

# THE PETAGRAM



A PUBLICATION OF THE ALEXANDRIA ANIMAL SHELTER

SUMMER 1985

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PET FOOD

The pet food industry affords a huge selection of foods for our pet animals. There is no cut or quality value system assigned to pet foods as there is for the meat we eat. By knowing what to look for on the label, you can choose a better quality pet food for your pet.

Labels on pet food, whether dry kibble, canned or moist morsels, include information on 1) the ingredient list 2) the guaranteed analysis and 3) the nutritional claims. When comparing the nutrients of pet foods, always compare within the groups. Never compare kibble to canned food. That's like comparing milk to cream.

1) The ingredients have to be listed on the label by weight in descending order. A cat food that has chicken by-products, fish meal and ground wheat gets over 50% of the nutrients from animal sources. A cat food on the other hand that contains corn, corn meal and soybean meal derives most of its nutrients from plant sources.

2) The guaranteed analysis statement on a pet food may look like this:

crude protein . . . . .	30.0%
crude fat . . . . .	9.0%
crude fiber . . . . .	4.5%
moisture . . . . .	12.0%

While the analysis statement tells us how much protein or fat is in the product, it does not tell if the sources are plant or animal origin. It also does not tell us the quality of the food or the digestibility.

3) The nutritional claim that a pet food label contains is by far the best indicator of the nutritional value of the food. A good nutritional claim reads "...exceeds the nutrient requirements for growth and maintenance as established by the National Research Council". While this claim guarantees that the required nutrients are present in the food, it does not guarantee that they will be available to the pet. Therefore, a claim such as above should be used in conjunction with the ingredient list.



The most desirable claim reads: "Provides complete and balanced nutrition for all stages of a cat's life substantiated by testing performed in accordance with the procedures established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials." It guarantees the quality of the food because it was actually tested in a feeding trial.

The saying "You are what you eat" applies also to animals. An extra nickel spent at the supermarket may result in a happier, healthier pet with fewer medical bills in the long run.

### The Alexandria Animal Shelter

A complete animal care and animal control facility  
910 S. Payne Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
838-4774

#### Hours for receiving animals:

9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday

#### Hours for viewing animals:

11:30 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday

5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday evening

## PARVO VIRUS HITS ALEXANDRIA

Canine parvo virus, the highly infectious disease that strikes dogs of all ages, is back again. Numerous dogs have died of the disease, this year particularly in the Del Ray area.

Parvo spreads mainly through contact with an infected dog's feces and can easily be transported on the hair or feet of other dogs. Although humans are not affected by the virus, they can carry the disease on their shoes or clothing.

The Animal Control Division recommends that pet owners protect their pets against parvo by having their pets medically examined and vaccinated against the disease. Keep your dog away from strange dogs and other dog feces; avoid areas used by many other dogs and clean up after your own dog.

Most importantly, have your pet examined by a veterinarian immediately if parvo virus is suspected. Signs of the disease include loss of appetite, depression, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration and fever.

# THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHELTER

By  
Lori Flynn

Alexandria citizens know the Animal Shelter is whom they call to come out and pick up the wandering dog who has been tearing up the garbage bags in the neighborhood or to rescue the stray cat who has just been struck by a car and left lying in the street bleeding to death. The Shelter is where they can drop off the fledgling robin, who is trying to learn to fly in front of their cat. Year after year citizens bring in their surplus litters of puppies and kittens when they can't find new homes for them.

We often wonder if the public knows, or cares, what happens to all the creatures we care for at the animal shelter. We cringe when we are called "the dog pound" or hear "brought you seven more this year, you won't kill them will you?"

Our staff grows weary with the never ending cycle of unwanted pets crossing our doorstep. It is discouraging and stressful, in an already stressful situation, when people think we are in the business of doing away with animals and that we enjoy doing it. Although this is not a typical reaction, it occurs often enough to be disconcerting to staff effort.

We are not the "Dog Pound", we are the Animal Shelter. We take all aspects of animal care to the final degree in serving the Citizens of Alexandria and the animals entrusted to our care. We try desparately to reunite the wandering dog with his owner. We take lost reports and advertise found animals in the newspapers daily. If we find the owner, we educate them on proper restraint methods in accordance with the local ordinances and sell them license tags and I.D. tags.

The injured stray cat is given emergency first aid in the field with veterinarian follow up treatment.

Orphaned and injured wildlife are initially treated by our staff, and then transported to wildlife workers who rehabilitate them, and then release them back into the wild.

In an effort to bring public awareness to the numerous animals in the shelter available for adoption, we feature a pet of the week in three newspapers. Our adoption process is one of the best in shelters on the east coast. We conduct an in-house interview with the potential adopter, provide for a free physical with a veterinarian after adoption, sponsor a low/cost spay neuter program. We also bathe, groom, and perform fecal checks to determine internal parasites, administer first distemper vaccine and do initial worming for puppies.

We are known for having strict adoption rules and procedures, and we are proud of the fact that it has contributed to lowering the number of surplus animals over the years in Alexandria.

We urge the public to do their part for the community and accept responsibility for their pets. We invite you to take advantage of our low cost spay and/or neuter program for your own pets and help yourself to our many publications on animal care and treatment. Working together we CAN make Alexandria a better place for pets and people.

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## SELECTING A VETERINARIAN



Don't wait until your pet has eaten poison or been hit by a car to find a veterinarian. In fairness to all concerned, select a veterinarian during a non-crisis time. This not only allows you to get to know the veterinarian but it also allows the veterinarian to get to know the animal under normal conditions.

The most important factor in determining your animal's veterinarian is to choose one with whom you feel comfortable. It

matters little the veterinarian's skills, knowledge or equipment if you cannot talk freely with him or if you don't fully trust and respect him.

Select a veterinarian who explains things to you thoroughly and in a manner you can understand. Veterinarians who always explain things in a technical fashion may be trying to "snow" you. Don't be intimidated by the fact that he's using terms you don't understand. Request that the animal's condition be explained in a way that you'll understand.

High veterinarian fees do not necessarily assure good veterinarian care. One way to evaluate a new veterinarian is through your first office call. You should see the veterinarian personally, not one of the assistants. A thorough examination should be given and any and all of your questions answered.

Watch to see how the assistants handle both your animal and any others in the office. A good veterinarian will want to make sure that all staff members are confident and gentle with the animals.

Ask the veterinarian if the office maintains an emergency service. This may mean either an answering service that will call the veterinarian if there is an emergency or that there is a special hospital the veterinarian refers patients to in an emergency.

Age should not be a determining factor in selecting a veterinarian. While veterinarians who have been in practice for many years may have much in the line of experience, the younger veterinarian just starting out may be more informed on new techniques and treatments.

Try to evaluate your veterinarian on the quality of care given your pet. The best veterinarians are continually improving their skills through continuing education as they practice.

**PET OWNERS BEWARE:**

# SUMMER POISONS

One of the most common signs of internal poisoning in animals is convulsions. Other symptoms include a general uneasiness, trembling, abdominal pain, drooling, shallow breathing and diarrhea. If poisoning is suspected, contact a veterinarian because common agents used for insect and weed control are usually not responsive to home first aid.



If you suspect your pet has been poisoned keep the animal quiet and warm. If possible determine what poison has been ingested. This can be done by checking any overturned cans the pet may have spilled or back tracking the pet's activities over the past hour. Open the pet's mouth and check the odor of the breath and color of the teeth. Pets who have eaten rat poison will have green coloring on the teeth and gums. If the animal's throat or tongue are blistered, this is a sign of ingesting a corrosive substance.

In all suspected cases of poisoning get the animal to the veterinarian immediately. Quick action on your part will save the animal's life.

Prevention as always is better than cure. Read the labels on your household products carefully and use them appropriately. Any product labeled hazardous for humans should be assumed toxic to animals also. The University of Illinois offers a 24-hour hotline for animal poisonings. The number is 217/333-3611.

A free chart of the most common household poisons and their treatments can be obtained by calling your local animal shelter.

**DANGER**

There's a hidden danger lurking in your car on warm days. According to the Animal Shelter Information Network leaving your

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pet inside could kill it in a few short minutes. Opening the windows slightly doesn't help much and adds to the danger of theft. Your animal shelter urges you to leave your pet safe at home where he has plenty of shade and fresh water.

## DOG TRUE-FALSE QUIZ



A CHAIN CHOKE COLLAR MAKES A GOOD ALL-PURPOSE COLLAR FOR DOGS.



THE TINY POMERANIAN IS DESCENDED FROM BIG SLED DOGS.



IF A DOG'S NOSE IS HOT AND DRY, IT MEANS THAT HE IS SICK.



DOGS ARE COLOR-BLIND.

- ① FALSE. THIS COLLAR SHOULD ONLY BE USED DURING SUPERVISED TRAINING SESSIONS.  
 IF LEFT ON THE DOG, IT MAY CATCH ON SOMETHING & STRANGLE THE DOG.  
 ② TRUE. IT IS DESCENDED FROM THE BIG, FURRY SPITZ DOG.  
 ③ FALSE. A HEALTHY DOG CAN HAVE A HOT DRY NOSE, A SICK DOG CAN HAVE A COLD WET ONE.  
 ④ TRUE. THEY SEE EVERYTHING AS BLACK, WHITE, OR GRAY (LIKE BLACK & WHITE TV).

# The Facts about Spaying and Neutering

The population potential of pets is phenomenal. Start with one female cat or dog. Add one male cat or dog. They can produce one litter of four offspring (two females, two males) the first year. She and other mates continue to produce identical size and sex litters once a year, and their female offspring do likewise. After seven years, she and her original mate will have been responsible for producing 4,372 offspring.

Preventing unwanted litters of kittens and puppies can be accomplished in two ways: Confinement or surgical sterilization (commonly called spaying and neutering). Because pets are capable of mating so much of the time, confinement is inconvenient for most pet owners. And confinement does not relieve the animal's sexual frustration or prevent a female's spotting floors and rugs with blood or a male cat's spraying furniture and draperies with foul-smelling urine.

**Spaying and neutering** refer to two of the most common operations performed in all veterinary hospitals. Females are **spayed** and males are **neutered**. Spaying involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus; neutering, removal of the testicles. The operations are performed under a general anesthetic, so the animal feels no pain. Most veterinarians keep the animal 1-2 nights after surgery and after a few days of the rest at home, the pet is back to normal:

Pets should be spayed/neutered as early as possible. Veterinarians recommend that a female be spayed **before** her first heat period (around 6 months of age) and a male be neutered at 6-9 months of age. And the operations can be performed safely throughout most of a pet's adult life. Check with your own veterinarian about your particular pet.

Spaying/neutering offer distinct advantages over confinement: (1) They are permanent. (2) With the urge to mate gone, a pet's urge to roam and fight are reduced. Pets usually become more gentle, homeloving, and affectionate. (3) Blood stains, spraying, and the persistent scratching, barking, and yowling to be let out are eliminated. (4) The threat of breast cancer is reduced and uterine infections eliminated in spayed females. And the threat of prostate cancer is reduced and testicular cancer eliminated in neutered males.



## Facts and Fallacies

Unfortunately, there are still many myths connected with spaying/neutering that cause an otherwise responsible pet owner to delay or avoid this important step:

### Excuses

1. Myth: "It is unnatural." Everything about pets is unnatural - they are domestic animals. Their ancestors were removed from the wild thousands of years ago to become dependent on humans.

2. Myth: "My pet will become fat and lazy." Overeating and lack of exercise produce fat, lazy pets, as well as people. Restrict your pet's food intake and provide plenty of exercise.
3. Myth: "The miracle of birth will be a learning experience for my children." Dogs and cats seek quiet, private places to give birth; litters are usually born when no one is around, at night, in secluded spots. Sex education at the expense of the lives produced is not a miracle but a lesson in irresponsibility.
4. Myth: "If my female has one litter she'll be a better pet." There is no medical proof to support this belief. Spaying can improve her disposition and "make her a better pet."
5. Myth: "My pet is a purebred with papers." The general deterioration in purebred dogs and cats today has resulted from "backyard breeders" who felt an obligation to breed their pedigreed pet. And purebreds are no strangers to local Animal Shelters.
6. Myth: "I can make some money." Reputable breeders will attest to the fact that breeding an animal is expensive: additional high-quality food for the pregnant and nursing mother; veterinary care before and after birth; food, wormings, and vaccinations for the litter; and the cost of advertising. And the competition is stiff. Check the "classifieds" of any newspaper.

The cost of the operation will be repaid many times over and in many ways. The pet's lifespan will be increased; injuries resulting from fighting over a mate or being hit by a car while in pursuit will not exist; and many local jurisdictions substantially reduce the fee to license spayed/neutered dogs every year. If financial assistance is needed there are many low-cost spay/neuter programs in the area to choose from. You can get more information by calling your local animal shelter:

Alexandria	838-4775
Arlington	931-9241
Fairfax	830-1100
Falls Church	241-5053
Loudoun	882-3211
Montgomery	279-1823
Prince Georges	336-3221
Prince William	791-3133
Vienna	938-4900
Washington	576-6664

Every single kitten or puppy that is born reduces the possibility that every other homeless cat or dog will find a good home. A trip to the local Animal Shelter can help anyone see for himself what pet overpopulation means. Individual pet owners can make a difference by having their own pets spayed or neutered. **Every** litter hurts.

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910 S. Payne Street, Alexandria, VA 22314