



Peace River Veterinary Clinic

Small Animal Newsletter, Fall & Winter

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Welcome to the Fall and Winter edition of our small animal newsletter. As many of you have noticed the clinic is finally done all of the renovations from this summer. We had a great open house in Sept and would like to thank the people who took the time to come out and see the new clinic. We would like to welcome Sara Shudra to our team. Sara has filled a part time Financial Manager position. With the cold winter months and Christmas fast approaching there are a few tips that our clinic would like to suggest. As November is Senior Pet Health month at our clinic it's only fitting that we include this topic in this newsletter. Just a reminder that January is Spay and Neuter month, bring your animal in and receive 20% off on Surgery day.

Senior Pets

How do you know when your pet is a senior? There is no specific age at which pets become "seniors", but animals age faster than people. Factors such as species, breed, weight, nutrition, environment, and veterinary care affect aging. Large breed dogs age faster than small breeds and cats. Most pets are considered "senior" at 7-8 years of age. Things you may notice as your pet ages: difficulty moving around/jumping/running or even getting up after laying down, getting gray hair (especially around the muzzle), weight loss or gain, changes in urination or drinking habits, poor hair coat, sleeping more, change in attitude, decreasing vision (especially at night).

There is a lot you can do to keep your animal healthy and comfortable during their golden years. Dogs do not get upset about a few grey hairs or thickening of the waist. They also don't get embarrassed about things that make their lives easier. Consider getting your dog a comfortable bed with lots of

cushion and maybe heating. Older animals have more difficulty maintaining body heat so it may be time for “Fido” to get a winter coat. Raised food and water bowls can be easier for older animals to reach. Ramps and steps can make getting in and out of the vehicle or on and off the couch easier. Older animals generally require increased frequency of exercise but decreased intensity (more frequent walks, less intense ball chasing).

As dogs and cats age, they have a greater risk of developing certain diseases and conditions. The incidence of problems such as heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, tumors (malignant and benign), arthritis, loss of hearing and sight, and oral/dental disease all increase with advanced age. It is important for your aging pet to have regular veterinary appointments. All of the conditions listed above are much easier to deal with if caught early. Your veterinarian may recommend additional testing such as blood work, urinalysis or radiographs to diagnose any problems. While at your veterinary clinic, ask about options for pain control to help your pet deal with arthritis. There is a range of treatments from herbal supplements, to drugs and even acupuncture that may help to alleviate your pet’s discomfort.

Now is also a good time to reassess your pet’s diet. Proper nutrition is very important for all animals but it is extra important for the “senior” pet. Fewer calories are required because the metabolism is slowing down. The diet needs to be modified to prevent extra weight gain, but to supply the nutrients your pet requires. If necessary, your veterinarian can recommend a specific veterinary diet that is specially formulated for certain conditions that your senior pet may be suffering from. A proper diet combined with appropriate exercise is excellent preventative medicine for the older animal.

Your senior pet has given you many years of unconditional love, now it is time for you to make their lives easier and more comfortable.



Winter pet tips

The cold weather is here and it affects our pets just like it affects us. You have to put on many layers when it is minus 30 outside. Your pet's short-hair coat is only equal to jeans and a shirt, not really enough to be outdoors for extended periods of time. Long-coated

breeds and snow dogs, such as huskies, are better off but still can't remain outside for a long time without protection from the elements.

The best advice is to keep your pet indoors as much as possible when the mercury drops, letting them out only to relieve themselves. If you have an outside dog, it needs an adequate

shelter that is dry and draft-free. The floor should be raised a few inches off of the ground and be well bedded.

There should be enough room for your dog to stand up and turn around but it should be small enough to retain body heat. The house should face away from the wind and the door should have a covering to stop drafts.

Go ahead and put a coat on short-coated breeds if your dog will let you. This will help their comfort level but remember that pets lose most of their body heat through their paws and heads. Booties can also be very beneficial because they keep the feet warm and can also protect the paws from irritating salt and de-icing chemicals. Always wipe your dog's paws after a winter walk to remove any irritants, as well as snowballs from between toes. If your dog gets foot snowballs you can try spraying the feet with cooking spray before heading out for a walk.

Pets are also susceptible to frostbite in very cold weather. This is seen most commonly on the extremities (paws, ears, noses, tails etc.) as the body pulls blood from these areas in an attempt to keep the core warm. These areas may appear pale gray, flushed or swollen.

Animals should be warmed up and veterinary care should be sought if you suspect frostbite.

If your pet is outside a lot in winter they will need extra calories because keeping warm takes energy. On the flip side, if your dog does not venture outside in the cold weather and becomes a winter couch-potato they will require less food.

Outside water bowls should be plastic (dog's tongues can stick to frozen metal the same as yours). Water should be checked frequently to ensure it is not frozen. If frozen water is a problem, heated bowls can be purchased.

Warm engines in parked cars can attract cats that are seeking a warm place to nap. Slapping the hood or honking the horn before starting the vehicle can protect small animals from injury.

Antifreeze is a deadly poison with a sweet taste that attracts dogs and cats. One or two licks can be lethal. Store antifreeze (and other poisons) out of reach, and if you see your pet licking an antifreeze spill seek veterinary attention immediately. It is often too late for treatment after your pet gets sick from antifreeze.

Christmas Pet Safety Tips

Christmas is a wonderful time of year - but not always for your pets! Here are some tips for keeping your pets out of danger.

Food to avoid giving your pet at Christmas:

- Alcoholic beverages

- Chocolate (highly toxic to pets)
- Coffee
- Mouldy or spoiled foods
- Salt
- Chicken or Turkey bones (they can splinter)

Avoid giving your pet any of your leftovers as this can cause diarrhea. Also keep your pet away from cooked bones: they can splinter or get lodged in your pet's throat or can cause serious damage by puncturing the intestinal tract.

Pet hazards around the Christmas tree

- Fallen Christmas tree needles are very sharp and can easily get stuck in your pet's paws or throat. Sweep tree needles up regularly or fence off your Christmas tree to separate your pet and tree.
- Do not hang or store your chocolates from or under your Christmas tree: they are highly toxic and your pet will be tempted if he can see and smell them.
- Cover up electric cords and flashing tree lights so your pet can't chew them and electrocute themselves.
- Christmas tree decorations can cause a nasty accident or be fatal to your pet. Cats and young pets especially, will show a great interest in decorations hanging from your tree. Try to use unbreakable decorations and nothing too small. Avoid tinsel or ribbons as these are dangerous to the gastrointestinal tract if your pet swallows them.
- Make sure your tree is well anchored so your pet can't pull it over.

Other Christmas Dangers to Pets

- Holly, Mistletoe, Lilies, and Poinsettias are poisonous to pets and must be kept well out of reach.
- Remember loud noises will panic your pet, such as Christmas crackers, poppers, balloons, and champagne bottles.
- Remove your Christmas wrapping paper (and toys) from the floor to avoid your pet chewing or swallowing it.
- For your pet's safety this Christmas always buy your pet's presents from a reputable pet shop or veterinary clinic.

Most pet related Christmas dangers are easy to avoid so just have fun and remember to be pet safe!

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

