



DCAH Newsletter

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Diseases in the News—How Do They Affect Your Pets?

There have been countless news reports in the last several months about potentially deadly diseases striking humans everywhere. Some notable examples have been SARS, West Nile Virus, Anthrax, Mad Cow Disease, and most recently, Monkey Pox. Pet lovers have wondered if and how these ailments might affect their companions.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is probably the most real risk for people and animals in our region. The animals that are most likely to contract this virus are horses, birds and humans. Birds seem to be particularly at risk, so the current recommendation would be to keep pet birds indoors. Horses have long been known to be an at-risk species, and a vaccine is available for them. Ask an equine veterinarian to administer this vaccine, and make sure you follow up with booster vaccines as recommended. Immunized animals have not acquired the disease in the face of this epidemic, so the vaccine appears to be very effective. In regards to dogs and cats, WNV does not appear to be a significant health risk. There have been very isolated cases of illness or death, but it seems that these pets have had compromised immune systems from other illnesses. Dogs and cats can certainly get the virus, as shown by positive antibody tests, but the huge majority of cases are clearly not symptomatic. Mosquito control is the most effective way of protecting your whole family from this virus. Eliminate standing water in your yard, and apply DEET to yourself and your children. **DO NOT APPLY DEET TO PETS**—it is not safe for consumption and pets will invariably lick it off. A new topical insecticide is available for **DOGS ONLY**. It is called Advantix, and is applied similarly to Frontline Topspot. It does repel mosquitoes, in addition to fleas and ticks, though the real importance of repelling mosquitoes is to help prevent heart-

worm disease. For more information on WNV, see <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/birds&mammals.htm>.

Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is, of course, a very recent discovery, so new information emerges daily. As of this writing, there is no evidence that it causes significant illness in pet dogs and cats, though a few cats in Hong Kong may have been infected. There has been some suggestion that the illness is a form of coronavirus that has mutated from such a virus in a cat-like animal called a civet. The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control are feverishly investigating this disease outbreak, and more data is certain to emerge. For now, it appears that pet owners should not be concerned about this disease—<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/5/15/204412.shtml>.

Anthrax, caused by a bacteria, was of considerable concern for our country a few years ago; and it is still considered to be a possible agent of bioterrorism. It can cause disease in cattle, sheep and goats, as well as in humans. It is not a health concern for pet dogs and cats. Natural spread of the disease has been curtailed in this country by diligent monitoring and reporting programs instituted by the USDA and the state board of animal health.

Similarly, Mad Cow Disease is not currently a threat to our pet population. A recent case of this disease (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) was apparently diagnosed in a cow in Canada, increasing the worry that we could see an emergence of this problem on our continent, but it appears that was an isolated case. For the most part, this disease is limited to cattle, sheep and goats, with rare (but fatal) infection of people. There have been no reports of pet dogs and cats contracting the disease, though some people worry about the practice of feeding meat

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Have a Heart Fund

Elvis, pictured here, is one of the lucky benefactors of your generosity this past quarter. Elvis was hit by a car during one of our many February snowstorms. Luckily for him, some good Samaritans found him on the snowy road. Natalie Maddox and her daughter, Hope, stopped to help Elvis and brought him to our hospital. X-rays revealed that he had a broken pelvis. In spite of his pain, he was as sweet as could be during his recuperation. In fact, he got his name because he “grinned” by lifting his upper lip. He spent two months at our hospital recuperating before being adopted into a loving home.

Contributors to our fund this quarter include:

The Scott Werner family, in memory of Sasha
The Albert Hutchinson family, in memory of Mandy
Melinda Whitman, in memory of her father
The Robert Murphy family, in memory of Missy

Peggy Bercher, in memory of Simon Schaeffer and Chloe Weber
Marty and Mark Pross, in memory of Cloudberry
Linda Boland
David Cummings 🐾



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and bone meal to pets. It was this custom that caused the spread of Mad Cow Disease in Europe (specifically, feeding beef and sheep meat scraps, in the form of meat and bone meal to other cattle and sheep). Again, careful monitoring of slaughter house practices by the USDA has served to protect the United States from this disease. (http://www.healthresearchbooks.com/articles/mad_cow25.htm).

Finally, there is the very recent emergence of Monkey Pox in the Midwest. This viral disease was previously only seen in the rainforests of parts of Africa, infecting monkeys there, as well as ground squirrels. It has been shown in laboratory studies that it can infect rabbits, mice and rats, as well: and it has now shown up in pet prairie dogs. From there, it has spread to humans, a pet rabbit, and an exotic rat species, presumably via bite wounds, contact with infected body fluids, or from virus contaminated objects such as bedding. In humans, the symptoms are a pustular rash, fever and muscle aches. In pets, an owner may notice fever, lethargy, cough, red eyes, enlarged glands and a bumpy rash. It is sometimes fatal in animals, but no fatalities have been reported in people in association with this outbreak. If you have a pet rodent or rabbit who may be experiencing these or other symptoms, handle the pet with gloves and take care to wash carefully afterwards. Bedding should be collected in garbage bags and disposed of with medical waste. Call a veterinarian who specializes in exotic animal care immediately. Our staff can provide you with some phone numbers. (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox/factsheet.htm>). 🐾

Home Delivery Pharmacy

As a convenience for our clients, our animal hospital has reached an agreement with VetCentric to provide home delivery pharmacy service. VetCentric is a home delivery pharmacy which has the support of the veterinary community. If your work schedule or commitments at home (small children) make it difficult for you to get to the hospital for refills of medication, prescription food, or flea and tick products, you may be interested in this service.

VetCentric carries most medications, prescription foods, supplements, flea and tick products, heartworm preventative, and shampoos. This pharmacy also can compound drugs. (Compounding involves creating a form of medication that is not commercially available in dosage amounts suitable for pets—especially small animals.) Our hospital inventory is limited by space and financial resources. Items used by only a few clients often

expire before they are used. VetCentric can maintain a much larger inventory. Therefore, the hospital can prescribe medications that might be difficult to obtain otherwise. However, VetCentric does not carry some products and drugs. For example, they do not handle controlled drugs like Phenobarbital.

Prices will be the same as for products offered for pick up at the hospital. All medications are delivered priority mail for free. Food deliveries do entail a delivery charge of \$4.95 per item (i.e. case or bag of food). Multiple orders have a lower per item delivery charge.

A veterinarian still has to approve your prescription. However, when you call in a request for a refill to our hospital, simply indicate you would like it delivered to your home via VetCentric. Our hospital will generate a prescription to them to fill and deliver. (Please allow 24 hours for this process.) You can

establish a VetCentric account either telephonically at 1-866-838-2368 or online at VetCentric.com. If you do not already have an account set up with them, they will contact you initially to do so.

If the doctor approves refills for your medication or prescription food, you can arrange for VetCentric to deliver your refills at pre-set intervals (i.e. every 3 months). This should be of special convenience to those of you with pets on life long medications like thyroid and heart drugs.

We hope that this new service will be more convenient for you. The hospital will continue to carry many medications, especially those required for immediate and urgent situations. However, it will probably decrease or eliminate from its inventory those items that are used by only a few clients. Please provide feedback to us on this new service. 🐾

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