

THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT

o.n a.n.i.m.a.l.s

IN OUR 42nd YEAR

FALL 1988

Did you know that the League offers a low cost spay/neuter program? In cooperation with eleven area veterinarians, the League provides you an opportunity to have your dog or cat altered at a greatly reduced price. The purpose of this program is to reduce the number of surplus dogs and cats—animals for whom there are no homes—animals that eventually have to be euthanized (killed!) Be a responsible pet owner, have your animal altered. Call the League Spay/Neuter number 838-5042 for information.

You're gambling with your cat's health and life when you allow your feline to be an "outdoor cat." Your cat will adjust to the comforts of the indoor life. Give it a try; you both will be happier.

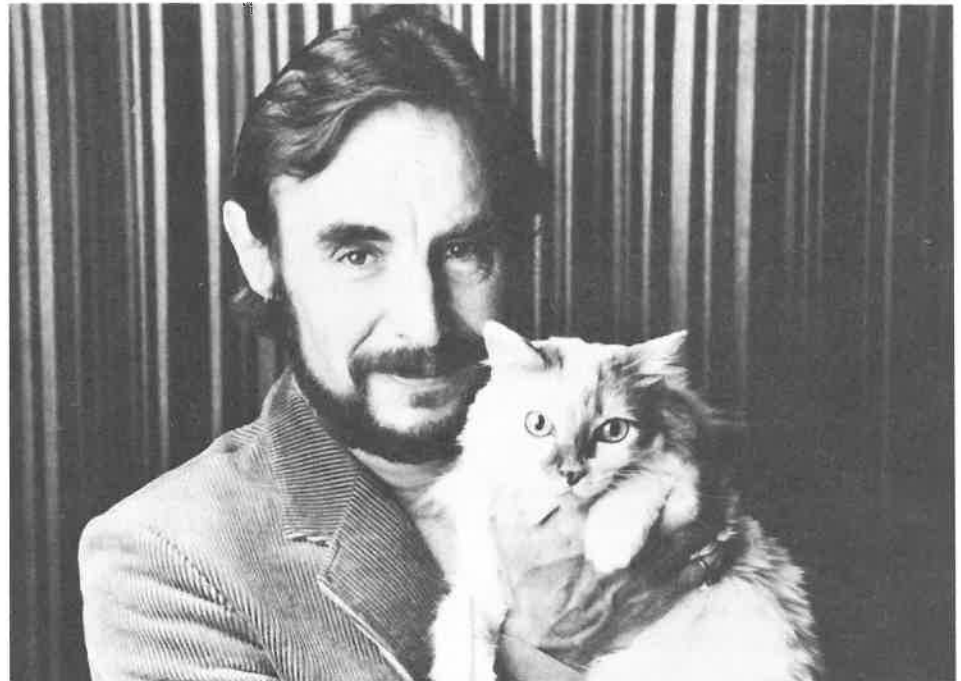
Because pets are so much a part of today's family, we may tend to think of them as short, fuzzy people. But they are a different species, with different physical and emotional tolerances and a different kind of intelligence. They can't be expected to "look both ways" or "read the label," or "stay in the yard." Regular veterinary care, controlled diets, leashes, fences and closed doors are not cruel. They are the least we can do for the delightful creatures who share our hazardous world.

This is the time of the year when the large department stores and the furriers are saying how elegant and sophisticated it is to wear a fur coat. However, they do not describe the horrible agony and terror inflicted on defenseless little animals when a steel-jaw leg-hold trap snaps shut on the animal's leg. It is important that all of us do what we can to eliminate this totally senseless and unnecessary cruelty.

When you walk your dog, please clean up after him. Take along a "Pooper-scooper" or a small plastic bag. If everyone picked up after his dog, it would not only make all non-dog-owners much happier, but it would reduce the spread of canine disease, including parasites. Remember, it's not only the courteous thing to do, but in Alexandria, it's the law.

ANNUAL DINNER AND MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Humane Society Vice President to Speak at Annual Dinner



The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria will hold its annual dinner and general membership meeting on Thursday October 27, 1988 at the American Legion Banquet Hall in the historic Gadsbys Tavern Building in Old Town Alexandria. Dr. Michael W. Fox, Vice President of the Humane Society of the United States will be the guest of honor and principal speaker. Dr. Fox was born and educated in England; he graduated from Boston College, received his veterinary degree from the Royal Veterinary College, and earned his Ph.D. in Medicine from the University of London. He has authored over thirty books, is a contributing editor to *McCall's* magazine, and has a nationwide syndicated newspaper column. Dr. Fox is one of the world's preeminent speakers on animal welfare, animal behavior, and conservation issues.

The evening's activities will begin with cocktails at 6:30 p.m., dinner at 7:30 p.m. followed by a short business meeting and Dr. Fox's talk. A vegetarian option will be available. The cost is \$15 per person. For additional information, and to make reservations please call Lee Gough 931-8771 or Vivian Willis 549-8962. Reservations should be made by October 22, 1988.

Feline Leukemia Virus - A Deadly Infection

by Mary W. Keisler, DVM
Old Town Veterinary Hospital



Editor's Note:
Dr. Mary Keisler was originally from Shreveport, La. She attended the University of Oklahoma for three years before she transferred to the Louisiana State

University, where she received a B.S. in zoology. She received her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine. She has lived in the Northern Virginia area for the past four and a half years. Dr. Keisler practices with three other Veterinarians at Old Town Veterinary Hospital, primarily treating dogs and cats. She is serving her second term on the Board of Veterinary Medicine for the District of Columbia. Dr. Keisler is married and has a family consisting of a 1 month old daughter, two cats and two dogs.

As the milder weather of fall approaches, many cat owners begin letting their cats go outside. It is very important that any outdoor cat is properly vaccinated. Many cat owners are familiar with the feline distemper and rabies vaccines but do not understand the importance of the feline leukemia vaccine. The following article will address the feline leukemia virus.

Feline leukemia is a member of the retrovirus family. It is one of the leading causes of cat deaths today. It is believed that it is not contagious to dogs or humans.

Feline leukemia can be transmitted through the saliva, respiratory secretions, feces, and urine from an infected cat. (Licking and biting are the primary routes of infection.) The virus can also be transmitted in the mother's milk or through the womb to unborn kittens. Fortunately, exposure to feline leukemia does not necessarily result in infection and subsequent disease. Kittens under 6 months of age, very old cats, and stressed or immune-suppressed cats will probably come down with the virus if exposed. Only about 28 percent of adult cats exposed will become permanently infected. The conse-

quences of exposure depend on the length of exposure and the immune status of the cat. Prolonged, continual contact is usually necessary for an infection to occur.

Once your cat is exposed to the virus, he or she may either reject the virus or become infected. An infected cat may shed virus particles but not show signs of disease for some time. Eighty-three percent of infected cats will die within three and a half years.

Signs of feline leukemia are quite variable. Anemia (low red blood count), leukemia (low white blood cell count, which results in a depressed ability to fight infections), cancer, respiratory diseases, and reproductive failure are signs of the disease. As the immune system is depressed, any illness can be the result of feline leukemia. A few cats infected will show no signs of illness.

Considering the variable length of time before signs occur, testing your cat is very important. There are two blood tests readily available. The first test is called the ELISA test. This test can be run within several minutes at most Veterinary hospitals. It can pick up the virus in the blood shortly after the cat has been exposed. Unfortunately, there are some false positives. Also, a cat tested shortly after exposure may test positive but then reject the virus from its system. Any cat who tests positive with the ELISA test and who is not showing signs of the disease should be retested with an IFA test or an ELISA test three to four weeks later. The IFA test is a highly specific blood test that does not pick up the virus until somewhat later. A false positive is very uncommon. This test is usually sent to New Jersey and it can take up to two weeks to get the results. Also, a cat recently infected will not show up as positive. Occasionally a cat will become infected but the virus leaves the blood stream and remains dormant in the bone marrow. These cats will test negative but have the potential to begin shedding the virus into the blood stream and become ill. Previous vaccination does not cause a positive result for either test.

In 1984, a vaccination was developed

against feline leukemia. This vaccine is considered about 80 percent effective. Most Veterinarians recommend vaccination for any cat in direct contact with other cats. I recommend testing a cat prior to vaccination. Although the vaccine does not hurt a positive cat, it does not help it either. The vaccine can be started at 9 weeks of age. A series of vaccines must initially be received. Two vaccines must be given two to three weeks apart. A booster is given two to four months later. A yearly booster is necessary thereafter.

In summary, it is important to remember several facts. Feline leukemia is a fatal viral infection. It is transmitted through prolonged contact with another positive cat. A cat may be positive without showing signs of disease. Eventually almost all cats infected will die. There is a test for feline leukemia. We recommend that any new cat or kitten should be tested, especially before exposing him or her to other cats. If your cat is in contact with different cats, then he or she should be vaccinated. Your Veterinarian should be consulted about your individual situation.

COUPON BOOKS

Entertainment '89

Once again your League, with the help of cooperating veterinarians, is selling Entertainment Coupon Books. The price is \$30 for a book that contains hundreds of 2 for 1, or 50 percent discount coupons for family dining, movies, shows, concerts, sports, and other exciting offers. See your veterinarian or call 780-4949 for further information. Profits from the sale of these books go to our animal-welfare programs.

"Rocket Man" Happy in New Role

It's a long way from dodging traffic on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to appearing as a "Star" in a local dinner theater, but that's the story of one "Shelter Alumnus."

"The poor dog was confused and scared when I saw him in the middle of the bridge," says the lady who spotted the little Terrier-Schnauzer on her way home from work last March. "After dodging a few cars myself, I finally was able to grab him. He seemed frightened, but I think he was glad to have 'human contact.'" She was unable to take him home, because her apartment prohibits pets. So she took the little creature to the Shelter; there he was bathed, fed and given a clean, quiet place to rest. The lady called the Shelter daily to see if the dog had been claimed by his owner. The answer was always the same. So in an effort to find him a home, she distributed flyers throughout the area.



"Rocket Man" a.k.a. "Sandy"

Mr. and Mrs. Serge Albert saw one of the flyers, met the little dog at the Shelter, and the match was made. The Alberts own a catering business near Alexandria's West End Dinner Theater. One day when the dog, now named "Rocket Man," accompanied Mrs. Albert to work, the producers of *Annie*, which was then being cast, saw him and said he'd be the perfect "Sandy." The Alberts agreed to give it a try and "Rocket Man" went into rehearsals as the faithful companion to the little orphan girl. The rest is history: 80 continuous performances with good reviews. When *Annie* closed on July 30, "Rocket Man" had to give up his "Star" status. Wendy Albert says that the adjustment has been without problems; and while the little creature seemed to enjoy the thespian life, she is sure that he is just as happy now taking long evening walks with his proud owners.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We will soon be asking our friends to renew their League membership for 1989. Letters will be mailed early in December to all our current members, and also to selected people in the community whom we believe share our love and concern for animals.

When you receive our letter, please remember that the League is dependent on the support of its members to carry out its many animal welfare programs. These programs include the adoption of shelter animals, night emergency care for sick or injured stray animals, grooming supplies and

vaccines for animals at the shelter, low cost spay/neuter, humane education wildlife assistance, and veterinary care for shelter animals. We want not only to continue these programs next year, but we would like to expand them; however, we can only do this with the generous support of our friends. We have been working hard since 1946 to eliminate the terrible suffering, abuse, and neglect of animals. When you receive your 1989 membership form, please help us; please be generous. If you won't help, who will?

If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. That is the principal difference between dog and man.

Mark Twain

CAMPAIGN SPONSORS NEEDED

Ad Campaign Pays Off

In our continuous effort to find good homes for every shelter animal, the League recently placed an ad with photos of eight animals in the Alexandria Gazette-Packet. We are very pleased to report that all eight of the little creatures were quickly

Eight adorable pets saved through ad campaign.

adopted. We would like to continue these ads, but we need your help to pay for them. If a sponsor cares to do so, he may come to the Shelter and select the animals whose photos will appear in the ad. Of course, after the ad appears, we will call you when each

Continued on next page.

MAIL TO:

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA 22320

YES, I CARE ABOUT ANIMALS AND I WANT TO SUPPORT THE LEAGUE IN ITS WORK.

Enclosed is my check for my 1988 membership dues.

\$15 Individual \$25 Family _____ Special Gift

Name _____

Street _____ Apt. No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The League is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization established in 1946.

Local Animal Lovers Pitch-In to Help 34 Mistreated Dogs



Photo by Larry Davis

Jackie Barschesky (right), owner of For-Pets-Sake Grooming Shop, and Manager Allen Thompson pitch-in to groom one of the 34 dogs taken from house in Del Ray.

On August 16, 1988, responding to neighbors' complaints, city animal wardens found 34 dogs confined to a home in the Del Ray section of Alexandria. In the following days, many people pitched-in to help these unfortunate creatures: the animal wardens who had to deal with unbelievable filth and stench to recover the animals from the house; the Shelter staff who provided food, housing and loving care for the dogs; Animal Welfare League volunteers who immediately arranged to have the dogs bathed and dipped and transported to and from the groomers in their own automobiles; the veterinarians at Alexandria Animal

Hospital who provided professional care for the 10 dogs who needed medical attention; the owners and staff at For Pets' Sake groomers, the Animal Hospital at Penn Daw and the Hayfield Animal Hospital, who generously donated their time and supplies to clean these unfortunate dogs, who according to one account, had been "living in two to six inches of feces and urine."

The people who kept these dogs confined have been charged with cruelty to animals and are scheduled to appear in General District Court on Oct. 12, 1988.

AD CAMPAIGN PAYS OFF
Continued from preceding page.

animal is adopted. The satisfaction that you will get from knowing that one of "your" animals was adopted (instead of being euthanized) will make you feel good for a long time. Dedicating such an ad to a deceased relative who loved animals or perhaps to your own deceased pet would be an appropriate memorial. Perhaps someone you know, a friend or co-worker, who cares about animals, is having a birthday or an anniversary; what gift could you possibly give that would be more appreciated than this "gift of life" for homeless animals?

If an individual, business or association would like to help these unfortunate dogs and cats find good homes, please contact the League at P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA 22320, or call us at 370-4498.

Remember, the League is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization; so your donation is tax deductible.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria SPOTLIGHT ON ANIMALS is published four times a year and has a circulation of 11,000. Address all correspondence to:

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Va., P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA 22320.

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