



# THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

# SPOTLIGHT

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

SPRING 1989

*The heartworm season is here! If you haven't taken your dog for a heartworm check, do it now! Heartworm is prevalent in Northern Virginia, and it can be fatal. Call your veterinarian today for more information.*

*Did you know that every animal adopted from the Alexandria Animal Welfare League gets a free health check-up and examination by a veterinarian?*

*Hot, humid weather is on the way. Please, in the summer, do not take your dog with you in the car, and then leave him there "for just a few minutes" while you run into the store. He might be dead when you return. (See page 3).*

*When it is time to make out your will, please remember that the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria still will be fighting animal abuse and cruelty after you are gone. To be part of this on-going commitment to the welfare of animals, please consider remembering the League in some small way in your will. Our legal name is The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Inc.*

*If a stray animal is sick or injured when it comes to the shelter, it is rushed to a local veterinarian, and the League pays the bill.*

*When you walk your dog, please remember to pick up after him. People do not appreciate dog feces on their lawns, or along the curb.*

*Picking up after your dog helps reduce the spread of canine disease, including parasites. Remember, picking up after your dog is not only the courteous thing to do, but in Alexandria, IT'S THE LAW!*

**MARK  
SATURDAY  
JUNE 17, 1989  
ON YOUR  
CALENDAR!  
(SEE PAGE 4)**

## 1989 Could be record year for "Quality Adoptions"

### Adoptions Continue At High Level



Photo by Larry Davis  
Mrs. Bogusia Thoemmes holds Kashia, whom she recently adopted from the Alexandria Shelter. Mrs. Thoemmes says that "The League adoption program is excellent, and is far superior to the adoption program of the California shelter" where she adopted her other dog. Mrs. Thoemmes believes that the home-visit must be "...an essential part of any good adoption program."

\* \* \* \* \*

The Animal Welfare League is pleased to report that the number of animal adoptions continues to remain at a high level. As we reported in the last edition of *Spotlight on Animals*, 1989 began with a record breaking number of adoptions. Although that exceptionally high number has not continued into mid-1989, we are confident that 1989 will have one of the highest numbers of total adoptions in League history.

Although we are very pleased with the large number of animals being placed, we are equally pleased in knowing that these are "Quality Adoptions", i.e., we believe that each of these animals is going into a home where the animal will receive loving care for the rest of his life. One integral part of this "Quality Adoption" program is the home-visit. For decades our League has insisted

that prior to any placement, our Adoption Officer visit the home of each potential adopter. The home-visit is intended to ensure that the adopter understands the responsibilities of pet ownership, and is prepared to make a 10 or 12 year commitment to care for the animal. The Adoption Officer is prepared to offer advice on animal nutrition, house training, and behavior problems. After the placement, the Adoption Officer is available to provide any follow-up assistance that the adopter might want.

By conducting these home-visits we are making every effort to ensure that the animal, who cannot speak for himself, is going into a loving, caring environment where the people understand their emotional and financial responsibilities to the new member of the family. By discussing these issues "up-front," i.e., prior to the animal going into the home, we have maintained not only a very high adoption rate, but we have very successfully reduced to a minimum the number of animals returned to the Shelter.

The home-visit procedure for every animal, dog or cat, is highly recommended by national humane organizations, and it is a goal that most shelters and local humane societies strive to incorporate into their adoption programs.

We do everything possible to conduct our home-visits quickly and at times that are convenient to the adopters. We regularly conduct them in the evenings and on Saturdays. Our goal is to place as many animals as possible into homes where they will receive love and care for the rest of their lives. We believe that our adoption program is sound, and that our procedures are successful, as the number of animals "Going Home" remains high, and the number of animals returned to the Shelter remains very low.

## **THE AGING PET**

*by Janet Lemke, DVM  
Elpaw Veterinary Clinic*

*Dr. Lemke came to veterinary medicine as a second career after working on Capitol Hill as a legislative research analyst, specializing in animal welfare and medical issues. She received a B.S. in Biology from Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, and her D.V.M. from the University of Georgia. Her performance horse and 17-year old cat keep her busy when not tending to Elpaw patients.*

With improving health care—in nutrition, parasite control, vaccinations, medicine, surgery and overall supervision—our pets are living longer, resulting in a large population of elderly dogs and cats. In spite of increasing frailty and deteriorating health, these years with your older pet can be “quality time,” when you can appreciate this special relationship more than ever. You need to be aware, however, of the special needs of the geriatric pet.

### **AT HOME**

Nutritionally, the older pet generally requires less protein and fewer calories. Several good diets are available and should be discussed with your veterinarian. Along with a normal deterioration in vision and hearing, your pet may also experience a decrease in taste and smell, which might lessen his interest in eating. When changes in diet become necessary, be sure to make them gradually.

A noticeable change in your pet's water intake and urination habits, blood in the urine, or pain on urination, may indicate a problem and should be explored early. Your vet probably will request a urine sample, and may want to do a blood test at examination. Constipation is occasionally a problem in the older pet, and can often be managed with medication or diet. Persistent vomiting and/or diarrhea, or sustained loss of appetite should be brought to the attention of your vet. In cats, if you see a weight loss in spite of a ravenous appetite, and if they appear hyperactive or aggressive, your vet may want to check for hyperthyroidism. Any persistent cough or difficulty in breathing should be pursued as well.

As your pet ages, body mass may seem to drop to the underside, leaving a bony top-line. This usually is accompanied by a loss of muscle tone as well, particularly noticeable in the hips and hind legs. Degenerative joint disease is common in the older animal.

Medications, used under veterinary supervision, often make your pet more comfortable.

Hopefully, by the time your pet has become a senior citizen, he or she has already been neutered, greatly reducing the risk of certain tumors and infections. Look for changes in testicular size, unusual discharge from the vulva, or lumps in the mammary glands or around the anus. Any new lumps or bumps always should be evaluated early.

Examine your pet regularly: check his teeth, gums, and ears for any odor, inflammation, discharge or pain; groom regularly, checking for parasites and skin problems, and to assist in maintaining healthy skin and a coat free of mats and loose hair; check for matting, irritations or swellings around the anus. And learn how to brush your pet's teeth, to prevent tartar build-up and avoid gingivitis.

### **AT THE VETERINARY CLINIC**

We strongly urge you to maintain yearly check-ups for your older pet. In some cases, twice a year or more is necessary. Keep in mind, your pet cannot tell us what's bothering him. You must speak for your pet and be prepared to answer questions about daily behavior and activities. Is he eating? Urinating? Defecating? Managing stairs? Vomiting? Your contribution is essential to an effective examination.

When you bring your pet for a check-up, try to bring urine and fecal samples. A yearly blood test is advisable for the geriatric pet to help identify problems early and monitor health. Follow-up tests may be necessary on a more frequent basis. Your vet will also pay special attention to the heart, and may need x-rays and EKGs for a complete evaluation. Dental care is very important in all pets, but becomes more of a problem in later years. Dental work under anesthesia may become necessary.

As your pet ages, the risk of developing cancer increases. Some cancers are relatively benign; some are treatable; others present a poor prognosis. When dealing with cancer, as with other serious health problems, you may be called upon to make important decisions on behalf of your pet. Whether to treat or not is, ultimately, your decision. You need to consider other existing health problems, benefits and risks of treatment, and, above all, your pet's “quality of life.” You also may be faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to release your pet from suffering by humane euthanasia. Your veterinarian can assist you in making these decisions.

Remember, the years with your pet are years to be cherished. The care and devotion you provide in their final years enrich your life as well as theirs.

## **136 Dogs Compete**

### **IT WAS A GRAND DAY FOR THE IRISH**

The Animal Welfare League held its Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show on Saturday, March 11, 1989 at Market Square. Over 1,600 people watched while 136 dogs “competed” in this fun event.

The show has grown over the years from a few dogs and their owners to an event which now attracts people from the entire Northern Virginia Area. In addition to bringing dog-lovers together for a morning of fun, the League uses the opportunity to distribute humane education literature and to try to find homes for shelter animals.

The Fun Dog Show is a main part of the All-Day St. Patrick's Day Festivities organized by the Ballyshanners, a local Irish-American Club. Plan to attend our show next year!

### **Contract to be Awarded in June**

## **SHELTER TO GO TO “CONTRACTOR”**

The City of Alexandria recently announced that it intends to place the operation of the Animal Shelter under a “private contractor”. For many years the city government has operated the Shelter, under the supervision of the police department. During this time the Animal Welfare League has worked closely with the police department and the Shelter staff, and has maintained an office at the Shelter building. The League, although not responsible for the Shelter itself, has been responsible for adoptions and many other animal programs.

The current Shelter staff has worked very hard, under extremely difficult conditions, to provide a clean, comfortable refuge for homeless animals, and they deserve recognition for a “Job-Well-Done.” The police department also deserves a great deal of credit and appreciation for its work in providing the management supervision for the Shelter. The operation of the Shelter has been greatly improved under police department control.

*The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria SPOTLIGHT ON ANIMALS is published four times a year and has a circulation of 14,000. Address all correspondence to: The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Va., P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA 22320.*

*Jack Steele . . . . . President  
William Fleitz . . . . . Editor  
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## LEAVE "FIDO" HOME

They're just about here! Yes, the days are fast approaching when the mercury passes 90 degrees by 11 a.m., and flirts with 100 degrees by 2 p.m. Unfortunately those are the days that we frequently see, in almost any parking lot, the family dog with his nose pressed into the two-inch opening of the car window desperately trying to get a breath of cooler air to stay alive.

It is difficult to understand why some people still insist on taking their dogs with them, when they know they are going to have to leave them when they go into a store. Sure, dogs love to go for a ride, and we all know that any dog would rather be with his owner than to be left alone, but think about the consequences.

On an 85-degree-day, the temperature inside a parked car, with the window opened two inches, will soar to 105 degrees in less than 10 minutes. A dog simply cannot survive in that environment for more than a few minutes.

If you really love your dog, leave him home in the hot weather. He's much better off in your air-conditioned home, with a bowl of fresh water, than he is in your parked car suffering and struggling to stay alive.

Be a responsible pet owner!

## I NEED A HOME



I'm a beautiful 4-year-old, 50lbs, Husky mix. I would love to be a member of a nice Northern Virginia family.

## THE SHAME OF FUR!

It is hard to understand how anyone today can wear a fur coat. The SENSELESS BRUTALITY and CRUELTY associated with trapping and fur "ranching" is almost beyond comprehension, and would sicken anyone who watched it.

Yet we still have people in our society who somehow disassociate the fur coat in the salon, or at the cocktail party, from the BARBARIC CRUELTY inflicted on defenseless animals in order to literally strip their skins from their bodies.

When you see a fur coat think about how many innocent animals were killed to obtain the fur for the garment. Then visualize how each of these animals died. The animal was probably out searching for food when a steel-jaw trap slammed on his leg, crushing the bone. The animal experienced pain similar to what you would feel if a car door was slammed shut on your hand. Lying alone, perhaps for days, in excruciating pain, exposed to the

weather, the terrified animal was without food or water, and could only wait for death to release him from his horrible agony. WHY?

What can you do to help stop this totally unnecessary, senseless torture of innocent animals?

**FIRST, DON'T WEAR FUR.** Don't compliment or give approval to those who do wear fur. Be willing to speak out on the issue; discuss with people in your office the horrible cruelty associated with the "fur industry." Ask your priest, minister, or rabbi to speak on the immorality of inflicting unnecessary pain on innocent creatures. Tell your legislators that you want trapping outlawed. Write letters to the editors of your newspapers.

It will only be through the determined effort of concerned people that we can put a stop to this totally senseless torture of innocent animals.

### Serving Since 1946

## WHAT IS THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE?

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization founded in 1946. For 43 years we have worked hard to eliminate the terrible suffering inflicted on animals by human cruelty, abuse, and neglect.

Our current programs include Adoption of Shelter Animals, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter, Help for Wildlife, Humane Education, Veterinary Care for Stray Animals, and Night Emergency Service for Injured Animals.

We are one of the oldest organizations in Virginia dedicated to the humane treatment of animals.

The policies of the League, and its day-to-day direction are provided by its Board of Directors, who are members of our community and who are elected by the League membership at the annual meeting. The League is a strong, viable organization which today manages many of the Animal Welfare Programs in the City of Alexandria. Our membership has increased considerably over the last three years.

## A PRAYER FOR DOGS

*Good Master, bless each dog that we own. That has no flower bed to bury bones. No loving hand to scratch his ears. No gate to guard and never quite enough to eat. Ye Saints, guard well each Pup That stinks with tail turned down instead of up. All other dogs, beloved, gay and free. Are blessed enough - they need not trouble Thee.*

*Author Unknown  
(Courtesy of Mr. Robert Swenson)*

### 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 1989 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.

**MYTH:** Spaying my dog will hurt her.  
**FACT:** This is absolutely false. Spaying is a safe operation, performed painlessly while your dog is under a general anesthesia. After surgery, your dog will be on her feet in a few hours, and will be fully recovered in a few days. Any slight discomfort that your dog might have for a few hours after surgery, is far outweighed by the long term health benefits that she will receive from being spayed.  
Discuss spaying with your vet.



## Should You Let Your Cat Run Outdoors?

by Jean B. Townsend

*Should you let your cat run outdoors? By all means! Let him outdoors, but only if you want him to—*

- get hit by a car. Then you and your children can wonder why he hasn't come home. When you find his body, if you do, you can wonder whether he died outright or whether he lay there suffering for hours before he died.
- get stolen, perhaps by an animal dealer who will sell your pet to a research lab.
- get caught and mangled in the fanbelt of a neighbor's car in cold weather.
- get poisoned, either accidentally by pesticides or poisonous plants or intentionally by cat-haters.
- get chased by dogs or other animals and killed or hopelessly lost.
- get parasites such as fleas, ticks, or worms, all of which threaten his health.
- be exposed to serious disease such as infectious feline leukemia or rabies.
- cause problems with your neighbors when he uses their lawn for a litter pan or hunts small animals and birds.
- get "taken for a ride" by a disgruntled neighbor.

Many people simply open their doors and let their cats run loose outdoors without considering the long list of hazards which await their pets.

But, you ask, doesn't a cat need fresh air and exercise? No! Cats do not need much exercise to keep in shape. Experts believe that the key to their fitness lies in the isometric stretching which they do several times a day. You can encourage your cat to exercise—and provide a ton of fun for you and your cat alike—by providing him with a scratching post, or better still, a climbing tree.

Be a good neighbor and responsible pet owner. Keep your cat indoors where he's safe.

## Feline Leukemia—A Killer

What is feline leukemia virus?

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) is a contagious disease of cats. And while leukemia is a cancer, very few cats die of cancer itself. Rather the disease kills by destroying a cat's immune system, leaving him unable to fight off even minor infections. Thus, something as simple as a common cold can mean death to an FeLV infected cat. In fact, 83% of cats infected with FeLV will die within one to two years from a disease other than cancer.

How do cats get FeLV infection?

FeLV infection is spread by contact, such as sneezing, licking or biting by an infected cat. It can also be passed to kittens in the mother's milk.

Obviously, outdoor cats are at a higher risk, but even cats not allowed to roam can be exposed. The virus can exist in urine or feces. And if you have more than one cat, one may have been exposed but is not yet showing signs of illness. He could give FeLV to your other cats. If you take your cat on trips or vacations, or exhibit your cat in shows, these situations are hard to control.

It's easy to see how FeLV is spread so easily and why it poses a threat to unprotected cats.

Are some cats more likely to get FeLV than others?

Some cats get the disease and die, and others seem to resist it. A good, healthy immune system may destroy the virus before it can take hold. For this reason, cats most at risk are kittens under 12 weeks of age. Their immune systems aren't fully developed. The other most frequent victims are older, sick or stressed cats, because their immune systems are depressed.

Source: Norden Laboratories

## Too Many Dogs and Cats

There is a tremendous overpopulation of cats and dogs, both purebred and mixed breed, in the United States. As a result millions of stray and unwanted animals must be killed each year. Animal overpopulation can be defined, simply, as too many kittens and puppies born each year for the number of responsible, loving homes available. Most of these unfortunate little creatures will encounter only cruelty, deprivation, homelessness, and an untimely death. Right here in Alexandria, over 1500 dogs and cats had to be euthanized last year because there were no homes for them.

Be an animal-lover, and a responsible pet owner. Have your pet spayed or neutered.

### FANTLE'S

Fantle's Drugstores has recently established a "Good Neighbor" program. When you send us your Fantle's receipts we can redeem them for money. Here's how it works: when you shop at any Fantle's Drugstore save your receipt and pick up a submission form at the checkout counter. Mail the receipt and submission form to us. The League will get 5% of the total sales from Fantle's. It's an easy and "cost free" way for you to help homeless and abused animals. Our address is: Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA. 22320.

## Spring Garden Party

Benefiting the  
Animal Welfare League of Alexandria  
in the garden of one the city's  
most historic private residences,  
built in the eighteenth century

Saturday, June 17, 5-7 p.m.

Refreshments, Live Entertainment, and Door Prizes

For tickets and information, call 548-4741

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