



June/July, 2011

Study Examines Causes of Death in Dogs

Findings a mix of surprises, confirmations

A study from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine analyzing causes of death among the various dog breeds confirmed previous anecdotal beliefs and limited research but also identified novel patterns in certain groups.

Researchers for the study, "Mortality in North American dogs from 1984 to 2004: an investigation into age-, size-, and breed-related causes of death," (J Vet Intern Med 2011;25(2):187-198), sifted through 20 years of records from the Veterinary Medical Database. The VMDB is one of the world's largest veterinary medical data repositories, with records from 27 North American veterinary schools' and colleges' teaching hospitals. In all, Dr. Kate E. Creevy, an assistant professor at Georgia's veterinary college, and her co-authors looked at records of more than 74,556 dogs of 82 breeds. Causes of death were categorized in two ways: by the organ system involved and by the category of disease.

Results indicated that young dogs (2 years or younger) died most commonly of trauma, congenital disease, and infectious causes. Older dogs, on the other hand, died overwhelmingly of cancer; however, the frequency of cancer peaked in the group that included 10-year-old dogs and then declined with the oldest age group.

In analyzing specific breeds, researchers found generally unsurprising results, such as Dachshunds having a high percentage of deaths attributable to neurologic disease and Golden Retrievers having the highest percentage of deaths from cancer. Respiratory disease was the most common cause of death in Bulldogs, and Chihuahuas and Maltese died largely of cardiovascular diseases. Yet, some unexpected findings also emerged from the study. For instance, researchers documented a high percentage of cardiovascular system causes of death in Fox Terriers, a breed not traditionally associated with this diagnosis. Afghan Hounds and Vizslas in the study population most often died of respiratory disease, which researchers could not readily explain.

Predictably, Golden Retrievers and Boxers died of cancer more commonly than any other disease and at rates higher than those of most other breeds; however, the Bouvier des Flandres was the breed with the second highest rate of cancer-related deaths, ranking ahead of the Boxer. This pattern has not been reported previously.

"With rare breeds, an individual veterinarian may not see enough cases to be able to develop the opinion on whether the breed has a high incidence of conditions such as cancer," Dr. Creevy said in a press release. "But if you analyze records that have been compiled over 20 years, you can detect patterns that you wouldn't otherwise notice."

Finally, although cancer generally was the most common pathophysiologic process resulting in death in the study population, there were a few breeds less likely to die of the disease, including several toy breeds—Chihuahua, Pekingese, Pomeranian, and Toy Poodle—and the Australian Heeler and the Treeing Walker Coonhound. *Source: JavmaNews. June 15, 2011 <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/>*

Pet Dogs and Cats Do Not Raise Allergy Risk for Children

June 13, 2011. If you have a pet cat or dog in your home, your young children's chances of developing a pet allergy is no higher, in fact, often they may be protected, researchers from the Department of Public Health Sciences, Henry Ford Hospital reported in the journal *Clinical & Experimental Allergy*. A common concern of parents of young children is whether keeping a pet at home might raise their allergy risk.

Ganesa Wegienka, MS, PhD, and team monitored a group of children from the day they were born through to adulthood. The children and their parents were regularly contacted regarding their exposure to dogs and cats. When 565 of them reached the age of 18 years, blood samples were taken and tested for antibodies to cat and dog allergens.

[Clin Exp Allergy](#). 2011 Jul;41(7):979-86. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2222.2011.03747.x.

Lifetime dog and cat exposure and dog- and cat-specific sensitization at age 18 years.

[Wegienka G](#), [Johnson CC](#), [Havstad S](#), [Ownby DR](#), [Nicholas C](#), [Zoratti EM](#).

Source

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Abstract

Background Prior research about whether keeping a dog or cat at home causes allergies to that pet has been limited to outcomes in early childhood. **Objective** Evaluate the association between lifetime dog and cat exposure and allergic sensitization to the specific animal at 18 years of age. **Methods** Participants enrolled in the Detroit Childhood Allergy Study birth cohort during 1987-1989 were contacted at the age 18 years. Sensitization to dog or cat was defined as kU/L. Annual interview data from childhood and follow-up animal-specific IgE0.35 interviews at age 18 years were used to determine lifetime indoor dog and cat exposure (indoor was defined when the animal spent more than 50% of their time inside the house). Exposure was considered in various ways: first year, age groups and cumulative lifetime. Analyses were conducted separately for dogs and cats. **Results** Among males, those with an indoor dog during the first year of life had half the risk [relative risk (RR)=0.50, 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.27, 0.92] of being sensitized to dogs at age 18 compared with those who did not have an indoor dog in the first year. This was also true for males and females born via c-section (RR=0.33, 95% CI 0.07, 0.97). Overall, teens with an indoor cat in the first year of life had a decreased risk (RR=0.52, 95% CI 0.31, 0.90) of being sensitized to cats. Neither cumulative exposure nor exposure at any other particular age was associated with either outcome. **Conclusions and Clinical Relevance** The first year of life is the critical period during childhood when indoor exposure to dogs or cats influences sensitization to these animals.

Cite this as: G. Wegienka, C. C. Johnson, S. Havstad, D. R. Ownby, C. Nicholas and E. M. Zoratti, *Clinical & Experimental Allergy*, 2011 (41) 979-986.

More Fundraising Scams

Humane Watch: We reported some troubling news last year: The Humane Society of the United States uses certain fundraising companies that keep most of the donations solicited from animal lovers on its behalf. Using the New York Attorney General's annual "[Pennies for Charity](#)" report, we discovered that out of \$12.2 million raised for HSUS's benefit between 2000 and 2009 in New York, [just 7.12% actually went to the animal rights group](#), thanks to other state filings, we have new data. Unfortunately (but not shockingly), much of the money people think is going to HSUS is still getting vacuumed up by professional dial-for-dollars companies.

According to [filings submitted to the Massachusetts Attorney General](#), fundraising firm The Share Group raised slightly over \$24 million on behalf of HSUS in 2009, and just *3.64 percent* — less than \$875,000 — actually went to HSUS.

It gets even *worse* for other fundraisers. RMG Inc. raised \$108,000 for HSUS, and HSUS ran at a net *loss*, paying RMG \$46,000 for the privilege. That's a return of *negative 42.75 percent*. HSUS's return with "Donor Services Group" was an abysmal *negative 335 percent*.

The numbers aren't much better for HSUS's affiliated organizations. Just 11 percent of the revenue of The Share Group's campaign for the Humane Society Legislative Fund actually went to HSLF. And the Doris Day Animal League had a negative 2.6 percent return for its campaign with The Share Group. The one bright spot was DDAL's campaign with Public Interest Communications, in which the organization retained 45 percent of the revenue, though it was a fairly small campaign.

The North Carolina Secretary of State has even [more recent filings](#). According to those campaign reports, just 15.5 percent of the \$1.7 million The Share Group raised on behalf of HSUS last year actually went where donors thought it was headed.

Shocked? You should be. These firms (and HSUS) manipulate donors' emotions by playing on their sympathy for dogs and cats and their disgust for animal cruelty, while a fundraising company siphons off most of the money.

Here's how the game works: The professional fundraising firms keep the *short-term* donations, but HSUS gets to keep the mailing list. (By looking at [some of the fundraising contracts](#), you can see that HSUS agrees that the telemarketing firm will keep more than 95 percent of the money.) In the long run, HSUS can appeal to these donors without such a middleman. And in the meantime, it can [puff up its "constituency."](#)

Share Group and HSUS just signed [a new contract](#), so this nonsense will go on through 2013. According to the terms, HSUS is only expected to receive 1 percent of the revenue of the company's telemarketing campaign.

Whether HSUS's massive overhead costs are put towards its [pension plan](#), its [bloated staff](#) or its [telemarketers](#), there's one place that money isn't going: America's cats and dogs. <http://humanewatch.org/>



Livestock Industry Concerned by UEP-HSUS Deal

The United Egg Producers Board of Directors and the Humane Society of the United States reached an agreement this week to jointly petition the government for federal legislation to transition the industry from a conventional cage egg production business to enriched colony cage housing. Their goal is to have the law in place by June 30, 2012 and the transition fully implemented by December 31, 2029.

The standards specify cage space, hen house comfort levels, beak trimming, feeding and watering practices, molting without feed withdrawal, on-farm euthanasia and transportation and are incorporated into UEP's animal welfare program, "UEP Certified."

As part of the agreement, HSUS and UEP said they will not "initiate, fund or support" any ballot initiatives or local or state legislation that would define hen space, and they will not "initiate, fund or support" investigation of or litigation against each other or UEP members.

Talks between the two parties started after HSUS said it recognized that there were benefits to colonies, reversing a position that it only supported cage-free egg production systems.

National Pork Producers Council President Doug Wolf says the pork industry is committed to animal well-being, but legislation pre-empting state laws on egg production would set a dangerous precedent.

Wolf says NPPC is concerned a one-size-fits-all approach will take away producers' freedom to operate in a way that's best for their animals, make it difficult to respond to consumer demands, raise retail meat prices, devastate niche producers and redirect valuable resources from enhancing food safety to regulating production practices for reasons other than public health and welfare.

NPPC also is concerned about the uncertainty such legislation would generate among U.S. pork producers. Wolf says the pork industry has adopted programs that educate and certify producers in best practices under NPPC's We Care principles. He says pork producers have practiced these principles for decades because it's the right thing to do. *Source: <http://www.farmfutures.com/>*

UW Firebombing Suspect Arrested After Decade on the Run

By LEVI PULKKINEN, SEATTLEPI.COM STAFF

A 31-year-old fugitive suspected of building the bombs used to burn a University of Washington horticulture building has been arrested in Chicago. [Justin Solondz](#) – a purported Earth Liberation Front member not yet tried in the 2001 arson – was taken into federal custody Wednesday evening after he was expelled from China. Solondz was indicted along with five other purported ELF members accused with setting a fire that destroyed the UW Center for Urban Horticulture, doing \$6 million in damage to the facility.

Federal prosecutors alleged Solondz built the firebombs used in the ELF attack at an Olympia residence. He fled the country prior to his indictment and had been serving a prison sentence in China for drug crimes prior to his arrival in the United States. "The dogged persistence and long term patience of the FBI has paid off," U.S. Attorney for Western Washington Jenny Durkan said in a statement. "Mr. Solondz will finally face accountability for his actions." Prosecutors claim the arson was part of a string of 17 attacks by the radical environmental group. The FBI investigation that followed – dubbed Operation Backfire by the bureau – saw fourteen people convicted of the attacks; three others remain at large.

“FBI personnel across the Bureau worked tirelessly to bring Mr. Solondz back to the United States, with agents tracking him across eastern Europe, Russia, Mongolia, and China,” Laura M. Laughlin, Special Agent-in-Charge of the FBI Seattle office, said in a statement. “Although Mr. Solondz is the last of five perpetrators of the UW arson to be charged for his role in the conspiracy, the FBI will not rest until it also brings in the remaining ‘Operation Backfire’ fugitives related to other (ELF and Animal Liberation Front)-claimed arsons in this region.”

Charged with a variety of related crimes, including bomb making and arson, Solondz is expected to be returned to Washington in coming days. Wednesday’s arrests followed on years of investigation by the FBI and other agencies attempting to track down Solondz. As recently as February, agents moved to obtain copies of data from phones and electronics seized from Solondz by Chinese authorities. Solondz was convicted on drug offenses while on the run abroad in 2009, and had been serving a three-year sentence in a Chinese prison.

In search warrant documents filed with the U.S. District Court in Seattle, FBI Special Agent Ted Halla said he believes electronics seized from Solondz in China will show he received assistance from others during his years as a fugitive. Halla noted that evidence may also be recovered related to the activities of the ELF and Animal Liberation Front, two radical environmentalist organizations who've taken responsibility for numerous acts of sabotage and arson around the United States.

"Since 1996, ELF and ALF have claimed responsibility for numerous arsons, and other crimes, that ostensibly were committed to further the causes of the environment and animal rights," Halla told the court. "Damages from the arsons total tens of millions of dollars."

Included in that crime spree was the May 21, 2001, arson at the UW Center for Urban Horticulture. The fire destroyed the building, causing more than \$6 million in damage. The arsonists wrongly believed the center to be working in genetic engineering. In fact, the professor targeted by ELF was studying fast-growing poplar trees planted as an alternative means of producing wood fiber; the center itself supports teaching and research of biology in the urban areas, and housed rare plant specimens at the time of the attack. Three years after the fire, an FBI informant told investigators that a joint ELF-ALF cell referred to as "The Family" was behind the attack. In the months that followed, the informant recorded several conversations with members of "The Family" during which they discussed the arson and other crimes. *Source:* <http://www.seattlepi.com/>

Onion & Garlic Poisoning in Cats

The genus *Allium* includes onion, garlic, leek, chives, shallots, and scallions. All *Allium* species and their derivatives can be poisonous to dogs and cats. Their toxic components can damage red blood cells (RBC), leading to a hemolytic anemia. In particular, cats are 2 to 3 times more susceptible to RBC damage from these components than other species. Onion toxicosis is noted in animals that consume more than 0.5% of their body weight; in a 10 lb cat, this would be 8 oz. Ingestion of smaller amounts over several days can lead to RBC damage. Notably, manufacturers often add onion powder to baby food to increase palatability; and baby food is often given to cats when they are ill to entice eating. Commonly, signs lag behind consumption by a few days – vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and dehydration may occur. Treatment is mainly supportive. Owners should restrict access to these foodstuffs. [MK] Winn Feline Foundation <http://winnfelinehealth.blogspot.com/>

Common Drug Kills Malaria-Carrying Mosquitoes

Colorado State University researchers have discovered that a common and cheap medication used to fight roundworm and other parasites that plague people in Africa may offer an important strategy in the fight against malaria. The drug could prevent the transmission of malaria by killing mosquitoes, according to a CSU study published today in the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*.

The drug, called ivermectin, appears to kill malaria-carrying mosquitoes that feed on people who are taking it. Researchers discovered a link when the rate of transmission of malaria fell among people taking the drug during a campaign to prevent river blindness. River blindness is caused by a roundworm called *Onchocerca volvulus*.

“The discovery of the multiple benefits of this drug in fighting parasites and mosquitoes carrying parasites is exciting,” said Brian Foy, senior author of the study and a vector biologist at CSU’s College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. “We need innovative, new tools to fight malaria, and using ivermectin as a tool is especially exciting because it fights multiple diseases in the same community of people.”

Foy and a team of researchers developed their hypothesis that ivermectin may interrupt malaria transmission and then gathered and analyzed data for more than two years as part of the study. Foy worked closely with CSU colleagues Kevin Kobylinski, Massamba Sylla and Phillip Chapman. All four are researchers in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Pathology. The research also partnered with Dr. Moussa Dieng Sarr from the Ministry of Health and Preventative Medicine in the African country, Senegal.

Source: Today@Colorado State <http://www.today.colostate.edu/story.aspx?id=5907>

VA Shelter euthanizes 80 cats to Stop Calcivirus

July 1, 2011. Some 80 cats at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter had to be euthanized after coming into contact with a highly contagious, virulent virus fatal to felines. Cats infected with this virus were brought into the shelter in mid-June and, over the course of the next week to 10 days, the severity of the illness became apparent. Cats merely exposed to the virus began exhibiting signs of infection.

The decision was made to euthanize all sick and exposed cats to stop the spread of the infection. But it wasn’t enough to halt the infections. So the shelter veterinarians, following national shelter medical protocols, recommended all cats in the shelter be euthanized. That process was completed June 29.

The virus is believed to be a virulent strain of Calcivirus, which causes upper respiratory distress, and vaccine proved ineffective against this particular strain. The rapid onset of the infection, coupled with the failure of antibiotics to improve the affected cats’ health, factored into the ultimate decision to euthanize them. Humans and dogs are not affected by the virus; however, dogs can carry it on their coats and consequently infect cats living in the same household. Symptoms of this particular virus include a rapid onset of lethargy, sneezing, discharge from the eyes, and mouth sores. Any cat owners who suspect their cats may be infected are encouraged to seek treatment from their veterinarians.

According to the shelter, "This has been a heartbreaking, painful process for everyone who works and volunteers with the shelter. We’re currently following a strict cleaning regimen to eliminate the virus from all rooms used to house cats." Cat adoptions will resume following an official announcement. Dogs continue to be available for adoption. Source: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/>

Canine distemper hits Kentucky shelter

June 30, 2011. Louisville, KY. (WDRB) -- WDRB News has learned that Metro Animal Services is temporarily suspending some of its services at one of its centers Thursday afternoon after a confirmed case of "canine distemper."

The center affected is located at 3705 Manslick Road. The Animal House Adoption Center at 3516 Newburg Road is not affected.

The animal involved is a Jack Russell terrier that was involved in a biting incident prior to being brought to the center. That animal died while in quarantine. An autopsy performed by the University of Kentucky's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Lexington revealed that the dog died from canine distemper.

"Distemper is spread much like the flu," a news release states. "It can become airborne when an animal coughs and live up to two hours outside the host. Distemper is passed from dog to dog and is not a danger to humans."

The dog was not in contact with other animals at the center, according to the release. As a result of the finding, all movement in the Animal Care Center has been restricted and the animals are under observation. A "cleaning protocol" is in effect.

As a precautionary measure, the center has suspended: stray dog pickup by Animal Control officers; spay / neuter surgery for current shelter dogs and puppies; and acceptance of owner-surrendered pets.

Source: www.fox41.com

Canine Parvovirus Hits Maryland Shelter

June 8, 2011. CUMBERLAND— A case of a highly infectious canine disease is the major reason the Allegany County Animal Shelter has temporarily placed limits on accepting new animals.

"Allegany County Animal Shelter is at capacity for both dogs and cats and therefore will not be accepting any new animals at this time. ... We apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your cooperation in this matter," a posting Monday on the shelter's official Facebook page reads.

The shelter currently houses 41 dogs and 150 cats, said Karl Brubaker, the shelter manager. It's cat and kitten season and the cat numbers are "actually down from what they were," Brubaker said. "We are still at capacity. We have an issue with parvo," Dick DeVore, the county's emergency management division chief, said Wednesday. "Give us a little bit of time," he said. "We've dealt with outbreaks like this before." Based on experience with previous outbreaks, "we want to be extra careful," said Brubaker.

Because parvovirus is extremely contagious, the shelter can't adopt dogs out or place them at animal rescues until a two-week incubation period is complete. A dog was diagnosed with the virus Monday and is currently in the care of a veterinarian, said DeVore. That means that there's no way to reduce the dog population at the shelter. "We've had decent success working at moving cats," DeVore said. The county is trying to limit the number of euthanizations to those medically necessary and will not euthanize for space issues, DeVore has said.

Despite the shelter issues, animal control operations continue. County staff will continue to handle sick, injured or threatening animals. The shelter will not accept owner-surrendered animals. "We cannot accept animals until we get the population where we want it to be," DeVore said. He said the "magic number" would be about 35 dogs and 100 cats. While the county shelter has an open-admission policy, DeVore said the shelter has the discretion to limit intakes when faced with a situation like parvovirus.

“We will continue our core mission,” he said. “We are just taking a momentary pause,” DeVore said. Staff and volunteers “continue to do a tremendous job.” A prime concern is to avoid spreading the virus outside the shelter, DeVore said. *Source: www.times-news.com*

Treatment of Ringworm in Shelter Cats

[Newbury S, Moriello KA, Kwochka KW et al: Use of itraconazole and either lime sulphur or Malaseb Concentrate Rinse® to treat shelter cats naturally infected with *Microsporum canis*: an open field trial, *Vet Dermatol* 22:75, 2011.](#)

Dermatophytosis (ringworm) is an important skin disease in cats because it is highly contagious and has a zoonotic potential. This disease can be a problem in shelters, especially because of the effect on the most adoptable population in an animal shelter: kittens and young cats. The authors performed an open, non-randomized study of 90 cats with severe dermatophytosis. The cats were treated with 21 days of oral itraconazole at 10 mg/kg and one of three topical antifungal rinses applied twice weekly: lime sulphur (LSO); reformulated lime sulphur with an odor-masking agent (LSR); or a 0.2% miconazole nitrate and 0.2% chlorhexidine gluconate rinse (MC). Weekly examinations were performed along with monitoring of fungal cultures for response to therapy. The cats were not prevented from licking the rinse solutions and none developed oral ulcerations. The study concluded that LSO, LSR, and MC are options for adjunct topical antifungal therapy. LSO was found to result in a significantly shorter number of treatment days than MC or LSR. When a shelter has limited facilities and room for treatment of cats, LSO may be the best option for topical treatment. [VT] *Winn Feline Foundation* <http://winnfelinehealth.blogspot.com/>

Animal Rights at University of North Carolina

The Animal Legal Defense Fund’s (ALDF) Advancement of Animal Law Scholarships are awarded to second- and third-year law student members of Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) chapters based upon demonstrated commitment to ALDF’s mission. Elizabeth Overcash, winner of a \$5,000 scholarship, is entering her third year at the University of North Carolina School of Law. Elizabeth founded the school’s Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapter and currently leads it as president. This year, her SALDF chapter has been one of the most active groups at the law school. They brought in several speakers, hosted vegetarian and vegan lunches, did a fundraiser for their local shelter, organized a book club to read *Eating Animals*, and executed a five-week animal advocacy event. They are also working on a large *pro bono* project called Justice for Bella, arising out of the unjustified shooting of a North Carolina dog. Elizabeth successfully petitioned the school for an animal law class, which will be taught at UNC Law for the first time in the fall of 2011. Additionally, she wrote a law review article comparing the treatment of companion animals with that of factory farmed animals, which will be published in the *North Carolina Law Review* next year. *Source: ALDF website*

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