

# SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 44th YEAR

SUMMER 1990

*Though summer is almost over, the worst of the hot weather could still be ahead. The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria reminds you that, no matter how much your pet may enjoy riding in your car, an automobile can become an oven in just the few minutes it takes you to pick up a few groceries or run a quick errand. Too many animals suffer and die needlessly when owners underestimate outdoor temperatures. Even on balmy days, it's much kinder to leave your pet alone at home than to subject him to possible stroke and sudden death.*

*Runners, too, should be cautious about enlisting dogs as summertime jogging companions. Dogs have no sweat glands, and panting offers their only natural relief when they are overheated. If you exercise with your dog, be sensible: take great care to provide plenty of water and frequent rest for the animal. Dogs who go jogging only when their owners are at home on weekends are even more subject to dangerous overheating.*

*The League has worked tirelessly since its founding in 1946 to improve the lot of homeless animals by fostering human compassion and understanding through education and other important programs. St. Francis of Assisi once said: "If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of pity and compassion, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow man." Our Shelter animals have benefited greatly from strong community support, the lifeblood of which is volunteer participation. Your involvement can make the lives of our homeless pets better and happier. For information on how you can help, please call 838-4775 today.*

## Seven-day-a-week operation begins Sept. 2

# Shelter Announces Sunday Hours

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is very pleased to announce that beginning September 2, the Animal Shelter will be open on Sundays from 12 noon until 4 p.m. This means that for the first time in its history, the Alexandria Animal Shelter will be open seven days a week.

Shelter Director Brenda Purvis states that "During the past 12 months we've greatly increased the number of hours that the Shelter is open to the public; this includes expanding our evening hours, and staying open on many holidays."

Ms. Purvis adds, "We've always wanted to be open on Sundays, but we've never had the necessary resources. Now, with additional funding, we've hired more staff, which allows us the flexibility to operate seven days a week. When we begin staying open on Sundays, we'll be the only municipal shelter that I know of in the Virginia-Maryland region that is open every day of the week."

Becky Nelson, the League Adoption Officer, says that the Sunday opening "should result in many more animal adoptions. Alexandria is a community in which many, if not most adults work at least five

days a week. By providing an additional day on the weekend for the public to visit the Shelter, I'm sure we'll see our adoptions increase quite a bit."

The League encourages anyone who is thinking about adding a four-legged member to the family to visit the Shelter at 910 South Payne Street. Beginning September 2, you are welcome any day of the week.

Please call 838-4775 for additional information.

## Volunteer of the Year



Nancy Posey displays plaque she received honoring her as the League's Volunteer of the Year. The plaque was awarded at a special tea for volunteers which was held in April.

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# Feline Urologic Syndrome (F.U.S.)

by Peter Farrell, D.V.M.  
Del Ray Animal Hospital

Feline Urologic Syndrome is an inflammation of the urethra and bladder of cats which, in males, often leads to a life-threatening obstruction of the urinary tract. A cat unable to urinate will suffer excruciating pain and eventual death due to kidney failure. Therefore, it is important that owners of male cats be able to recognize the symptoms of this disease. Prompt treatment is the best hope for a successful outcome.

Some cats form a sandlike grit in the bladder that can obstruct urine flow. While both males and females form this grit, females are usually able to pass it in the urine. Males, on the other hand, have a long, narrow urethra that is more easily blocked by this material. Thus, urine can build up in the bladder until the pressure finally causes the cat's kidneys to shut down. Death soon follows.

An alert pet owner can spot the signs that a problem is starting before it reaches a crisis point. Often the first symptom is urination in abnormal locations by a normally housebroken pet. Closer observation will usually show that the cat is straining to urinate but is voiding only small amounts. Many cat owners mistake this straining for constipation. *Before administering any laxatives, be sure your cat is able to urinate!*

Frequently, when a cat can void only small quantities of urine there are traces of blood in it and a strong ammonia-like odor. A cat that is having difficulty urinating may spend an excessive amount of time licking his penis or vocalizing while in the litter pan.

If a total blockage occurs, signs of kidney failure begin: loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, and dehydration. At this stage, touching the abdomen, even gently, will elicit a cry of pain. Unless he is treated immediately, the cat will have convulsions, slip into a coma and die.

Therefore, veterinary treatment early in the course of the disease offers the best chance for survival. The veterinarian usually will pass a catheter up the urethra and into the bladder to relieve the pressure. The bladder is then flushed with saline to remove as much grit as possible. At the same time, therapy is begun to prevent the formation of new crystals. If the blockage cannot be removed, a surgical approach may be recommended.

No one knows why some cats form

these crystals and others do not. The crystals themselves are usually composed of a mineral called magnesium phosphate. If a cat who is prone to crystal formation eats a diet high in magnesium, his chances of becoming blocked are much higher than those of such a cat eating food with restricted magnesium level.

Other factors, such as alkaline urine or a bacterial urinary tract infection, also can contribute to crystal formation and blockage. More culprits are urine retention caused by a dirty litter pan, inclement weather, confinement and even stress.

Owners can help prevent F.U.S. by feeding their cats a diet low in magnesium. Most of the so-called "super premium" brands of cat food fall into this category. They are available through veterinarians and pet stores. Other cat foods may be labeled low in "ash," which is a generic term used to describe their mineral content. Dry and soft-moist foods



low in ash are usually also low in magnesium. However, many "low ash" canned foods are actually low in other minerals while containing high amounts of magnesium. Nevertheless, many veterinarians recommend against feeding dry food to cats with a history of F.U.S. because cats need to eat a greater quantity of dry food to get the same number of calories. Thus, cats eating dry food usually ingest more magnesium than those eating canned foods.

While most pet cats are never affected by F.U.S., those that are require swift veterinary attention and careful dietary control to relieve the immediate problem and prevent recurrences.



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# League's Visiting Vet Program a Success

## Doctors regularly monitor Shelter animals' health

The Animal Welfare League has added another level to the animal care program at the Shelter. Under the Visiting Vet program, local veterinarians regularly visit the Shelter to monitor the health of our animals, and work with the Shelter staff to enhance their ability to identify disease and treat minor illnesses.

Kennel Manager Linda Johnson reports that the program has been very successful. Three veterinarians are currently in the program: Dr. Peter Farrell of the Del Ray Animal Hospital; Dr. Richard Hawe of the Alexandria Animal Hospital; and Dr. Mary Keisler of the Old Town Animal Hospital.

"All three veterinarians have been wonderful," says Ms. Johnson. "They come here for one reason—to help homeless animals. The only compensation they get is knowing that our animals are healthier and more comfortable because of their visits. Of course, we would be very grateful if one or two additional doctors could visit us, but right now we feel particularly fortunate because we have three of the best and most compassionate veterinarians in the area helping us."

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Jack Steele, *President*  
Joyce McDowell, *Editor*

## In Memoriam

Mrs. Inez Moore Hauber passed away on April 28.

In 1946 Mrs. Hauber and a small group of concerned citizens formed the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.

During the past 44 years, she served the League in many capacities, and remained a strong supporter of our programs until her recent death.

The League, the community, and the animal welfare movement have lost a dedicated friend whose contributions and commitment to homeless animals will long be remembered.

## Five Pets Saved from Neglectful Owner

It began with a report to Animal Control of a chow dog running at large with its throat cut. When an animal control officer captured the dog, it became evident that the wound was caused by a collar whose size had not been adjusted as the dog grew; the collar was embedded several inches into the flesh of the dog's neck and throat, resulting in a severe infection.

When the dog's owner was identified, formal charges of cruelty to animals were filed against her for the long-term neglect that had become life-threatening to the dog. After lengthy negotiations between attorneys representing the Commonwealth and the dog's owner, the owner agreed to surrender all her pets to the Animal Shelter. As a further prerequisite

to avoiding trial on cruelty charges, the owner also signed an agreement that she will own no more companion animals as long as she lives in the city of Alexandria.

Thanks to her veterinary care at Del Ray Animal Hospital, the chow, a red female, made an excellent recovery from her wounds and was recently adopted from the Shelter into a new and caring home.

The other pets surrendered by the original owner were a red male chow dog, a black longhair female cat, and her two longhair kittens. The mother cat is still at the Shelter awaiting a new and loving home, but the other pets in this case have already been adopted.

## Neglected Dog Finds New Friends, Home, Thanks to League 'Samaritan'

"It was very sad!" That's the way a League member described the sight she recently saw in the middle of the road. The dog, scared and confused, was right in the center of a busy highway, with cars coming at her in both directions.

The woman stopped her car, and after waving her arms to warn other drivers, she gently carried the animal to the side of the road.

"The poor creature was terrified," said the woman, "but somehow she seemed to realize that she had found a friend. The dog was very thin, as if she hadn't eaten in days—if not weeks—and she was covered with fleas and ticks. Her neck was raw where a too-tight collar or chain had once worn away the fur and much of the skin."

Having no collar or identifying marks, the dog was brought to the Shelter, where she was bathed to relieve her discomfort

from the fleas and ticks. Then she was immediately taken by the League to a veterinarian. Since there was no medical history available, a complete examination was ordered.

Tests indicated that there were no injuries or major organic problems, and although she was severely malnourished and had some very significant skin problems, the dog was otherwise in good health.

After a good rest and a follow-up medical examination, the dog, nicknamed "Charlie" by the woman who found her, was adopted into a loving home where she can spend her remaining years enjoying the peace and comfort that had apparently been denied her for so long.



*Dr. Ellen Evans of the Elpaw Veterinary Clinic is shown with Charlie, a gentle chow who was abused but now has a loving home with a new family.*

## VEPCO Employees Save Stranded Cat

Thanks to the generous help of two Virginia Power employees, Animal Control was able to rescue a stray kitten who had been stranded on a roof for two and a half days of record-breaking July heat.

Fortunately, a caring dispatcher at Virginia Power answered the animal control officer's call for help, and sent a repairman with a bucket truck to the site. With their help, Animal Control was able to reach the roof and bring the frightened kitten safely back to earth.

The kitten, a male five-month-old shorthair, black smoke in color, was slightly dehydrated and running a high fever as a result of his prolonged exposure. An overnight stay at a local veterinary hospital restored the kitten to good health.

## Traveling With Your Pet

Are you planning to take your dog or cat on your next jaunt to the Smokies? If you intend to stay in a motel in the Tarheel State, you'd better think again: North Carolina law prohibits the housing of pets in public lodging facilities.

That's just one of the many useful tidbits you'll find in *Touring with Towser*, a pamphlet listing hotels and motels nationwide which will welcome your four-legged companions when you seek lodging. The booklet, which lists these enlightened facilities by state and city, is revised every year or so to include updates. A blank sheet is even included so you can notify the publisher of your own "finds."

At \$1.50, it's a bargain for anyone who loves to travel with pets. To order, send a check or money order to Quaker Professional Services, 585 Hawthorne Court, Galesburg, IL 61401.

## Mark Your Calendar!

The League's Annual Dinner Meeting will be held on Thursday evening, October 25, 1990, at the American Legion Banquet Room in the Gadsby's Tavern building in Old Town Alexandria.

All League members and their guests are cordially invited to attend. Look for more information in the Fall edition of *Spotlight*.

### VIRGINIA-MARYLAND VETERINARY EMERGENCY SERVICE

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## Living with Wildlife: A Short Course

Alexandrians are indeed fortunate to live in a suburban area which is filled with the beauty of wildlife. However, each day the Shelter receives numerous calls from misinformed residents who are terrified at the mere sight of a raccoon, opossum or bat.

It is important to understand that these creatures are indigenous to this area and were here long before humans. As our neighborhood slowly became urbanized, so did our wildlife.

It is now common to see once-nocturnal wildlife out and about during the daylight. And many of these animal families found our chimneys and attics preferable to the trees where they once nested. Every day, frantic citizens call the Shelter demanding that healthy wildlife be trapped and removed.

While the actual traps themselves may

be humane, relocating the animal often is not, as its young may be left behind to slowly die, and the creatures already inhabiting the next territory may fight off the newcomer. Nor does trapping solve the problem. A home attractive to one raccoon will be equally attractive to all the others.

Our trained personnel can give you many suggestions on humane methods of deterring wildlife from your home. And we can answer your questions and alleviate your fears concerning our wild friends. As fall approaches, we urge our community to cap your chimneys and secure any openings to your homes to discourage our furry friends from making your home their winter nests.

In addition, we encourage you to learn to respect and live in harmony with the wild creatures who share our world.

## Be Kind to Animals Week Draws Much Community Support

The League's celebration of Be Kind to Animals Week (May 6-12) brought animal lovers from around the region to participate in photo sittings, a rabies clinic and tours of the Alexandria Animal Shelter.

Over a four-day period, over 200 pet owners brought their four-legged companions to the Shelter to be photographed by Michael Joseph, a pet photographer from North Carolina who generously donated all sitting fees to the Shelter.

Meanwhile, other visitors became acquainted with homeless Shelter animals, who enjoyed the extra doses of human companionship and attention. Several of the animals found new homes with families who took advantage of the specially extended Shelter hours that week.

A number of pet owners brought their dogs and cats to a special Sunday afternoon clinic where area veterinarians administered low-cost rabies injections.

Several Shelter visitors made donations to the Shelter and received drawing tickets for each dollar they contributed. The League is grateful to the area businesses who contributed prizes for the drawing.

The lucky winners and their prizes were as follows:

**Minnie Kaye**—dinner at Chadwick's Restaurant

**Jacquelin Straub**—pizza from Generous George's

**Marie Pointdujour**—free sitting service from Pets-At-Home

**Betsy Fowler**—\$25 gift certificate from Olde Towne School for Dogs

**Marcene Etchieson**—free bath/dip and 10% off boarding fee from For Pet's Sake

**Vinetta Anand**—a Be Kind to Animals Week t-shirt

### Deferrent Methods

Before you attempt to trap an animal, try these deterrents:

**Wildlife inside the home:** Place mothballs and containers of ammonia in the area. Leave bright lights on and play loud music. If the animal has young, it will relocate the babies to a new nest outside. Once the animals are gone, seal up any openings to prevent others from coming in.

**Wildlife in a chimney.** Do *not* light a fire in the fireplace! Smoke will cause the animal to lose consciousness and fall into the fire. Place a container of ammonia under the flue. You may hang a rope down into the chimney to help the animal climb out. Birds and infant animals may need to be removed by an Animal Control Officer. Once the animals are gone, cap the chimney.

**Outside your home:** Tightly secure garbage inside sturdy containers. Don't leave pet or other food outside. Add ammonia-soaked rags to the trash, and tie old stockings filled with mothballs to the handles of the trashcan. Sprinkle the contents of the can with cayenne pepper.

**Garden areas:** Sprinkle epsom salts on and around plants. Animals eating epsom salts will experience a temporary stomachache and diarrhea, but will learn to avoid the tainted area. You may also place ammonia-soaked rags and mothballs around the perimeter of your garden. Finally, noise from a radio will help to dissuade the animals from coming into your garden.

Please call the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria at 838-4775 if you have any questions concerning wildlife. We will be happy to help you.

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