



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

# SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 44th YEAR

SPRING 1990

*Be Kind to Animals Week is a good time to resolve to do all we can to alleviate the suffering that animals endure due to lack of knowledge, education, compassion and resources. You can make a lasting contribution to the plight of animals by remembering the League in your will. Our legal name is The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Inc.*

*We have one of the best shelter staffs in the region, but we need volunteers to help us give our animals the best quality of care possible. To find out how you can help, please call us at 838-5042.*

*Hot, humid weather is fast approaching. Please—don't take your pet with you in the car while you run errands. Even cooler outdoor temperatures can be deceiving. A few minutes in the sunshine can turn your car into an oven. So be kind to your pet: leave him at home.*

*The League continues to support efforts to outlaw trapping of animals for fur.*

*This cruel practice costs innocent animals their lives and causes untold suffering. How can you help? Contact your legislators and write to the editors of your newspapers. Boycott fur and encourage your friends to do the same.*

*The League works tirelessly to care for injured and homeless animals. Trained technicians are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to respond to animal emergencies. In addition, the League conducts an adoption program for shelter animals, as well as a humane education program and a low-cost spay-neuter program to reduce the number of unwanted animals. Our wildlife program rehabilitates injured/orphaned wildlife and releases them back into the wild. The League offers many other services as well. For more information, call us at 838-4775.*

## League to Commemorate 'Be Kind to Animals Week' with Programs, Activities

Be Kind to Animals Week, an annual event nationwide, will receive special commemoration in Alexandria this year when it is celebrated May 6-12.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), which administers the local Animal Shelter, is planning a series of events designed to heighten public awareness of the many ways in which the Shelter serves the community.

First, the Shelter staff will be augmented throughout the week during the hours the Shelter is open to give the public an opportunity to visit and tour the facility and learn more about the Shelter's activities. Shelter staff and volunteers will be on hand to answer questions about procedures related to the homeless animals in its care, including adoption, health care, and grooming. In addition, pets can receive low-cost rabies shots at a rabies clinic to be held at the Shelter on Sunday, May 6, from noon until 2 p.m.

T-shirts and sweatshirts will be available for sale, and free buttons will be distributed; donations to the Shelter will be welcome.

The League and the Shelter also have produced a pamphlet, *40 Ways You Can Be Kind to Animals*, which will be distributed by pet stores, grooming shops, and community organizations such as the Boy Scouts. Even local churches will be given messages relating to the role of animals in human experience which can be used in Sunday School classes, sermons and church bulletins.

"It is hoped that this educational initiative will help raise everyone's consciousness about compassionate treatment of the animals in our care," says Jack Steele, President of the AWLA Board. "A good place to start is with the children, and that's why many area schools are working with us on this important project."

Steele noted that many area restaurants are cooperating with the League in promoting Be Kind to Animals Week by

allowing, and even encouraging, their staff to wear the Be Kind to Animals buttons and t-shirts. "It's really great that so many Alexandrians are offering such strong support for this important effort," he added.

Dog and cat owners are invited to bring their pets to the Shelter at 910 S. Payne Street during Be Kind to Animals Week, when special appointments will be set up for photography sessions. Pet Portraits by Michael, a studio in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, will be offering sittings for a fee of \$9.95, which will be donated to the Shelter. Owner-and-pet photos can be purchased from the studio for an additional charge. The sittings last approximately 15 minutes; to make an appointment, call 1-800-822-1379. Sitting times will be scheduled on Friday, May 4, Saturday, May 5, and Sunday, May 6. Past experience has proven that the available time slots for Pet Portraits by Michael fill up quickly, so you are encouraged to call early to schedule your appointment.

For more information on Be Kind to Animals, or to learn how you can help, call 838-4775.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria was founded in 1946. In addition to operating the Alexandria Animal Shelter, the League conducts animal adoptions, humane education, help for wildlife, low-cost spay-neuter and other animal welfare programs.

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- The St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show

# Preventing and Treating Heartworm Disease

by Don S. Wilson, DVM  
Alexandria Animal Hospital



The days are getting longer and warmer, an event referred to by most as the "spring season," and by veterinarians as the "heartworm season," for it is the time of year when plans for preventing the catastrophic heartworm disease are begun or reviewed for all our patients.

Heartworm infection has been on a steady increase for the past 30 years. Initially confined to the Southeastern and Gulf Coastal states, the disease can now be found in virtually all areas of the continental United States and into Canada. It has been estimated that well over a million dogs and an unknown number of cats are infected with this deadly parasite.

Heartworm disease is the result of infection by the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*. *Dirofilaria immitis* adults are long (5-25 cm) wormlike parasites and as many as 100 may live in the chambers of the heart of the infected dog or cat. The parasite is transmitted from one dog or cat to another by the ubiquitous mosquito. The mosquito bites the infected pet, taking its blood meal. After a short period of development in the mosquito the parasite will be transmitted to the next pet that the mosquito bites. The mosquito is essential for the transmission of the parasite and is abundant in the Northern Virginia region, placing at risk all pets that go outdoors.

The signs and symptoms of the disease are variable and may be insidious. All symptoms are related to failure of the heart adequately to pump blood to the body. The symptoms may include exercise intolerance, coughing, weight loss, lethargy or a slow general debilitation of the patient. Cats frequently display similar symptoms, as well as anorexia, vomiting and shortness of breath.

Your veterinarian has several methods to diagnose the disease and the blood test can usually be done in the office. If the disease is diagnosed, it can be treated. Although this is a critical treatment, with proper precautions most patients can be treated successfully. It is important to treat all cases, first for the well being of

the patient, and second because the untreated pet is a source of the infection in the community.

The best means of managing this terrible disease is through prevention. Modern veterinary medicine has made dramatic advances in the diagnosis and prevention of heartworm disease in recent years. Unfortunately, there is yet to be developed a preventative approved for use in the cat. There are two basic drugs used for prevention. The original, *diethylcarbazine*, is still very effective and comes in tablets, liquid and chewable form. This drug must be given once daily. The newest drug, available for the past three years and fast becoming the drug of choice, is *ivermectin*. This drug is safe and effective and has the advantage of once

## Vet's Corner

monthly administration. With milder winters and longer mosquito seasons, many veterinarians and owners are opting to give the preventative year round rather than discontinuing it during the winter.

It is imperative that all pets who go off the preventative in the winter months be tested in the spring before starting the medication again. Failure to retest can result in life-threatening complications to the pet. Our practice currently is testing every two years patients that take the preventative year round. All owners should consult with their veterinarian for their current recommendations regarding testing and preventative to help in the ongoing fight against the spread of this dread disease.

## Pet Portraits By Michael To Hold Sittings at Alexandria Shelter



What better way to preserve memories of our families as they grow and change than through professional photographic portraits? Soon, you will have an opportunity to do just that, and include your favorite furred, feathered or finned companions.

Michael Joseph, a professional photographer who has photographed over 12,000 pets, will be at the Alexandria Shelter May 4-6 to capture your family memories.

For a sitting fee of \$9.95, all of which is donated to both the Alexandria and Arlington Animal Welfare Leagues, Michael will spend ample time to capture six to eight views of your family and pets, both together and separately. This fee covers a maximum of three family members and two pets. Additional people or pets can be included for \$3 each.

Seven to 10 days after your sitting, you will receive proofs and have the option of purchasing a variety of sizes and styles of portraits. Previews start at \$15 and portrait packages are available, all at your option.

Appointments are necessary and can be scheduled by calling 1-800-822-1379. Call soon to ensure the time and date you prefer.

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Photos of Families and Pets

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## April Is National Spay-Neuter Month

Each year, up to 90 million dogs and cats are born in the United States alone—that's 10,000 an hour.

Animal shelters are overflowing with unwanted dogs and cats, and millions are humanely killed in shelters across the country. The fate of those that don't find their way to shelters is even more unpleasant. Many abandoned animals die of starvation and disease; others are killed or injured by automobiles. Cruelty to animals begins when you allow the birth of unwanted litters of puppies and kittens.

Preventing unwanted litters can be accomplished by confinement or surgical sterilization, called spaying and neutering. Confinement, in addition to being inconvenient for most pet owners, also does not relieve the animal's natural frustration at being unable to mate.

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. (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.

Remember: 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 Shelter can show you just what pet overpopulation means. Individual pet owners can make a difference by having their own pets spayed or neutered.

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 annual fee to license spayed/neutered dogs.

There are low-cost spay/neuter programs available through the Shelter. For more information, call 838-4775. Or, better, yet, drop by the Shelter during Be Kind to Animals Week, May 6-12, and talk to one of the volunteers or staff.

**Be Kind To Animals!**

Join the Alexandria Animal Welfare League. See page 4 for details.

## Councilwoman Del Pepper Visits Shelter



Alexandria City Councilwoman Del Pepper recently toured the Shelter, where she met with Shelter staff and League officials. Mrs. Pepper remarked that she was "very impressed with the overall cleanliness of the facility and the excellent staff, and pleased with the high quality of care given to the animals."

After her tour, the Shelter presented her with one of the League's new sweatshirts. Pictured from left, are Care Technician Karen Miller, Office Manager Cindy Rogers, Councilwoman Pepper, Acting Shelter Director Brenda Purvis, Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Genega, and Care Technician Linda Johnson.

## Bunnies at Shelter Need Good Homes

The Shelter has six rabbits who were the victims of abuse and neglect and now need good homes. These bunnies would best be placed in homes that are relatively quiet, and they would make great pets for a senior or a couple. For more information, call 838-4775, or visit the Shelter as soon as possible.

**Be Kind To Animals Week is  
May 6-12**

## VIRGINIA-MARYLAND VETERINARY EMERGENCY SERVICE

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703/ 823-3601

*Treating small animals and exotics.*

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## YES! I CARE ABOUT ANIMALS AND I WANT TO SUPPORT THE LEAGUE IN ITS IMPORTANT WORK.

*Enclosed is my check for my 1990 membership dues.*

\$15 Individual     \$25 Family     \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Special Gift

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**Send your tax-deductible contribution to Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, P.O. Box 20050, Alexandria, VA 22320-1050.**

# Owners, Pets Enjoy St. Paddy's Day Show

by Karen M. Carroll

Owners and pets turned out in force for the Fourth Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show in Old Town Alexandria on March 10. There were dozens of dogs eager to "compete" in events ranging from "Most Irish" to "Best Trick."

Several participants in each of the events were Shelter alumni, and all clearly were thriving in their new homes. Most dogs sported green in honor of the occasion. Among them were a pair of handsome Irish setters wearing tam-o'-shanters and coordinating shirts, several terriers and spaniels prancing about in spangled hats and bow ties, and one normally white Jack Russell, resplendent in a coat painted with green vegetable dye shamrocks.

A perfect spring day and over 2,000 animal lovers and pets contributed to this highly successful event, sponsored by the League and the Ballyshanners, an Irish group in Alexandria. WGMS Radio personality Judy Gruber and General District Court Judge Daniel O'Flaherty did a superb job of announcing and judging the events. A wonderful sequel to the Show was the adoption of five homeless dogs brought to meet the public by Shelter volunteers.

Our thanks to everyone who participated this year for their contribution to what has become a delightful Alexandria tradition!

## Pet Tip

Clean your pet's food and water dishes daily, and make sure there's always fresh water in his bowl.

(From the pamphlet, *40 Ways You Can Be Kind to Animals*, which you can pick up free at the Shelter.)



***A volunteer escorts an adoptable Shelter dog to the St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show to meet prospective owners. All five of the dogs presented at the show have now been adopted.***

# Keep Your Pets Tagged

A Washington, D.C. pet owner recently lost the sheepdog who had been her companion for 14 years when, preparing to give the dog a bath, she left the animal outdoors without her collar and identification tags.

A moment was all it took, for the dog apparently wandered off. Soon the animal was picked up by the authorities, who later said the dog appeared to have been run over by a car and looked unkempt. Assuming the dog was injured and homeless, they decided to euthanize her immediately.

The Alexandria Shelter's policy is to avoid such tragedies by making a concerted effort to find the owner before taking any irrevocable actions. An injured animal would be rushed to a veterinarian for treatment. No animal is euthanized immediately unless it clearly is in severe and untreatable pain.

While this is reassuring to local pet owners, it nonetheless serves as a reminder that safety demands that your animal always wear his license and identification tags. When it comes to protecting such a valuable membered your family, you definitely don't want to take any chances.

Personalized ID tags for your pet are available from any pet store.

# Help the League Be Kind To Animals

Earlier this year, we sent letters to all our members asking them to renew their memberships for 1990. In addition, we also sent letters to selected members of our community telling them about the League, and asking them to join us in our effort to assist homeless and injured animals, and to fight animal abuse.

If you received a letter, and haven't yet responded, please take a minute to do so today. We desperately need the support of every person who is concerned about the terrible suffering inflicted on

animals by human ignorance, cruelty and abuse. There is much work to be done and our resources are limited. Please help us. If you won't help, who will?

## Pet Health Pointer

Does your dog seem to be scratching a lot and losing too much hair? He may be sensitive to food or environment. Yes, dogs have allergies, too! Ask your vet for advice on treating this problem.

**Animal Welfare League  
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