

A New Year

2007 has drawn to a close and we would like to thank our members for their continuing support. In 2007 NCRAOA developed new educational material for our members to use, participated in several public events focused on responsible dog ownership, and monitored numerous pieces of legislation throughout the state.

Going forward

We look forward to working with our members on areas of concern and building our base as new individuals and clubs come onboard. We plan to greatly expand the new Multi-Media Corner of our website with downloadable packages for use as club programs or presentations at legislative meetings.

We invite our members and readers to make the following New Year's Resolution:

-  I will participate in a responsible animal owner event in my community
-  I will educate at least two people on the true agenda of the animal rights movement

Best wishes for a happy, healthy New Year!

AMVA: Animal welfare policies revised

The Executive Board approved a series of recommendations from the Animal Welfare Committee, including changes to some animal welfare policies.

The board approved revisions to a policy on euthanasia of unwanted animals. The new wording broadens the scope to include animals unfit for adoption, better describes individuals who should be performing euthanasia, and references the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia. The revised policy states the following:

Euthanasia Of Animals That Are Unwanted Or Unfit For Adoption

The AVMA is not opposed to the euthanasia of unwanted animals or those unfit for adoption, when conducted by qualified personnel, using appropriate humane methods as described in the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia.

Another newly revised policy approved by the board is Use of Animals in Research, Testing, and Education. This policy now references the range of individuals and organizations affected by acts of extremists in the animal rights movement and recognizes the ethical responsibilities (in addition to the already stated professional, scientific, and moral obligations) associated with animal use. The revised policy states the following:

Use Of Animals In Research, Testing, And Education

The AVMA recognizes that animals play a central and essential role in research, testing, and education for continued improvement in the health and welfare of human beings and animals. The AVMA also recognizes that humane care of animals used in research, testing, and education is an integral part of those activities.

In keeping with these concerns, the AVMA endorses the principles embodied in the "Three R" tenet of Russell and Burch (1959). These principles are: refinement of experimental methods to eliminate or reduce animal pain and distress; reduction of the number of animals consistent with sound experimental design; and replacement of animals with non-animal methods wherever feasible.

The use of animals in research, testing, and education is a privilege carrying with it unique professional, scientific, and moral obligations, and ethical responsibilities. The AVMA encourages proper stewardship of all animals, but defends and promotes the use of animals in meaningful research, testing, and education programs.

The AVMA condemns all acts of violence, vandalism, or intimidation directed toward individuals, facilities, or tertiary organizations affiliated with the use of animals in research, testing, or education.

JAVMA January 1, 2008 <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/jan08/080101c.asp>

Arthritis: A Common Problem

If they live long enough, most cats are bound to experience this painful joint disease. Here's what you can do to help your pet.

Cats are living longer these days, thanks largely to advances in feline nutrition and veterinary medicine in general. That's good news. The bad news, however, is that these longer life spans give cats a greater chance of developing arthritis — a painful, debilitating and potentially crippling joint disease that is predominantly age-related. In a study conducted a few years ago, researchers carefully analyzed X-rays of the spines and limbs of 100 middle-aged or elderly cats (10 years of age or older). The X-rays revealed that 90 percent of cats over age 12 showed clearly discernible radiographic signs of arthritis.

But this is not to say that older cats are exclusively at risk for this joint disorder. Another study, based on postmortem examination of shelter cats, indicated that one out of five cats one year of age and older in this population, despite their relative youth, were arthritic to some extent.

In any case, the condition is chronic and incurable. Once a cat is diagnosed with arthritis, the disease is usually manageable to a degree by means of medical therapy or surgery. But once present, it is never totally curable.

WEAR AND TEAR

Arthritis comes in a variety of forms and can be precipitated by wide-ranging factors, including genetically acquired predisposition, congenital malformation, physical trauma, immune system malfunction and even infectious disease. Most commonly, however, feline arthritis results from the constant wear and tear that the joints experience during the course of a typically active cat's daily life, says Christine Bellezza, DVM, a consultant at Cornell University's Feline Health Center. While the sources of the condition vary, they all eventually lead to inflammation within the joints, changes in their anatomical makeup, pain and an inevitable decline in the ability of the associated bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments to function properly.

The most common form of feline arthritis, says Dr. Bellezza, is osteoarthritis, otherwise known as degenerative joint disease. This condition is characterized by the erosion of cartilage, the smooth tissue that protects the ends of bones from rubbing directly against one another within a movable joint.

When this protective tissue is worn or torn away completely, the bone ends come into immediate contact, and the persistent grinding of bone against bone results in inflammation and pain.

All joints in a cat's body can be affected by osteoarthritis. While those that will become most visibly apparent to the owner are the movable joints, most often the shoulders and elbows, the knees (stifles), the wrists (carpi) and the hips are also frequently affected. The outward signs will vary, depending on which joints are most painful, the extent of damage, and the animal's age. An altered gait may eventually occur as the disease progresses or if the joint disorder has resulted from an injury.

Although osteoarthritis most commonly results from the constant grinding of bone ends over a long lifetime, Dr. Bellezza points out that the condition can also emerge in younger cats as the result of hip dysplasia, a genetically acquired malformation in which the ball-and-socket joint connecting the top end of the thigh bone and the cavity in the hip into which it is supposed to fit are improperly aligned. As a result, the bones in the joint knock and grind against each other, which can eventually lead to the wear and tear characteristic of osteoarthritis.

RISK FACTORS

There is no gender predisposition for feline arthritis; males and females of all breeds are similarly susceptible. Overall, advanced age is by far the greatest risk factor. Also of significance, Dr. Bellezza notes, is an animal's weight, since fat cats are constantly exerting excessive pressure on their vulnerable load-bearing joints. (This is especially problematic considering the growing problem of feline obesity. Recent research on the subject suggests that between 30 percent and 35 percent of cats living in U.S. households are grossly overweight.)

Regarding lifestyle as a risk factor, she notes that outdoor cats may be at greater risk than indoor cats for arthritis because of their increased vulnerability to joint-damaging injury — being struck by a car, for example. At the same time, she notes, indoor cats are not without risk just because they're more sedentary and underexercised. "Some activity is beneficial to joint function," she observes.

No matter what has caused the condition, the signs of arthritis are similar. A formerly agile and athletic cat will become increasingly reluctant to leap up onto a sofa or windowsill or to scamper up and down stairs. It will typically become quieter and more sedentary. Its appetite may diminish, and it will tend to spend more of its time in one spot. A severely arthritic cat will also indicate that it is in pain when its lower back or limbs are touched. Due to persistent discomfort and joint immobility, some animals will become less fastidious when it comes to cleaning themselves thoroughly or using the litter box.

On the other hand, Dr. Bellezza points out, some affected cats, no matter how much pain they are experiencing, may skillfully conceal their discomfort. Presumably due to a deeply ingrained instinct for self-protection, they will avoid signaling to potential predators that they are in any way disabled. "Cats can be kind of tricky in that respect," she notes.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

In many instances, a routine veterinary checkup may reveal that a cat is suffering from early-stage, if not advanced, arthritis — and the earlier that the condition is diagnosed, the better are the chances that its resultant pain and disability can be alleviated.

Veterinary diagnosis of a cat that seems to be experiencing arthritic pain, says Dr. Bellezza, focuses on excluding other disorders and, insofar as possible, confirming the presence of osteoarthritis or other types of

joint disease. This will entail a complete medical history and overall physical examination of the affected animal. If the signs of arthritis are present, the physical exam will be followed by X-rays — and possibly other imaging techniques — which may provide definitive indications of arthritis.

Treatment for feline osteoarthritis, she says, usually entails weight loss for obese cats, gentle exercise, environmental modifications and pain control. Helping the cat to avoid painful situations by moving food dishes and litter boxes to easily accessible locations and devising ways to avoid the need for leaping to high places can be of great help. Many arthritic cats will also appreciate warm areas in which to rest.

Nutraceutical compounds such as glucosamine and chondroitin are frequently prescribed first. "These medications can take months before they start to work," says Dr. Bellezza, "but a lot of arthritic cats will eventually show signs of improvement, and these medications are virtually without side effects." If these agents fail to relieve the animal's pain, further options include the use of anti-inflammatory drugs, although these agents can have significant side effects in cats and their use must be carefully supervised by a veterinarian.

Surgical options are available for certain types of arthritis, she points out, including bone-fusion procedures for select joints. Although these surgeries tend to be regarded as last-ditch efforts and can be expensive, Dr. Bellezza notes that they often provide excellent pain relief. Although feline osteoarthritis is a progressive disease, the progression can be slowed, and most cats can be made more comfortable by a combination of lifestyle changes, weight control, nutritional supplements and pain medications.

By Tom Ewing – Catwatch, December 2007

http://www.catwatchnewsletter.com/issues/11_12/features/140738-1.html

Working for Your Love, Not the Money

Millions of us wake up each morning and drive to work. We might be motivated because we enjoy our job, but for many, if it wasn't for the money, we wouldn't be headed for the office.

Meet Nala, who works 40 hours a week and is on call 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, detecting explosives at the University of Illinois. She's a Belgian Malinois, a dog breed similar to a German Shepherd. Although she drives to work everyday like the rest of us (albeit in a specially outfitted police car), has her own badge, and gets free admission to all sporting events, she doesn't receive a paycheck every two weeks. She works only for the praise of her handler, Officer Troy Chew, and a tennis ball. "She goes crazy for that ball," says Officer Chew, a police officer for the Department of Public Safety at the Urbana-Champaign campus, and Nala's handler since July 2004.

Nala is just one of the many dogs that work for a living. In the field of public safety there are a few jobs open only to our four-legged friends. Nala is considered an E.O.D., or explosive ordinance dog, trained to smell chemicals in bombs. "When she finds something, she creeps down to the ground and turns her head," says Officer Chew. More commonly seen are narcotics dogs trained to scratch where they smell drugs. Obviously, having a bomb-detecting dog paw at a live bomb might cause some problems and thus the difference in training.

Beyond the scope of the law enforcement field, since the creation of the Seeing Eye Foundation in 1929, over 14,000 dogs have been trained and partnered with the visually impaired. According to Dr. Amber Labelle, a veterinary ophthalmology resident at the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana, "dogs probably see the world similarly to a red or green color blind human."

Dr. Labelle mentions that dogs have great night vision because they have more light detecting cells in their eyes than humans do. Dr. Mitzi Zarfoss, another veterinary ophthalmology resident, explains that "dogs are far less likely to need glasses than humans are, because they wouldn't have survived this far evolutionarily without good eyes." Although we cannot ask dogs how well they see, their eyes have certainly helped thousands of non-seeing humans go about their day-to-day lives.

Perhaps the newest class of working canines is seizure-alert dogs. Scientists are not sure how some dogs can innately detect a seizure in an epileptic child 15 minutes prior to onset, but somehow they can. As if being able to detect a seizure was not good enough, researchers in Cambridge, England, have proven that dogs have the ability to smell cancer in patients long before any manmade test can.

More than likely, many dogs have these incredible abilities. But as Officer Chew says, "A lot of it has to do with knowing your dog's subtle changes in body behavior that tell you they have picked up on something."

Thanks to the teamwork of Nala and Officer Chew, and the thousands of other dogs working each day, this world is a safer and brighter place. If only we all could work for love and a tennis ball.

Ashley Mitek-Information Specialist

University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine, Office of Public Engagement

<http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/petcolumns/index.cfm?function=showarticle&id=556>

NC State Researcher Discovers Potential New Treatment for Epilepsy

December 18, 2007 A researcher at North Carolina State University has discovered that a drug currently thought to be useful in treating sleep disorders may also be helpful in controlling seizures in patients with a traditionally drug-resistant form of epilepsy.

Dr. Doodipala Reddy, assistant professor of molecular biomedical sciences in the College of Veterinary Medicine, has demonstrated that the drug Gaboxadol is effective in controlling seizures in animals with temporal lobe epilepsy, a form of the disease which is often resistant to drug therapy.

In his previous research, Reddy had studied how neurosteroids, which are steroids that the human body produces naturally, provide protection against the repeated seizures caused by temporal lobe epilepsy. When Reddy examined the chemical mechanism of Gaboxadol, he noted that it was similar to that of naturally occurring neurosteroids, and that it might perform a similar role in suppressing the neural overactivity that can lead to seizures.

Reddy tested the drug on epileptic rats and found that the treatment did markedly reduce the intensity and number of spontaneous seizures. He presented his findings at the Nov. 5 meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, and is now conducting behavioral studies to look at the possible neurological side effects of Gaboxadol.

"Our findings were that this drug worked much better than even we expected," Reddy says. "Our goal is to develop a drug therapy for these epilepsy patients that will improve their quality of life, without side-effects." ■

The Six Principles of the Animal Rights Position

Gary L. Francione, Professor of Law and Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Scholar of Law and Philosophy at Rutgers University School of Law-Newark, adheres to the abolitionist theory of animal rights and has been teaching animal rights and animal law for over 20 years. Below is an outline of what he considers to be the six principles of the animal rights position:

1. The animal rights position maintains that all sentient beings, humans or nonhuman, have one right: the basic right not to be treated as the property of others.
2. Our recognition of the one basic right means that we must abolish, and not merely regulate, institutionalized animal exploitation—because it assumes that animals are the property of humans.
3. Just as we reject racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia, we reject speciesism. The species of a sentient being is no more reason to deny the protection of this basic right than race, sex, age, or sexual orientation is a reason to deny membership in the human moral community to other humans.
4. We recognize that we will not abolish overnight the property status of nonhumans, but we will support only those campaigns and positions that explicitly promote the abolitionist agenda. We will not support positions that call for supposedly “improved” regulation of animal exploitation. We reject any campaign that promotes sexism, racism, homophobia or other forms of discrimination against humans.
5. We recognize that the most important step that any of us can take toward abolition is to adopt the vegan lifestyle and to educate others about veganism. Veganism is the principle of abolition applied to one’s personal life and the consumption of any meat, fowl, fish, or dairy product, or the wearing or use of animal products, is inconsistent with the abolitionist perspective.
6. We recognize the principle of nonviolence as the guiding principle of the animal rights movement.

Certainly this explains the animal rights philosophical position with crystal clarity. According to his website writings, Francione believes that animal welfare—the mainstream view—is counterproductive because its focus is treatment rather than ending the use of animals. To quote Francione, “one thing that is absolutely certain is that if you are not a vegan, you *are* an animal exploiter”.

However, there are many animal rights activists and organizations who recognize that the general public will not accept animal abolition and legislation to enact this would fail. Therefore, groups such as HSUS focus on welfare reform through a myriad of “animal protection” campaigns: Humane Eating, Anti-Hunting, Anti-breeding. In simple terms, they are willing to strive for small inroads changing public perception and gaining legal ground along a path toward the end goal of non-use of animals. An example would be campaigning for breeding restrictions, i.e., breeding one litter a year is acceptable but breeding seven or eight litters is not, while the underlying message and goal is—nothing should be bred at all.

Animal owners and legislators must learn to analyze proposed welfare and protection legislation to determine whether it is necessary or if it is masking a step in the animal rights agenda. The commitment of activists to politically and legally guarantee rights for animals includes a belief in the righteousness of their movement and the need for others to conform to this doctrine. A minority philosophical belief should not be integrated on a tide of emotions into our legal system in order to force citizens into compliance.

The Bully Pulpit:

Getting the Politics and Emotion Out of Animal Legislation

When I recently gave a seminar in California, the San Francisco area was in a tizzy over proposed breed-specific legislation that would ban those breeds of dogs certain individuals or groups consider problematic. As always when such legislation is proposed, it precipitated a feeding frenzy in a media community often far more interested in sound bites than dog bites. An old truism has long maintained that animals make good media, but media-savvy politicians and others are now discovering that they can tap into that media base for their own use by using animals (and their owners), too. This, in turn, means that the motive underlying any animal legislation may have little to do with benefiting animals, and a lot to do with benefiting certain individuals or special interest groups.

So, how can you tell whether any animal legislation will truly benefit animals?

A good place to start is to ask the legislation's creators and sponsors the following 5 questions:

1. What is the purpose of this legislation? For example, some supporters of breed-specific legislation (BSL) might say that the stated purpose of the legislation is to prevent fatal dog attacks or dangerous dogs from roaming the street. Meanwhile, folks who support legislation that would effectively shut down puppy mills might say that the purpose is to eliminate the dire conditions under which those animals must live.
2. Can this purpose be achieved some better way? If the goal is to prevent fatal dog attacks or dangerous dogs from roaming the streets, legislation that targets all dogs, regardless of breed, who fall into this category would seem a more logical and cost-effective alternative. Similarly, because all states already have laws that hold owners responsible for the behaviors of their animals, wouldn't it make more sense to hold the owners of these relatively few dangerous dogs responsible rather than ban entire breeds?
3. How will this law be enforced? Sometimes those outside the political system believe that, once a law spells out their demands, that automatically means that those demands will be met. However, that will occur only if the law specifically provides for this. For example, suppose a politician wanted to gain the support (i.e., votes, contributions) from the animal-lovers in his area. What better way than to sponsor legislation that would claim to put an end to evil puppy mills? When you read the fine print of his bill, though, you discover that it makes no provision for how this law will be enforced. If such is the case, the bill is essentially a piece of fluff designed to garner media attention and the support of naive animal-lovers.

On the other hand, suppose the fine print states that the law will be enforced by local animal control officers, the police, or members of some federal agency like the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Such pronouncements should then lead conscientious animal-lovers to ask the next question.

4. Does this proposed law provide funding for its proper enforcement? A sad but far too true reality is that we live in an era of self-serving politicians who will sponsor laws for which no funding is

available simply to garner support from special interest groups. It is also sadly true that unfunded legislation is often used as a means to get rid of those same groups. Years ago when I was head of a veterinary organization during what seemed like an endless foray into state politics, one politician flat out admitted, "We try to pass every bit of animal-related legislation that comes through because we know if we don't those people will hound us to death. We just don't fund it."

Now, you would think the people who want these laws passed would notice this, but it turns out that a lot of times they don't. And the reason they don't is because, like the politicians, some of those who claim to speak for the animals are far more interested in what getting those laws passed says about their power over other people than they are about any real or imagined ways that law may benefit animals.

However, if you find yourself among those who really do care about how the law affects animals, whether funding is provided within the law serves as the acid test. If it isn't, then move on to the next question.

5. Because the law does not provide funding for enforcement, how will this be accomplished? It is all well and good for politicians and animal-lovers to sit in their cozy offices and homes and say that local, state, or federal agents will simply free up the funds to do this. Although that might happen in affluent areas with an excess of agents or the wherewithal to hire more, that doesn't describe what occurs in many parts of the country. Many law enforcement agencies are so short of staff and underfunded that they cannot effectively enforce laws that ensure the health and safety of the human population, let alone the animal one. Given the choice between enforcing a ban on thousands of dogs because of one fatal attack versus trying to stem the far greater number of children killed by abusive adults, where would you focus your limited resources? Given the choice to send more agents to evaluate puppy mills and back yard breeders or to protect the food supply from bioterrorist attacks, which would you choose?

As with anything that affects the animals around us, it pays to be educated consumers when it comes to any animal legislation others attempt to sell us from their bully pulpits. Only by doing so can we ensure that we won't learn after the fact that what they were selling us was just plain bull.

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Myrna Milani earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Capital University (Columbus, Ohio) and a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the Ohio State University, College of Veterinary Medicine. Following a year as a full-time academic advisor to pre-veterinary students at the university, Dr. Milani entered private veterinary practice in New Hampshire. Her interest in and study of the relationship between humans and animals as it affects the health and behavior of both led her to write seven books for the general public.

Selecting a Course Instructor by Observing a Class

The following questions might prove useful in selecting an instructor and class. Training one's own dog is different than instructing a group class. One might be proficient in one area and not in the other.

- Does the instructor create a mental picture of the exercises being taught and explain the command to be used?
- Are the instructions clear and precise?
- Does the instructor seem to be knowledgeable?
- Does the instructor handle students' dogs?
- If the instructor uses a student's dog to demonstrate an exercise, is the demonstration effective?
- Is the instructor's experience evident?
- How does the instructor respond to the needs of the students? Of the dogs?
- How do the students and dogs respond to the instructor?
- What is the attitude of the instructor?
- Is the instructor positioned to observe the entire class?
- Does the instructor make sure that the entire group is engaged in learning for the class time or do you see dogs and handlers just waiting for a turn?
- Is the instructor in command of the entire class at all times?
- How does the instructor utilize the training site?

More articles on training are available on our website: <http://www.ncraoa.com/training.html>

Protecting your right to responsibly own and breed animals.

Join NCRAOA. See our home page for membership information and application

For more information on animal health, training, reports on pet issues, animal sheltering, or to learn the difference between animal welfare and animal rights – visit our website at www.ncraoa.com

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance, Inc. (NCRAOA) is a statewide organization of animal owners and professionals dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of responsible citizens to breed and own animals. NCRAOA, a 501(c)3 organization, provides education and information to the public and supports reasonable and humane animal welfare laws.

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