

THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

# SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 42nd YEAR

SUMMER 1988

*We ask our friends to consider remembering the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria in their wills. Unfortunately, the terrible suffering that "civilization" inflicts on animals will continue after you are gone. Please, help reduce the agony, abuse and neglect of animals by including the League in your will.*

*If you use a "choke" or "training collar" on your dog, be sure to remove it when the training session stops. Never allow that type of collar to remain on your dog when you are not present. Remember, it is a noose around your dog's neck, and if the end should get caught on a fixed object and your dog gets excited and pulls to free himself, the "noose" will tighten and strangulation can easily result. It has happened right here in Alexandria!*

*As of June 30, over 500 dogs and cats had to be euthanized this year at the Shelter because there were no homes for them. We are not talking about old or sick animals; we're talking about bright, healthy young dogs and cats that would have made wonderful pets. These innocent animals had to be killed because the animal population greatly exceeds the available homes for them. Please help reduce the tremendous overpopulation of dogs and cats.*

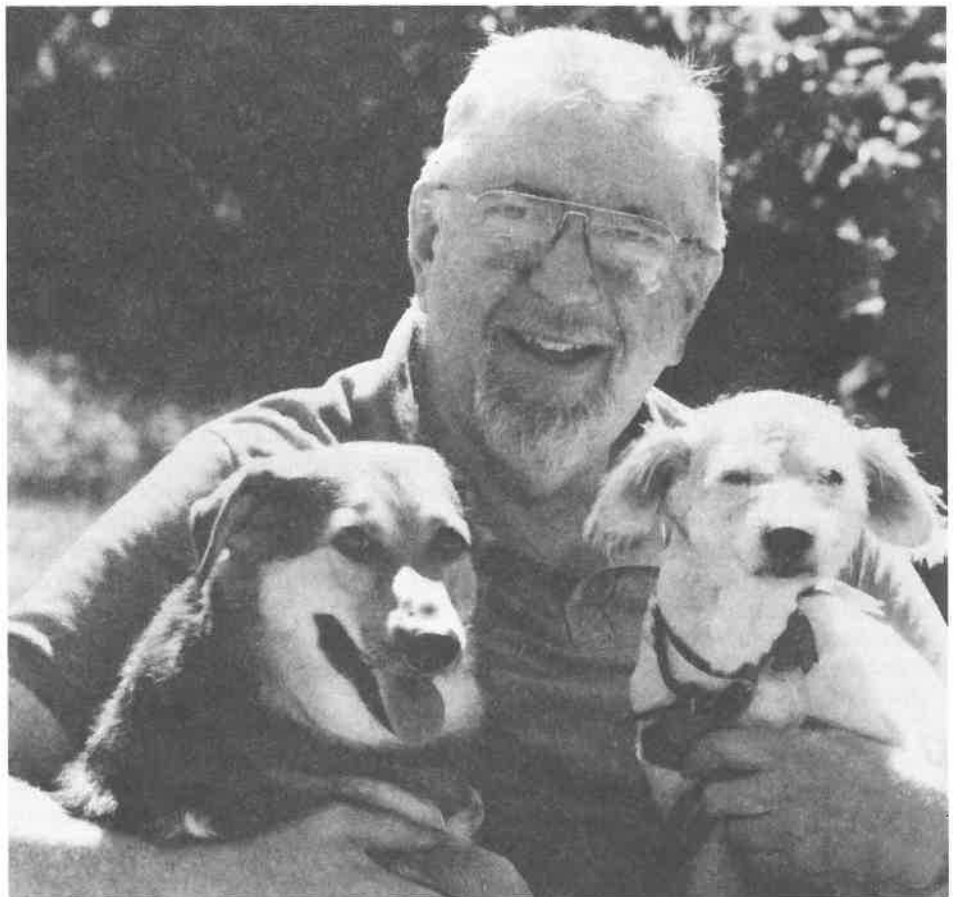
*Be part of the solution—not part of the problem. Have your pet spayed or neutered.*

*The League has a low cost spay/neuter program. Call our Spay/Neuter number 838-5042 for more information.*

*If you really love your cat, consider keeping him/her inside. Indoor cats will live a much longer, healthier life than the cat that prowls the neighborhood. Most of the dead cats that we see on the streets and in the gutters belonged to someone who probably said: "My cat likes to be outside." In addition to the danger from cars, an outdoor cat faces constant exposure to disease, poison, parasites, fights, theft (for medical research), and innumerable other threats which are non-existent for the indoor cat. Cats will adjust to the comforts of the indoor life; some will adjust immediately—others might take longer. Give your cat the advantage of a healthier, longer, better life: Keep your cat indoors. Be a responsible pet owner!*

## MEET SHELTER ALUMNAE, "PEGGY" AND "HONEY"

### *Members of the Family*



"Peggy" (left) and "Honey" playfully pose with their owner Howard Bontz of Alexandria. "Peggy" and "Honey" are both Shelter alumnae, having been adopted by Howard and his wife Dot many years ago.

"Peggy" is unaware that she is supposed to be considered a handicapped canine as a result of her having only three legs. She lost one of her legs in an accident sometime before the Bontzes adopted her from the Shelter. "Peggy" leads a full, active and complete life. She loves to run around the house, and she can't wait to go for long walks; of course the stairs are no problem at all for "Peggy."

"Both dogs get along fine," explains Howard. "They are two of the nicest dogs in this world. They're members of our family, and we love them both."

## Should you Castrate your Dog?

by Mary W. Keisler, DVM  
Old Town Veterinary Hospital



Castration is a surgical procedure in which the animal is placed under a general anesthetic in order to remove the testicles or male gonads. Although most people understand the importance of this procedure in effecting sexual sterilization, there are many other equally important reasons. It is important for each dog owner to fully understand these reasons. The following article will help explain these.

Urine marking and dominance aggression are some unwanted behavioral characteristics which can be modified or eliminated by castration. Some male dogs choose to mark their territory (inside or out) with their urine. Castration has at least a 50 percent probability of decreasing this behavior regardless of the age or duration of the problem. Dominance aggression can be shown by a male dog in order to elicit submission from either another dog or person. Intermale aggression is greatly reduced about 62 percent of the time. This reduction may be even greater if both male dogs are castrated. This is an important consideration for many Alexandria residents who share common play areas. It is important to note that castration is considered unlikely to affect the dog's protective or territorial aggression, therefore his benefits as a "watchdog" are not hindered.

Besides behavioral reasons, medical reasons often warrant castration. Cryptorchidism is a condition where one testicle does not descend to its normal scrotal position. This is a hereditary condition and the affected animal should not be used for breeding. The undescended testicle has a 13.6 times higher risk for cancer than the normal testicle and always should be removed.

Cancer in the normal descended testicle is also an important consideration. Testicular cancer is more common in the dog than any other domestic animal. It usually occurs in both testicles and is one of the second most common cancers found in dogs. The average age of

the affected dog is 10 years. Enlargement in size of the testicle, change in shape or increased firmness should at least alert one to seek your veterinarian's advice.

Another tumor fairly common in the male, intact dog is a perineal adenoma. This is a hormonal dependent growth located on or near the anal opening. Fortunately these usually are benign and castration will eliminate these.

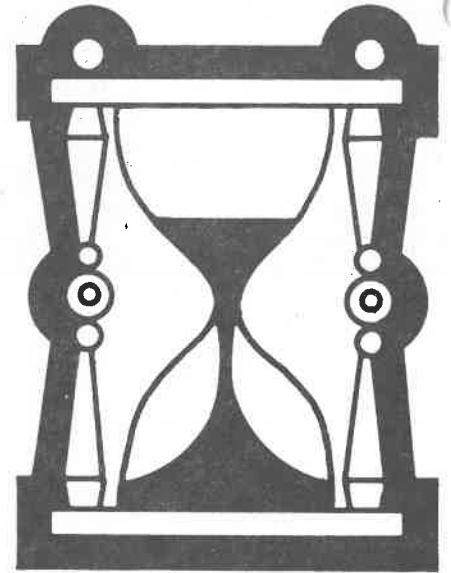
A perineal hernia, a defect in the pelvic musculature in the region around the anus, is another problem directly related to the male hormone. This defect can result in entrapment of various intestinal organs and must usually be surgically repaired.

One of the most common disorders related to prolonged male hormonal influence is a prostate disorder. The prostate is part of the male genital system and is located surrounding the neck of the bladder. Continual hormonal influence causes prostatic hyperplasia (enlargement). Enlargement of the prostate gland can partially obstruct the urethra (the tube from the bladder to the outside) and cause difficulty in urination. Prostatic infection is often seen in association with prostatic enlargement. Prostate infection can be quite serious and often does not respond to medical therapy alone. Castration can cause a decrease in the size of the prostate gland within weeks. Fortunately prostatic cancer is uncommon, but the male hormone has been implicated as a possible cause.

The question of castration is a very important one. Every pet owner should be fully informed of the benefits of neutering your animal. Your veterinarian can be very helpful in enlightening you on this subject.

It is very sad that a well known local non-profit organization dedicated to the elimination of a specific human disease and human suffering recently used fur coats as a fund raising device. Fur coats are the ultimate symbol of totally unnecessary torture endured by defenseless animals for human vanity.

## The Older Pet



As dogs and cats get older, their behavior changes. The animal that never seemed to rest, and was ready to play on a moment's notice, now might be inclined to take more frequent and longer naps. The pet that used to hear your car drive up, now might not hear you until you enter the room. The dog that used to love those long evening walks might now appear tired by the time you get to the corner. The pet who always insisted on being in the center of family activity might now be more content in a secluded spot away from noise and people. The animal that used to race around the house with sure footed agility, might now be moving at a much slower pace and remain in one or two selected areas. The dog or cat that used to love going up and down stairs might now refuse to move on them. The animal that was perfectly house-trained might now be having occasional "accidents."

These are all signs of an aging animal. Of course the older animal should get frequent checkups, and you should discuss with your veterinarian any behavior changes you observe. Many illnesses of an older animal can be treated, but you must accept the fact that, like humans, old age in animals creates a change in behavior and needs. Your older pet will need your understanding and help more and more. Be patient. Be kind. Remember the many years of happiness and devotion that your pet gave to you. Now it is your turn; give your older pet the love, peace and care that he needs as he enters the twilight of his short life.

# Bighead

By Carol Wolff

He was a big gray Tom cat, not too lean, but too ugly. His jowls puffed out as though he had a walnut tucked into each cheek. His eyes were obscured by pus and tears. His coat was hopelessly filthy. His tattered ears and mouth revealed his battle-filled past. He lived nowhere and everywhere. This traveling man knew his public. He appeared for handouts and then moved on. The neighborhood folks knew him and by a variety of names. I called him Bighead. He was a sweetheart.

When a few of us decided to clean him up and find him a home, he changed his route. Day after day we would spot him from afar, but he was smoke as we approached. This friendly boy knew something was up and for a week he was on the road. I was ready for him to come back, though, I had keys to a neighbor's "safe house", keys to another's car. I had a carry-cage and his favorite food.

And then, one morning, there he was. He came to me eagerly, as always, and as I let him inside the safe house, I felt enormous relief and happiness. No more would Mr. Bighead suffer the rain and snow, hunger, or danger. We would take him to the vet for a good clean-up and shots. And, his macho days were over. The over-population of stray kittens in Alexandria would be decreased.

The vet's office knew the plan. They had flexed their busy schedule daily, in anticipation of Bighead's capture. In fact, the name Bighead had celebrity at the Animal Hospital. Now they said to bring him right over.

When I went back to the safe house to get him, he had eaten a bit and was deeply asleep, on his stretched out back,

draped gracefully across my neighbor's white silk settee. He mewed hello when I woke him, and seemed perfectly at ease with the morning's luxuries. He walked into the carry cage when I asked him to and on the back seat of our old Cadillac he yawned and pretended royalty. In the vet's waiting room, still in his cage, he was content and purring.

The first order of business was not a bath or a shot. It was a test for Feline Leukemia. Bighead's future depended on the results of that test. A few hours after admission, we had those results. They were positive.

I still look for Bighead when I'm out. I try to pretend the sadness never happened and that the tough guy didn't die. He was street-smart, but no stray animal can avoid disease and pain. We took away his disease and pain, but to do so we had to take away his life. I miss him every day.

## ANNUAL DINNER AND MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Mark Thursday,  
October 27, 1988,  
on Your Calendar!**

That's the date of the League's annual dinner and general membership meeting. As in previous years the dinner will be held at the American Legion Banquet Hall in the Gadsby's Tavern building. Cocktails at 6:30 p.m. and dinner at 7:30 p.m. More details in our fall newsletter.

## At Peace

*If a man does not soon pass beyond the thought: "By what shall this dog profit me?" into the large state of simple gladness to be with the dog, he shall never know the very essence of that companionship which depends, not on the points of a dog, but on some strange and subtle mingling of mute spirits. For is by muteness that a dog becomes for one so utterly beyond value; with him, one is at peace, where words play no torturing tricks. When he just sits lovingly and knows that he is being loved, those are the moments that I think are precious to a dog;--when, with his adoring soul coming through his eyes, he feels that you are really thinking of him.*

John Galsworthy

"The worst sin to our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them. That's the essence of inhumanity."

George Bernard Shaw

## Your Help is Needed

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria was founded in 1946. For 42 years we have worked hard to eliminate the terrible suffering inflicted on animals by human cruelty, indifference and neglect. Our current programs include adoption of shelter animals, low cost spay/neuter, help for wildlife, veterinary care for injured or ill stray animals, humane education, and night emergency service for injured stray animals. To continue these and other programs we need the support of every animal lover in the area. We simply cannot do what must be done without your help. If you won't help, who will?

### 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.*

***"I'm Gentle and Affectionate, and I Need a Home."***



This beautiful young Shepard-mix is anxiously waiting at the Shelter for a lucky Alexandria family to take her home. She is nine months old and weighs 45 pounds. She gets along very well with other dogs, and she loves people. She is the perfect pet for a family that is looking for a medium-sized gentle, affectionate companion.

She's one of many healthy, beautiful dogs and cats temporarily living at the Shelter. If you are thinking about adding a four-legged member to your family, please visit the Shelter at 910 South Payne St.

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Jack Steele . . . . . *President*  
William Fleitz . . . . . *Editor*

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## ***Summer is Here!***

It appears that we are going to have a typical Alexandria summer—temperatures in the 90's, high humidity and almost unbearable pollution. Certainly not an environmentally pleasant time of year for humans. But what about our animals? Yes, dogs and cats are affected by hot weather, high humidity and pollution—the same things that make us uncomfortable. In many ways summer can cause much greater discomfort to our animals than to us; remember, animals do not have human cooling systems, i.e., perspiration; they must dissipate heat by the exchange of air through panting.

There are many things we can do to help these wonderful, loyal companions have a more enjoyable, comfortable summer, and to avoid life-threatening situations.

Do not take your dog with you in the car when driving to the store. Sure, he enjoys being with you, and he loves to go for a ride. But what happens when you have to go into the store "just for a few minutes," and the dog has to stay in the car. In a matter of moments the temperature will soar to over 100 degrees, even with the windows slightly opened. A dog cannot survive in that heat for more than a very short time. He could have permanent brain-damage, or be dead by the time you return.

Allow your animal to enjoy the comfort of your air-conditioned house. If for some reason he must be outside, make sure he has plenty of shade throughout the day (remember, an area that is shady in the morning might receive the direct hot sun in the afternoon). Be sure that he has plenty of fresh water. If you will not be observing him for more than an hour or so, it's a good idea to provide two big bowls of water; a dog's water consumption is surprisingly high in hot weather, and

remember water bowls occasionally are tipped over accidentally.

Hot weather brings out the mosquitos, and that means the potential for heartworm. This horrible disease is very prevalent in Northern Virginia, and it can be fatal. If your dog has not been checked for heartworm this year, do not delay—call your veterinarian today for an appointment. Every dog should be checked for heartworm.

Be extremely careful with your lawn and garden chemicals. Store them in containers which deny access by your pets. Many garden chemicals are highly toxic.

Warm weather is the time for backyard barbecues. Those steaks or pieces of chicken can smell very appealing while they are being grilled. Your dog or cat does not realize that burning charcoal is just inches away from that wonderful aroma. Keep your animals away from the grill! When you've finished with your grilled chicken wrap those chicken bones tightly in tin foil and then in a sealed plastic bag; remember animals love chicken but chicken bones can easily get caught in the throat or puncture the intestine.

Dogs, like humans, need exercise, even in the summer. A walk with your dog in the early morning or late evening will be good for both of you. Avoid the mid-day heat, and make your walk a little shorter than you would in the cooler weather. Carefully watch your dog for any indication of exhaustion or other problem signs.

There are still those people who take their dogs jogging with them. It is cruel and dangerous to take a dog in hot weather and expect him to accompany his owner on a long run. A dog's body is simply not designed for such activity and permanent injury or death could easily result.

Discuss with your veterinarian immediately any unusual signs, or any abnormal behavior traits that you observe in your animals.

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