



THE BVH BARKER

News for Pet Owners

WINTER 2006

HOLIDAY HAZARDS FOR YOUR PETS

As we enter the winter holiday season we need to be mindful of the potential hazards for our pets and how to protect them.

Tinsel, Ribbons and Strings

These items can be a serious health hazard particularly for our cats. Cats love to play with string-like objects but if they swallow them they may get stuck in their intestines.

This can cause vomiting and may necessitate surgery to remove the string. Make sure you put away the ribbons and string after wrapping presents and parcels and if you use tinsel only put it where your cat can't reach it. Make sure your pet doesn't have access to the string from the turkey either.



Christmas Lights

Puppies are especially prone to chewing electrical cords and this can result in serious electrical burns and sometimes life threatening lung damage. If you have a pet that likes to chew things it might be best to trim the Christmas tree without lights this year.

Plants

Some of the plants we have around the house at this time of the year can cause vomiting and diarrhea and sometimes even toxicity. Holiday plants we should keep away from our pets include lilies, poinsettias, mistletoe and holly.

IN THIS ISSUE

Holiday Safety for your pet article by J. Martin, DVM.

Focus on Giardia: by Krista Rusling, RVT.

Heidi Report: Pet Grooming



Holiday Hazards - cont'd

Foods

This is the time of year when there is a lot of food around the house that our pets can get into inadvertently. Simply gorging on leftovers found in the garbage can sometimes cause a serious condition called pancreatitis in dogs. Chocolate, especially baking chocolate, can be toxic to dogs and high enough doses can be fatal. Many people are not aware that onions, grapes and raisins can be very toxic to our pets as well.

Liquid Potpourris

These household fragrances are sometimes used over the holiday season. Contact with skin can cause significant chemical burns and eye damage and swallowing them can cause serious ulceration of the mouth and digestive tract.

Antifreeze

Although it's not part of our holiday celebrations it is pertinent to mention antifreeze toxicity because many people are adding it to their vehicles at this time of year. Antifreeze has a pleasant taste so our pets are inclined to lap it up if available. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat and less than four teaspoons can be dangerous to a 10-pound dog. Thoroughly clean up any spills, store antifreeze in tightly closed containers and store in secured cabinets. If you suspect your pet has ingested antifreeze you should call us or the emergency clinic immediately because if treatment is delayed too long it will be ineffective.

Focus on GIARDIA

Giardia is a single celled protozoa that invades the intestinal tract. It can be present and have no symptoms or be present with symptoms such as diarrhea. If left untreated giardia could lead to severe, watery diarrhea/dehydration and even death.



Transmission/infection:

A dog becomes infected with giardia when it swallows the cyst stage of the parasite. The parasite is often found in water sources and general environment. Once the cysts are ingested they mature through several stages in the infected dogs intestines. Cysts are then shed back into the environment in the infected pets feces.

Diagnosis:

The method used to determine if a dog is infected with giardia is for the pet owner to bring a fresh fecal sample to our hospital for microscopic examination. If the sample is not fresh then detection of the cysts may not occur. Other reasons cysts may not be detected in an infected animal include; the animal not shedding cysts at the time of the stool sample; the cysts are very small and difficult to detect even through microscopic examination.

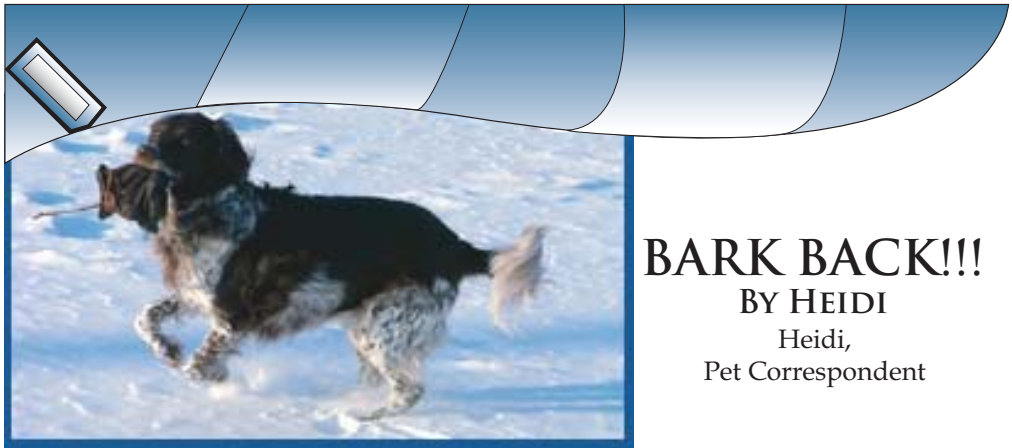
Treatment/prevention:

Once detected treatment is straight forward by using an antibiotic called metronidazole. Other drugs may also be used for diarrhea or dehydration. It is also extremely important for humans to follow increased sanitary measures such as basic hand washing and disinfection as giardia can also cause diarrhea in humans. For environmental disinfection, bleach can be diluted at 1:32 or 1:16 concentration (one cup in a gallon or 500ml in 4 liters of water).

Cysts are very susceptible to drying so thoroughly cleaning your pet's areas and then allowing it to dry for several days before reintroducing pets is recommended. There is also a giardia vaccine available that can be discussed with your veterinarian. Any questions or concerns you have about your pets or your own health should always be expressed to your veterinarian or family doctor to ensure optimal communication and overall wellness.

Feline Winter Car Safety

If you park your car outside during the winter months, remember to hit the hood of your car before you drive away. Outdoor cats will seek the warmth from your engine. They may fall asleep in your engine compartment, and become seriously injured when you start your car.



BARK BACK!!!

BY HEIDI
Heidi,
Pet Correspondent

Winter Grooming Questions

Question: Why do nails seem to grow faster in the Winter?

Heidi: Some dogs nails do, however due to snow on the ground, your four legged-friends do not wear the nails down as much. The S'Paw at the Barrie Veterinary Hospital offers a "nail and ear care package" which is a great way to trim up the nails and take care of the ears at the same time.

Question: When my pet goes outside, he often gets snowballs stuck in the fur on the feet and legs, what can I do about it?

Heidi: Have a towel ready at the door and gently squeeze the towel around the legs and feet. Do not rub and stroke the snow, as you will cause mats and all pets know how uncomfortable they are.

Question: Should I have my pet groomed during the winter?

Heidi: Yes, especially if your pet is wearing a longer coat for the colder months. Without regular brushing your pet will mat even with towel drying. Short haired dogs still shed in the winter, so they also still need to be groomed.

Preventive medicine is the best medicine to practice. Call (705) 728-4545 to schedule your pets annual examination.



Barrie Veterinary Hospital
200 Bayfield Street
Barrie, ON L4M 3B6

Phone: (705) 728-4545
Fax: (705) 728-8556