

# the Snoot Report

Premier  
Edition

News for Pet Owners from Vetcetera Pet Healthcare Centre

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## The Changing Face of Vaccinations

by Dr. Julie Buzby Snyder

A vaccination is a preparation intended to stimulate the immune system to protect against a specific organism. There are many schools of thought on vaccinations. The traditional approach recommends vaccinating every year with as much as you can. The opposite end of the spectrum advises never vaccinating. I think the truth lies somewhere in between.

Vetcetera's vaccination policy is rooted in evaluating each animal individually, examining the risk versus benefit of each vaccine for that pet. Take for example, vaccination for feline leukemia virus (FELV), which is a highly contagious fatal disease of cats. One out of 10,000 cats will develop a cancerous tumor (sarcoma) possibly linked to the vaccine and/or a genetic predisposition. When evaluating the risk versus benefit for FELV vaccination, we look at factors like number of cats in the household, indoor-outdoor status, FELV status of the other cats in the family and likelihood of introducing



new cats to the household. We would not recommend giving this vaccination to a strictly indoor cat in a household of known negative FELV cats. Conversely, any cat having access to the outdoors (and other cats of unknown history) we would usually vaccinate against FELV.

Side effects of vaccinations include vaccination reactions and immune system imbalances, such as rare autoimmune diseases where the body recognizes its own tissues as foreign. Vaccine reactions can be as mild as lethargy or as severe as facial swelling, hives and vomiting/diarrhea. If you notice anything abnormal following vaccination of your pet, please call immediately.

Alternatives to vaccinations include homeopathic nosodes and vaccination titers. I am very willing to work with clients who are interested in pursuing these options. It should be noted however that rabies vaccinations are required by law and no alternatives are legally acceptable. Should an unvaccinated pet bite a person, that pet's euthanasia could be required by the state to test for rabies virus. Titers require drawing blood and sending it to Cornell for analysis. Results reveal how much antibody the pet has in its system against that organism from previous exposure or vaccination. Titers change with time and need to be run annually. Though not scientifically proven to guarantee protection from disease, I think they are a legitimate method to evaluate the need for boosters in adult pets. Besides a thorough physical exam, an important part of your pet's annual visit is discussing the environment and lifestyle of your pet and determining an individual protocol, which may change from year to year. Please call with any questions or concerns.



## Blocked Cat: Urinary Tract Obstruction

by Chris Wiederhold



Urinary tract obstruction ("blocked cat") is a condition that is common in male cats and usually goes

undetected by owners until it is too late. Though this ailment primarily concerns male cats, male dogs can suffer from a similar life-threatening condition.

Male cats have an anatomic peculiarity which makes them more

susceptible to obstructions of the urethra (the tube which runs from the bladder to exit at the end of the penis). The urethra in a male cat narrows, almost like a funnel. Small stones, crystals, cells, mucus and other debris can become lodged and easily plug the urethra. Cats that become

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## What are we vaccinating our dogs against?

**Canine Parvovirus** – This highly contagious disease causes severe bloody vomiting and diarrhea. Death may occur from dehydration and secondary complications.

**Canine Distemper** – A highly contagious viral disease, this is primarily spread through direct contact. Clinical signs are usually associated with the respiratory, gastrointestinal and central nervous systems.

**Adenovirus** – This virus is associated with respiratory disease and infectious hepatitis (liver disease) in dogs.

**Leptospirosis** – This organism is common in our area. Clinical signs can progress to severe kidney and often liver failure. This disease is transmissible to people through the urine of an infected pet. Of all the components of a dog's annual vaccinations, this organism is the most likely to induce an adverse reaction.

**Canine Coronavirus** – This virus commonly affects the gastrointestinal system of puppies causing vomiting and diarrhea, but is not usually life threatening.

**Bordetella/Adenovirus Type 2/ Parainfluenza Virus** – Kennel Cough Complex: a collection of highly contagious bacteria and viruses that cause respiratory disease. We vaccinate through intranasal inhalation so that local immunity is high in the nasal passages, where the infection begins. Parainfluenza is also included in the traditionally annual injectable canine vaccine. Typically given to dogs, studies have shown that cats can also be affected by these pathogens. An intranasal vaccine for Bordetella now exists for cats too. The canine vaccination is required by most boarding facilities due to the contagion risk. For dogs at high risk for exposure (boarding frequently, showing, etc.) we recommend vaccination every 6 months.

**Lyme Disease** – Endemic in our area, Lyme disease is caused by a bacterial organism carried by ticks. Infection requires 48 hours of tick attachment for transmission. Symptoms can include shifting leg lameness, neurologic disease, inflammation of multiple joints, fever, lack of appetite and lethargy. The disease can progress to severe kidney failure. We do not recommend Lyme vaccination routinely for all dogs, rather just the high-risk population (hunting dogs, dogs that frequent wooded areas or fields, dogs that hike, etc.)

## Blocked Cat continued from page 1

“blocked” are diagnosed with “feline lower urinary tract disease” (FLUTD). Symptoms include frequent stops to the litter box, straining to urinate, crying out to urinate, an inability to pass urine, blood in the urine, urinating small amounts or drops frequently, weakness, and a bloated and/or painful abdomen. If untreated, bladder rupture, acute kidney failure, severe urinary tract damage and death could occur. If you notice your cat exhibiting any of the above signs, contact us immediately. Time is of the essence. Those that are treated at the first sign of symptoms have a better prognosis and usually require much less invasive therapy.



The most common treatment for this condition requires light sedation to pass a urinary catheter and flush the debris back into the bladder. After a few days the urinary catheter will be removed so that natural urine output can be monitored. If urine output has returned to normal the patient will be sent home for continued monitoring.

Long-term medical management and special diets which change the pH of the urine are required to minimize chances for reoccurrence of obstructions. A urinalysis should be repeated every six months to monitor crystal formation and help guide treatment. Unfortunately, the obstruction can recur in spite of special diets, yet can usually be managed medically. Surgery may be required in those rare recurring cases that cannot be resolved with the usual treatment.



## Holiday Safety Tips for Your Pet

by Heather Koch



As winter approaches, so does the potential risk for pets to be exposed to hazardous materials and situations.

**Poisonous plants:** Prevent ingestion of poinsettia leaves or stems, pine, cedar, holly berries and leaves, fir, balsam and mistletoe (especially the berries).

**Roaming Cats:** Bang the hood of your car or beep the horn prior to starting your vehicle. Stray or outside cats as well as wildlife may climb under your car and lay near your engine for warmth.

**Antifreeze (Ethylene Glycol):** Monitor your cars and trucks for antifreeze leaks (bright greenish-yellow liquid) and pools of it in driveways, near drains, etc. Antifreeze is a sweet tasting temptation for pets. Ingestion of even very small amounts results in sudden kidney failure leading to death.

**Frostbite:** Remove snow and ice from your pet's paws by using a warm, moist towel. Extremities such as lower limbs, ears and tips of tails are most at risk for frostbite.

**Housing:** Be sure to provide adequate shelter, bedding (straw or blankets) and a door to protect pets housed outdoors from wind and precipitation. Check pet's water supply at least twice daily for freezing.

**Christmas Tree:** Angel hair, tinsel, string and ribbons may cause obstruction in the bowel loops. Ingested tree ornaments can cause blockages or punctures of the gut. Christmas tree preservatives, snow sprays/flocks and fireplace colors/salts are also poisonous to pets.

**People Food:** Avoid giving table scraps, especially those containing bones of any type. Fatty table scraps, such as gravies and fatty parts of meat can inflame and damage the pancreas. Chocolate (particularly dark or unsweetened chocolate) and alcoholic beverages are also considered toxic to pets.

For further information, contact the Animal Poison Control Center at 888-4ANI-HELP (888-426-4435). This 24 hour service is sponsored by the ASPCA and can also be accessed at [www.napcc.aspc.org](http://www.napcc.aspc.org)



### Ask Snoot



Dear Snoot:  
**Why do dogs always seem compelled to sniff each other's rear ends? I have tried to modify this behavior in my dog, but he seems to sniff the behind of every dog he meets with urgency.**

– Seeker of doggy insight

Even to just have a look  
They had to take their behinds off  
And hang them on a hook  
Then into the hall they filed  
Every mother, son and sire  
Yet hardly were they seated  
When someone shouted, "FIRE!"  
They evacuated quickly  
They didn't have time to look  
And each dog grabbed, at random,  
A behind off the hook  
And that's the reason why, you see  
When walking down the streets  
Each dog will stop to swap a smell  
With every dog he meets  
And that's the reason too, my friend  
He'll leave a big fat bone  
To go and smell a behind  
For he hopes to find his own.

Dear Seeker,  
It all stems from a catastrophic event years back. Allow me to explain:

Some dogs once held a convention  
They came from near and far  
Some by automobile  
And some by trolley car  
Before they could enter the meeting

## Support Group Forming for Pets Fighting Cancer

If you have or have had a pet with cancer, know someone who does, or are interested in helping to battle this disease in animals, you are cordially invited to help us form this organization. The vision for the group stems from the notion that we can accomplish more together than apart. I know several owners currently fighting cancer with their pet and vigorously doing their own research and discovery. I am excited about seeing these people get together to inspire and encourage one another and ultimately be more equipped for their battle. The group will have a two-fold mission of support and education. Every meeting will feature a guest speaker or veterinary topic highlight pertaining to cancer, and then time for sharing. The first meeting is scheduled in January at Vetcetera. Please call for more information.



*The "Snoot Report" is dedicated to the pets who have touched the lives of all who knew them.*

### In loving memory of

- Samson Berger
- Jax Beuchler
- Spooky Bressler
- Kobe Brosius
- Misty Brown
- Zeke Buzby
- Perri Freeman
- Cleo Hughes
- Katie Hahn

- Pansy Holland
- Kara Keenan
- Britt Kohr
- Brandy McMinn
- Jasmine Moyer
- Bubba Nabholz
- Zackary Perlman
- Mr. Cat Redding
- Rufus Seyler

- Baby Schaeffer
- Oreo Simmons
- Shay Snyder
- Midnight Sowers
- Rosko Stines
- Zeb Tomazin
- Jenny Wiederhold
- Heidi Young
- Mike Zimmerman.



## What are we vaccinating our cats against?

**Feline Panleukopenia Virus (Distemper of cats)** – This is a highly contagious viral disease. It is similar to canine Parvovirus in both virus conformation and clinical signs. This organism is widespread in the environment, where it can survive more than one year.

**The following three pathogens**, along with Bordetella are the predominant causes of feline infectious respiratory disease.

**Rhinotracheitis** – This herpes virus is one of the major causes of infectious upper respiratory disease in cats. Clinical signs of feline upper respiratory disease include lack of appetite, lethargy, oculonasal discharge, sneezing and fever.

**Calicivirus** – Clinical signs of this virus are often indistinguishable from Rhinotracheitis, except cats with this virus frequently have ulcerations in their mouth.

**Chlamydiosis** – This respiratory pathogen is a bacterial organism whose clinical signs are chiefly inflammation of the conjunctiva (whites of the eye), and ocular discharge.

**Feline Leukemia Virus (FELV)** – FELV is a fatal retrovirus transmitted from mother to kittens across the placenta and through nursing, or from cat to cat primarily via saliva. We recommend blood testing of all new kittens prior to vaccination and especially before introducing them to other cats in your household.

**Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)** – No vaccination is available for this highly contagious and fatal virus, though we can blood test for it. Like FELV, a cat could be carrying this fatal disease yet look healthy. Both viruses are retroviruses, similar to human HIV, and are not transmissible to people.

**Feline Infectious Peritonitis** – This fatal disease is caused by a strain of coronavirus. An intranasal vaccine is available, but is highly controversial. This vaccine is not recommended or given at our practice.

Rabies vaccination is common to dogs, cats, horses and ferrets. Required by the state of Pennsylvania at or after 12 weeks of age, the vaccine is boosted at one year after that and then given every 3 years in small animals. Rabies vaccine is given annually in horses. Schuylkill County is an endemic rabies area, with skunks and raccoons serving as reservoir populations. Vaccination frequency should be determined by a pet's environment and lifestyle. Many vets recommend vaccinating high-risk animals (i.e. outdoor cats) every 2 years. Rabies disease is fatal to both people and animals, as there is no known treatment. It is transmitted from animals to people through infectious saliva.

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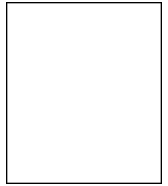
Happy Holidays



Pet Healthcare Centre

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## Pet of the Month

*The DeFalcos won Thumper at the county fair and "thought he would be less work than caring for a dog." Thumper is deeply loved by his family and is special to us as our only bunny patient. When we called the DeFalcos to tell them of Thumper's new-found fame, they volunteered to write Thumper's biography. We appreciate their kind words.*



Thumper, our six-year-old lop-eared bunny, has severe arthritis. We began noticing Thumper's front foot starting to turn outward slightly when he was about a year old. We questioned it every time he was seen by a veterinarian. As he got older, we grew more concerned. Earlier this year we traveled some distance to see an exotic vet with rabbit care experience. X-rays determined Thumper had severe arthritis. The most the vet could do was to provide pain medication and offer some ideas on modifying Thumper's living area. I asked if chiropractic treatments would be an alternative for Thumper. She thought it was worth a try. The only problem: it was not available locally.

Thumper was now on a high dose of pain medication. As time passed, the pain seemed to increase and we witnessed a gradual deterioration of his activity level. We were beginning to feel Thumper's life was drawing to a close.

Then I noticed the Vetcetera ad in our local paper. It mentioned chiropractic and acupuncture care for animals. I immediately scheduled a visit for Thumper. Dr. Julie began to treat Thumper with both acupuncture and chiropractic treatments and his progress has been great. Thumper has greater movement in his arthritic leg and his activity level has increased dramatically. He has renewed energy, more mobility and a decreased level of pain. We have been able to lower his dosage of pain medication.

We feel indebted to Dr. Julie and her staff for restoring Thumper's health to a point where he can enjoy life and we can enjoy his company. Vetcetera truly has the art of healing with caring and compassion for both the animals they treat and their owners. Thanks very much.

**- John and Susan DeFalco (and Thumper!)**

## Thank You to Our Clients!

**Thank you for your support of Vetcetera!** We love what we do and hope that is evident to you and your pets! We are grateful for you and truly consider you "part of the family." We would like to express our most sincere appreciation for honoring Vetcetera through the referral of your friends and family to our practice. We genuinely appreciate your confidence in our practice, expressed through referrals.

## and...

Congratulations to our receptionist Heather Koch and her husband John. They are expecting their first baby in May.

No doctor appointments will be available between Christmas and New Year's Day – Dec. 25th through Dec. 29th. Dr. Julie and Tim will be cruising in the Caribbean. However, Chris and Heather will be staffing the office. Please call them with any questions or concerns. Call Valley Central Emergency Center at 610-435-5588 in the event of an emergency need.



*The "Snoot Report" is a quarterly publication for friends and clients of Vetcetera Pet Healthcare Centre. We welcome your comments. Call us at 570-345-3250.*