



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT

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IN OUR 43rd YEAR

WINTER 1989

Did you know that the League has trained animal technicians on duty all night, every night, 365 days a year to respond to animal emergencies. If a stray animal's injuries are too serious for the technician to handle, the animal is rushed to a veterinarian.

Ok, what else does the League do? In addition to night emergency service for injured animals, the League conducts the adoption program for shelter animals (568 in 1988). We also have a humane education program. Our low cost spay/neuter program helps reduce the number of unwanted animals. We have a wildlife program that rehabilitates injured/orphaned wildlife, and then releases them back into the wild. We pay for veterinary care for sick or injured stray animals. We provide special vaccines for animals at the shelter. These are just some of the things that the League does . . . and we've been doing them since 1946.

Heartworm Season is approaching! Heartworm is a potentially fatal disease and is prevalent in Northern Virginia. It is essential that YOUR dog be checked for heartworm. Discuss with your veterinarian the proper procedure to protect your dog.

In an effort to reduce our expenses, the League has discontinued mailing receipts for the donations it receives. The money that we save on stationary and postage will go to projects that directly benefit animals. If any contributor would like to receive a receipt, please include a note with your donation, and of course we will promptly acknowledge your gift.

Sadly there is no end in sight to the terrible suffering inflicted on animals by mankind. If you would like to continue the struggle against animal abuse, even after you are gone, please consider including the Animal Welfare League in your will. If you have already made your will and have not included the League, perhaps you will consider revising it, and remember the League in some small way. Our legal name is the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Alexandria, VA. For additional information about the League, please call us at 370-4498. Thank you for caring about animals.

**Our 3rd Annual
St. Patrick's Day
FUN DOG SHOW
10 a.m., Saturday
March 11, 1989
(See Page 3)**

January '89 - Best Month Ever

Adoptions Increase



Sheila and Ted Drews of Alexandria share a moment of happiness with Daisy whom they recently adopted from the Shelter. Daisy, who had been abused by her previous owners, joins two other dogs in the Drews' Timberbranch Parkway home.

Good news! In 1988 the League found good homes for 568 animals. This is a big increase over the 1987 adoptions. The number of animals adopted was particularly high in the last four months of 1988, with an average of 54 per month. The high number of adoptions has continued into 1989 with January 1989 setting a new record of 68 animals going home; this is the most animals that we have ever placed in a single month.

We believe that the increase in the number of adoptions is attributable to many factors. The Shelter staff and the League workers all agree that the public has become more aware that there are bright, healthy, good-looking animals at the Shelter — animals that make wonderful pets. The League recently has taken a much more active role in publicizing shelter animals. We have placed numerous one-half page ads with pictures in the Gazette Packet Newspaper. Additionally, you might have seen another new feature of our adoption program, i.e., pictures of individual shel-

ter animals placed in retail establishments throughout the city; these color pictures are displayed in small plastic frames with a brief description of the animal. Also, in addition to our usual weekday and weekend home check, we are now offering "Home-Checks" of potential adoptors in the evenings. This makes the adoption process more convenient for adoptors, and of course it also expedites getting the adopted animals into their new homes quicker.

Of course, we are working hard not only to place as many animals as possible, but also to ensure that the animals are going into homes where they will receive good care for the rest of their lives. We offer pre-adoption counseling so that the new owners are aware of their responsibilities and we give advice on feeding, housetraining, and animal behavior.

If you know some one who is considering adding a pet to his/her family, please suggest that a visit to the Alexandria Animal Shelter is in order. Call 838-4775 for more information.

TOXOPLASMOSIS

By Ellen Evans, DVM
Elpaw Veterinary Clinic

Dr. Ellen Evans is one of three veterinarians at Elpaw Veterinary Clinic in Alexandria. She received a bachelors degree in Modern Languages from the College of William and Mary. The adoption of Sophia, a cat with many health problems, from the Fairfax County Shelter gave her the incentive to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. She received her DVM degree from Virginia Tech. in 1985 where she was a member of the Honor Society of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Evans is married and has a one year old son who loves dogs and cats. The Evans family has four cats, including Sophia who is now almost 12 years old and who rules the house.

Toxoplasma gondii (T.gondii) is a parasite which can infect humans. Therefore, it gets a lot of attention in the press, but is often misunderstood. Actually, it poses little risk to the general public and is easily avoided.

The parasite is a simple protozoal organism-which rarely causes disease in healthy animals or humans; many people have been exposed without even knowing it. The exceptions to the rule are individuals with weak immune systems such as AIDS victims, cancer chemotherapy patients, and unborn fetuses. Muscle and heart involvement and severe pneumonia are common sequelae to infection in immunocompromised patients. Fetal infections usually involve the nervous system and can cause such abnormalities as mental retardation or congenital eye disease.

25% - 40% of women of child-bearing age have been exposed to T. gondii and are immune to re-infection. Because initial exposure must take place during pregnancy in order to affect the fetus, babies of previously exposed women are protected. For non-immune mothers exposure during the first trimester has the most serious consequences, but infection is less likely to occur than it is during the last trimester.

The life cycle of T. gondii is very complex. Only the cat can host the entire cycle from beginning to end, but various parts of the cycle take place in many species. Cats who are exposed to the organism usually shed the infective egg (oocysts) in their feces once in their lives and only for about 14 days after the first exposure. Thereafter most are immune to re-exposure, but the organism can encyst in

body tissues and lie dormant. Stress or concurrent infections (such as feline leukemia) can then, in rare cases, cause susceptibility to reinfection or restimulate oocyst shedding. Toxoplasmosis in cats can be treated, but treatment may not eliminate the encysted organisms. Non-cat species will not shed oocysts in their stools, but can have T. gondii forms encysted in body tissues. Infection in any species can occur from ingesting the oocysts from cat feces, eating raw or undercooked meat with T. gondii encysted within it or transplacentally (mother to fetus).

Recommendations for Prevention

Ideally, if a woman is planning a family, she should be tested for T. Gondii antibodies prior to becoming pregnant. A positive test indicates previous exposure and immunity, which will protect the fetus. A negative test indicates no prior exposure and a need to be more cautious to prevent exposure during pregnancy.

The family cat can also be tested. If his blood test is negative he has probably not been exposed and is not immune. He should be kept inside and not fed raw meat for the entire pregnancy (of course these are good policies for your cat's well-being at any time). If his test is positive it can mean previous exposure or current infection. His blood test should be repeated in seven or more days to see if his antibody level (titer) is stable (a rising titer may suggest current infection) and his stool should be examined for evidence of shedding the organism. A previously exposed cat is usually immune and past the stage of being contagious, but it's still a good idea to keep him inside, use caution with his litter box, and maintain his health.

Here is a summary of recommendations: Dispose of cat feces daily (it takes several days for oocysts to be able to cause infection); keep cats inside; do not eat raw or undercooked meat (especially pork or lamb) or feed it to your cat; wash your hands thoroughly after preparing meat and before eating; wear gloves when gardening; cover childrens sandboxes when not in use; high risk people (pregnant or immunosuppressed) should not clean the litter box or, if there is no alternative, gloves should be worn; avoid adopting stray cats during pregnancy.

Ed. Note: Our sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Mary Keisler who wrote our Vet's Corner column in the past. Her articles were always well written and extremely interesting. We sincerely appreciate her taking time from a very busy schedule to help us with SPOTLIGHT ON ANIMALS. Thanks, Dr. Keisler.

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Lee Gough died suddenly on Oct. 25, 1988, at her home in Falls Church. Mrs. Gough was a long time member of The Animal Welfare League, a member of its Board of Directors for over 20 years, and a past president. Her late husband, Joe, was also a past president. The League, the community, and the entire animal welfare movement have lost a loyal and dedicated friend.

DON'T WEAR FUR

The newspapers are filled with the ads; we hear it constantly on the radio — Buy a Fur Coat: It's elegant; it's chic; it says you've "arrived." What we don't hear is a description of the horrible suffering inflicted on defenseless animals for greed and vanity. The greed is that of the fur industry which is willing to brutalize and torture innocent animals, to literally strip the skins off their backs. Of course, the fur industry is financially fueled by the vanity of people who somehow believe that they achieve status by wearing the skins of tortured animals.

More than 100 million innocent animals are killed each year by gassing, electrocution, strangulation, neck breaking, clubbing and leghold trapping . . . all for people to indulge in the beauty of their fur. As you read this article, try to visualize the indescribable suffering of thousands of animals who AT THIS MOMENT have their legs caught in a steel jaw leghold trap. They are there NOW, enduring horrible pain, hungry, freezing, terrified, confused, dying. WHY?

What can you do to help stop this absolutely senseless tragedy? Don't wear fur. Don't compliment, or give approval to individuals who do wear fur. Try to get others to reject the idea that fur is fashionable. Just as it has become common to see "Thank You For Not Smoking" signs, let's encourage "No Furs Please" notices on social invitations, and in retail establishments. Tell your legislators that you support antitrapping legislation. Do everything you can to "deglamorize" the wearing of furs. Let's all try to stop this senseless, unnecessary torture of animals.

Ad Campaign Continues

SPONSORS NEEDED

The Animal Welfare League continues to place one-half page ads in the Gazette Packet Newspaper with pictures of shelter animals available for adoption. We began the ad campaign last September in an effort to make people aware that there are healthy, bright, "personality-plus" dogs and cats living at the Shelter, desperately wanting homes. These ads have been extremely successful and have resulted in many animals being placed in good homes. Without the ads, many of these animals would not have been adopted and would have been euthanized.

If you would like to help us find good homes for Shelter animals by sponsoring one of these ads please call us at 370-4498. If your business or association would like to sponsor an entire ad we will prominently display your name or logo in the ad. Dedicating such an ad to a deceased relative who loved animals, or perhaps to your own deceased pet would be an appropriate memorial. Remember, you'll be helping those unfortunate little creatures who, through no fault of their own, are living at the Shelter and are facing a very uncertain future.

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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Annual Fun Dog Show

Mark Saturday, March 11, 1989 on your calendar! That's the day the Animal Welfare League, in cooperation with the Ballyshanners will again sponsor the Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show at Market Square, 301 King St., in Old Town Alexandria. The show will begin at 10 a.m., and will be a major attraction in the all-day Irish festivities. Last year's show had 113 dogs in competition and attracted an audience of over 1200 people.

Our show this year will have 25 categories including: The Largest Dog, The Dog With The Longest Tail, The "Most Irish" Dog, The Dog With The Longest Ears, The Dog

With The Most Unusual Eyes, The Dog With The Curliest Tail, The Smallest Dog, plus many others. A new feature this year will be "Star Look-A-Like" competition; categories will include Spuds McKenzie, Lassie, Rin Tin Tin, plus others. There will also be special categories for dogs which have been adopted from animal shelters. Every dog will receive a certificate, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons will be awarded to the winners in each category.

In addition to the competition the League will have Humane Education, Spay/Neuter, Adoption, and other displays at Market Square. Also, there will be a photographer to take a picture of you and your dog. After the Fun Dog Show, everyone — with or without your dog — is invited to march with the League in the afternoon St. Patrick's Day Parade.

If you have a dog bring him/her to the competition; if you don't have a dog, come down to Market Square, have a doughnut and a cup of coffee with us, and watch the show.

"I NEED A HOME"



I'm a beautiful 2½ year old Poodle mix. I think I'm a very special dog. I've been spayed, I'm house-trained, and I've had all my shots. I get along great with everyone, and I really love children. I'm ready to go home with a nice Alexandria family. . . my leash, water bowl and biscuit are packed. Come to the shelter to see me. PLEASE HURRY!

MEMBERSHIP

In early January, we sent letters to all our members asking them to renew their memberships for 1989. 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 have not 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 very limited. Please help us. 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 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.

A Dog's Plea

Treat me kindly, my beloved friend, for no heart in all the world is more grateful for kindness than the loving heart of me.

Do not break my spirit with a stick, for though I should lick your hand between blows, your patience and understanding will more quickly teach me the things you would have me learn.

Speak to me often, for your voice is the world's sweetest music, as you must know by the fierce wagging of my tail when your footstep falls upon my waiting ear.

Please take me inside when it is cold and wet, for I am a domesticated animal, no longer accustomed to bitter elements. I ask no greater glory than the privilege of sitting at your feet beside the hearth.

Keep my pan filled with fresh water, for I cannot tell you when I suffer thirst.

Feed me clean food that I may stay well, to romp and play and do your bidding, to walk by your side, and stand ready, willing and able to protect you with my life, should your life be in danger.

And, my friend, when I am very old, and I no longer enjoy good health, hearing and sight, do not make heroic efforts to keep me going. I am not having any fun. Please see that my trusting life is taken gently. I shall leave this earth knowing with the last breath I draw that my fate was always safest in your hands.

Husband and Wife Behind Bars

Cruelty To Animals = Jail

Last August, in response to neighbors' complaints, animal wardens discovered 34 dogs locked in a house on Raymond Ave., in the Del Ray Section of Alexandria. When the wardens entered the house the dogs were without food or water, and were living in "four to six inches of urine and feces." The owners of the house were convicted of cruelty to animals, were fined, and were sentenced to 30 days in jail. Numerous legal motions by the defendants were denied, and they began serving their sentences on January 29, 1989.

We sincerely hope that this case portends more vigorous prosecution, and more severe sentencing in animal cruelty cases.

Spaying and Neutering

by Nikki Beyer

The Facts on Spaying and Neutering

Dog and cat overpopulation is a tremendous problem in this country. Approximately 3000 dogs and cats are born each hour - more than 30 million each year. An estimated 7½ million dogs and cats are destroyed each year because they are unwanted.

Every pet owner should be aware that if a dog or cat has four offspring a year (one small litter), two of them female, and each of these females has four offspring a year, two of them female, by the seventh year, the original mother will have 4372 descendants. Obviously every litter counts.

Spaying and neutering refer to two of the most common operations performed in all veterinary hospitals. Females are spayed and males are neutered. Spaying involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus; neutering, removal of the testicles. The operations are performed under a general anesthetic, so the animal feels no pain. Most veterinarians keep the animal one to two nights after surgery and after a few days of rest at home, the pet is back to normal.

Pets should be spayed/neutered as early as possible. Veterinarians recommend that a female be spayed before her first heat period (around six months of age) and a male to be neutered at six to nine months of age.

Please pickup after your dog. It will help reduce canine disease, and your neighbors will appreciate it. Remember, it's not only the courteous thing to do, but in Alexandria, it's the LAW!

The Animal Welfare
League of Alexandria, Va., Inc.
P.O. Box 20050
Alexandria, VA 22320-1050

Myths and Misconceptions

Many pet owners have misconceptions about spaying/neutering.

MYTH: "The miracle of birth will be a learning experience for my children." Animals seek quiet, private places to give birth. Litters are usually born when no one is around, at night, in secluded spots. Sex education at the expense of the lives produced is not a miracle but a lesson in irresponsibility.

MYTH: "If my female has one litter she'll be a better pet." There is no medical proof to support this belief. Spaying can improve her disposition and make her a better pet.

MYTH: "Spaying will hurt my animal." This simply is not true. Spaying is a safe operation, performed painlessly while your dog or cat is under general anesthesia. For a few days after surgery there may be some discomfort, but this is part of the normal healing process.

MYTH: "I can make some money." Reputable breeders will attest to the fact that breeding an animal is expensive: additional high-quality food for the pregnant and nursing mother; veterinary care before and after birth; food, wormings, and vaccinations for the litter; the cost of advertising; and the competition is stiff.

MYTH: "Keeping animals from having litters is interfering with nature." We have already interfered with nature by domesticating dogs and cats. Domesticated animals mate more often and have larger litters than their wild ancestors, but they cannot survive as well.

Health Benefits

Aside from helping control the overpopulation problem, spaying/neutering promotes many long-term health benefits. Some of the problems avoided by spaying/neutering include:

Uterine Disease: the uterus is a common site of cancer and hormonal/infectious disease. When it is removed all risk of these life-threatening diseases is removed.

Breast Cancer: the chance of breast cancer is virtually eliminated by spaying before the first heat period. Some statistics show that over 40% of unspayed dogs will develop breast cancer. Cats have fewer breast tumors, but when they do, they are nearly always malignant. Spaying almost eliminates this risk.

Male Genital problems: over 50% of older dogs develop enlarged prostates. This is a very painful disorder. The incidence is greatly lowered by neutering. In fact, the therapy of choice for the condition is neutering. Prostate tumours are much less frequent in neutered pets - and testicular tumours are totally eliminated.

The decision to spay/neuter a pet is one that is both responsible and cost effective. To assist area pet owners with this important operation, the Alexandria Animal Welfare League offers a low-cost spay/neuter in conjunction with local veterinarians. Call 838-5042 for more information.

*NEXT TO YOU, YOUR PET'S BEST
FRIEND IS YOUR VETERINARIAN.*

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