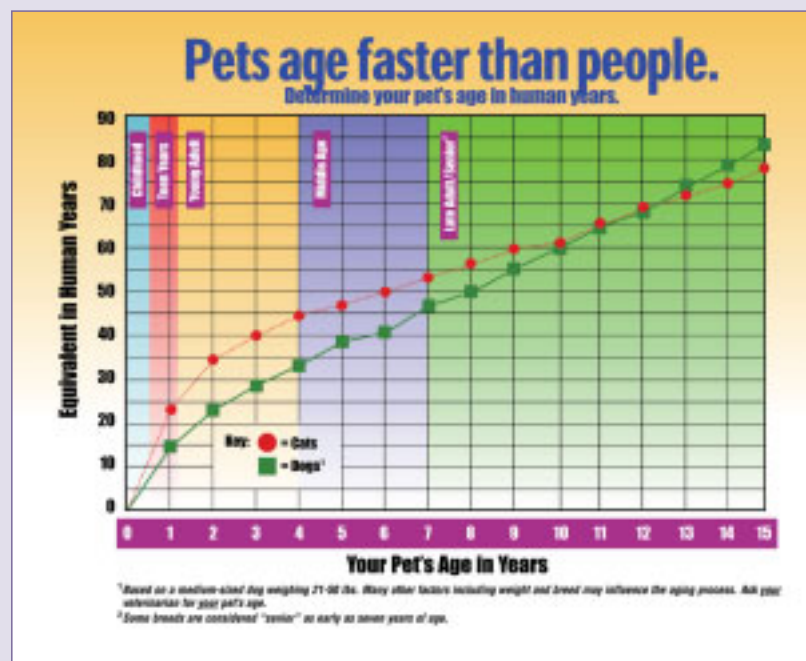
Another great benefit: More frequent visits mean you’re communicating more with pet owners and helping them take better care of their pets. Pet owners see the

care you offer, and they perceive a greater value in the work that you do.

To encourage twice-a-year visits, explain these benefits to clients:

1. Pets have a better chance to live longer, healthier, happier lives.
2. You are more likely to detect diseases earlier and treat them more quickly.
3. Pets get more of the care they need as they age.

Bottom line: Twice-a-year wellness exams are better medicine. Ready to establish a twice-a-year wellness protocol? The AVMA and Fort Dodge offer the tools to help you get started. Sign up today by completing the attached card.



Focus On the Practice

Encourage the bond with a wellness program

USE THESE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE FREQUENT VETERINARY VISITS.

By Thomas E. Catanzaro, DVM, MHA, FACHE, DACHE

In contrast to their grandparents, who owned barn cats and farm dogs, many pet owners today view their pets as family members. In fact, 73 percent of pet owners say they would go into debt to provide for their pets' well-being, according to the 2003 AAHA Pet Owner Survey. People want—and are willing to pay for—the best healthcare for their pets.

The first step toward promoting this bond and building lifelong client relationships is to offer comprehensive wellness programs. Annual exams that coincide with vaccinations are no longer the gold standard. Pets need to visit veterinarians more frequently because pets age quicker than people.

Pet wellness visits

First, encourage pet owners to plan scheduled wellness exams. Schedule an exam for immunizations, and then encourage subsequent wellness visits to differentiate these procedures.

Depending on the patient's needs, structure visits to include these services:

- obtain a sequential weight and body condition score
- check temperature, pulse, and respiration
- conduct a lead II electrocardiogram and blood pressure reading
- perform a 12-system physical exam with dental grading
- screen blood and feces for parasites
- conduct additional laboratory testing as indicated
- review the pet's diet and offer nutritional recommendations

- establish a vaccine plan for the next year
- address heartworm, intestinal parasite, and ectoparasite prevention
- discuss any travel plans that involve the pet
- ask about the health of other household pets
- address the client's concerns.

Senior pet screening

Pet wellness exams are also a good time to introduce over-40 surveillance programs to identify age-related or genetic conditions. Most clients understand that people need more diagnostic tests after they turn 40, such as mammograms for women and stress tests for men. Explain that older pets also require more attention and care from doctors. The over-40 program for pets helps to identify the signs of arthritis and

uses such diagnostic measures as blood chemistry baselines, radiographic baselines, and genetic and hereditary predisposition.

Delivering the message

To effectively convey your wellness recommendations to clients, start with the scripts you use to explain diagnoses and treatments. Develop “sound byte” narratives that encourage client action. Using the word “need” instead of “recommend” encourages clients to respond in a positive and timely manner.

Next, ensure staff members understand how to consistently deliver your practice's standard of healthcare. Team training and continuing education programs ensure your team has the tools they need to deliver high-quality care during every patient visit. Documentation in patients' records is critical so everyone knows what has been discussed with each client.

With systematic wellness programs and your guidance, most clients will happily provide their pets with the level of care you recommend, including multiple visits each year. Work to build lasting client relationships founded on good communication and trust. Then, enjoy the benefits of healthier patients and happier clients.



Twice-a-year visits offer the following benefits:

- Frequent appointments encourage compliance. For example, monthly weigh-ins for patients on weight-control programs help to keep clients focused on helping pets lose weight.
- Appointments every four to six months help detect plaque and periodontal disease early.
- It's often financially beneficial for clients to pay veterinary bills in increments during the course of a year instead of paying one large annual bill.

Caring for our canine troops

DID YOU KNOW AN ESTIMATED 4,900 MILITARY DOGS SERVED OUR COUNTRY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR?

If you're like many Americans, the answer is no. That's why the United States War Dogs Association, a nonprofit organization of former and current U.S. military dog handlers and supporters, is committed to honoring military dog teams as well as educating the public about their contributions dating back to World War I.

Today, as part of Operation Military Care K-9, the organization sends about 15 care packages every month to teams serving in Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq. The project began about 15 months ago, sending much needed supplies to both dogs and their handlers serving in Kuwait. Through dozens of individuals' and sponsors' hard work and determination, the organization shipped care packages to 60 military dog teams last year and is currently sending goods to 35 teams.

Ronald L. Aiello, president of the association, served as a military dog handler during the Vietnam War. Though care packages were said to have been sent to his 42-team unit, they never arrived. Aiello knows how sorely the packages were missed—a reason that it brings him such great joy to help servicemen and women and their dogs now. All care packages are shipped individually (rather than in bulk) to the kennel masters and handlers overseas so that the supplies reach their intended recipients, sometimes taking as little as seven days to reach the teams, Aiello says.

More than 20 companies have donated supplies for the care packages. Fort Dodge Animal Health was one of the first companies to answer the call, donating Nolvasan® antiseptic ointment and Nolvasan® otic.

Packages sent to troops also contained items such as dog food, biscuits, toys, dog goggles, cooling vests, cooling collars, dog boots, and dog shampoo. A full wish list is maintained on the association's Web site.

For more information about how you can support the U.S. War Dog Association and Operation Military Care K-9 efforts, visit www.uswardogs.org.



A military working dog and trainer who served during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Finding a loving home for every pet

NSALA TOURS THE WORLD TO FIND HOMES FOR HOMELESS PETS

In May 1995, the North Shore Animal League America (NSALA) began what is now the largest annual, international pet adoption event. The project began with this humble mission: To find a loving home for every animal in the Port Washington, N.Y. shelter, which housed more than 500 pets at that time. To date, the Pet Adoptathon has found homes for nearly 155,000 shelter animals worldwide. Last year the Pet Adoptathon encompassed more than 1,600 shelters in all 50 states and more than 23 countries. The numbers are still being tallied for this year's event, though the Port Washington shelter already reports 596 adoptions.

For the past four years, the NSALA has announced its Pet Adoptathon with the Tour for Life. The tour consists of three mobile adoption units that crisscross the nation, partnering with local organizations, volunteers, and sponsors to promote animal welfare and shelter animal adoption. The tour visited 34 U.S. cities in 21 states in April. Fort Dodge Animal Health's ProHeart® 6 sponsored this national initiative for the second consecutive year.

"Quite frankly, we couldn't do it without our sponsors' support," says Elysia Howard, the associate director for the NSALA. "Companies like Fort Dodge offer exposure and credibility as well as the promotional,

financial, and physical support we wouldn't get otherwise. They bring education and excitement to the events in the form of new owner and pet health literature, coupons, and give-aways," she says. Howard believes that partnerships such as these are vital in helping make the adoptions during the Pet Adoptathon and Tour for Life successful. They provide owners with the information and tools they need to keep their new adoptees happy and healthy.

Dear Doctor is brought to you by Fort Dodge Animal Health. To reach us, write *Dear Doctor*, Editorial Office, 8033 Flint, Lenexa, KS 66214; e-mail thedeardocor@yahoo.com; or call (800) 255-6864, ext. 129. Copyright © 2004 by Fort Dodge Animal Health. Reproduction without prior permission from Fort Dodge Animal Health is prohibited.

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