



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 45th YEAR

WINTER 1991

It's time to start thinking about Christmas gifts. Why not an Animal Welfare League sweatshirt or T-shirt? They are made of high-quality material, and come in a variety of colors and sizes—from children's to extra large. Visit the Shelter and look them over. They make wonderful gifts, and you'll be helping injured and homeless animals with every purchase.

One of the best things you can do for your dog or cat is to have him/her neutered. This operation will not only greatly decrease your pet's chances of developing cancer and many other medical problems, but in many cases it will improve the animal's disposition. Please, talk to your veterinarian about this very safe surgical procedure. It's the best Christmas present that you could give to your pet.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria was founded in 1946. For 44 years we've been working hard to alleviate the suffering of homeless and injured animals. One of the best ways you can assist in this important work is to remember us in some small way in your will. It's one of the few ways that you can continue to help suffering animals even after you are gone.

If you allow your cat to roam, remember that you are gambling with his/her life.

The life expectancy of the indoor cat is over twice that of an indoor-outdoor cat.

Discuss with your veterinarian the dangers and diseases to which an indoor-outdoor cat is exposed.

Finally, a note on winter: Please don't leave your pet outdoors unattended in bad weather. Keep his coat dry, and remember: the salt and harsh chemicals used on roads and sidewalks in winter can be harmful. So be sure to clean his paws regularly. You'll have a healthier, happier pet.

The League and the Shelter staff wish you and yours a joyous holiday season!



Dec. 1 and 2 at Olde Towne School for Dogs

Pet Portraits with Santa Claus

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria and the Olde Towne School for Dogs will cosponsor "Pet Portraits with Santa—1990." This is the second year that this event will be held. Last year's two-day photo event was an overwhelming success, with over 200 individual sittings. This year there will be two sessions, Saturday, December 1, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., and Sunday, December 2, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Both sessions will be held at the Olde Towne School for Dogs, 529 Oronoco Street, Old Town Alexandria.

The Olde Towne School will be decorated for the Christmas season, and Santa will be sitting on his chair surrounded by red and white poinset-

tias, waiting for you and your pet. Carol Harrison, a well known professional photographer, and another local photographer will donate their services and will take all the photos. Carlos Mejias, the owner and director of the Olde Towne School for Dogs, who is very generously donating his building and his time, will help pose every animal.

The photo package will consist of one 8" x 10", two 5" x 7" and four wallet-size prints, all in brilliant color. The cost for the entire package is only \$19.95. All proceeds will be donated to the Animal Welfare League to help injured and homeless animals.

Individuals or entire families may
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The Itching Pet



by Don S. Wilson, D.V.M.
Director, Alexandria
Animal Hospital

One of the most frequent complaints that pet owners express to veterinarians is that their pet is scratching constantly. The itch is so persistent that the pet isn't resting—and neither is the owner. Frequently these pets are brought in after the owner has spent a sleepless night listening to the dog or cat scratch and bite at its skin.

There are many causes of itching in the dog and cat, but the most common one is the *flea*. Most pets have fleas during the summer and fall months and are uncomfortable from the flea bites. Others are miserable! These unfortunate pets are so allergic to the flea bite that they react very strongly to even one bite. This sort of allergy is due to the pet's immune system reaction to the flea's saliva, which is injected when the flea bites.

Dogs allergic to flea bites commonly bite at their tails and inside their thighs, leaving the skin red and raw and susceptible to infection. Cats frequently develop small scabs and sores with severe itching and self-trauma.

An easy way to see whether your pet has fleas is to place it on a white sheet and comb the fur or fluff it with your hands. Small black specks will appear on the sheet if fleas are present. An inexpensive flea comb will also aid in the detection and removal of these pests.

Treatment for the allergic pet begins with control of the flea population. It's important to remember that the fleas must be attacked on three fronts: the pet, the house, and the

outside environment. In addition to controlling the fleas, most pets require medication—either by injection or orally, or both—to control the severe itching and damage to their skin. Your veterinarian can help you plan a treatment program which can offer both you and your pet some relief.

The second reason your pet is likely to itch is *allergies*, which indicate an overreaction of the body's immune system to a foreign substance. While in people allergies usually result in hay fever symptoms of the upper respiratory system, in dogs and cats they are most likely to cause itchy skin.

Atopy (inhalant allergic disease) is a frequent complaint. This disease causes the pet to rub its face, eyes and ears and scratch intensely at different parts of its body. Pets with this type of allergy often are most affected



during certain seasons of the year. If the pet is allergic to a substance such as house dust, it will be affected year round.

Seasonal allergic skin problems can be controlled with antihistamines or steroids or a combination of the two. These are very powerful drugs and should be used only under the direct supervision of your veterinarian. If the pet has problems throughout the year, it is time to consider allergy testing. Veterinary dermatologists can perform skin tests to identify what the pet is allergic to. Then a serum can be made to control the pet's



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allergic response.

The symptoms of *food allergies* are often the same as those of inhalant allergy, which can present a diagnostic challenge. Food allergies usually produce itchy skin, not stomach or intestinal problems as might be expected. The pet with food allergies may not have any skin problem other than itching.

Food allergies are not as common as the other causes of itching. The pet can be allergic to its regular diet or to treats that it has been given. Testing for food allergies involves an elimination diet supervised by your veterinarian. It will take at least a month to determine whether a food allergy is the culprit.

Bacterial hypersensitivity, another cause of itching in both dogs and cats, occurs when a pet becomes allergic to normal bacteria living on their skin. As the animal scratches, it damages the skin, promoting further invasion of the bacteria that caused the itching in the first place. It is important that the animal be treated with antibiotics to control infection, sometimes for an extended period of time.

Besides fleas, there are several types of mites that can cause itching in the dog and cat. Ear mites, for example, can cause itching of the ears, face and head. It is easily treated with ear drops and insecticides applied to the body. Other mites, such as mange mites, can cause severe itching as well. Your veterinarian can take skin scrapings and examine them microscopically for the parasite. These mites can be treated easily once the diagnosis is made. Ticks can cause local itching, but it is usually not severe and doesn't require treatment once the tick is removed.

It is important to remember that there are many reasons your pet may scratch. Your veterinarian can help relieve your pet's suffering and allow both of you a good night's sleep.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
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Jack Steele, *President*
Joyce McDowell, *Editor*

71% Increase

Adoptions at All-Time High

The Animal Welfare League is very pleased to report that animal adoptions are at an all-time high. For the 13-month period that the League has operated the Shelter, animal adoptions increased 71 percent over the preceding 13-month period. This increase is due to a combination of factors.

The Shelter is open more hours, including Sundays. Our home visits are scheduled at the convenience of the adoptors; we conduct them seven days a week, at just about any time of the day, including evenings. We have a well-trained, professional staff who are qualified to assist potential adoptors in the selection of a pet.

Although the Shelter building is

antiquated and structurally deficient in many ways, we work very hard to keep it clean; the results are healthier animals, and a more attractive environment for adoptors to meet potential new members of their families.

All League adoption policies, including home visits, are in strict accordance with the guidelines of the two national humane organizations, the American Humane Association and The Humane Society of the United States.

In a recent evaluation of the Shelter, our adoption program was singled out for special praise for its thoroughness and its low percentage of animals returned to the Shelter after being adopted.

Shelter Focus

Lisa Brusaw Administrative Assistant

The Alexandria Animal Shelter owes its efficiency in part to the hard work of one of the Shelter's Administrative Assistants, Lisa Brusaw. Originally from sunny California, she

began working with the Shelter in July 1990. Lisa's deep interest in animals and her fine "people" skills have indeed made a positive impact on the Shelter and the animals entrusted to our care.

The next time you call or visit the Shelter, ask for Lisa. She can help you select the right pet for your home and answer your questions.



Fun Dog Show Set for March 9

We are already starting to receive calls asking if there will be another St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show in 1991. The answer is a resounding YES!

Planning has already begun and the date has been set: Saturday morning, March 9, at Market Square in Old Town. The Fun Dog Show will be part of the all-day St. Patrick's Day festivities sponsored by the Ballyshanners, a local Irish-American organization. Look for more information in our Spring newsletter.

YES! I care about animals and I want to support the League in its work.

Enclosed is my check for my 1990 membership dues.

\$15 Individual \$25 Family Special gift \$ _____

Name _____

Street address _____ Apt. no. _____

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The League is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization established in 1946.

Please return your contribution to:
Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
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Half It All!

Once again the League is selling the Entertainment coupon books. The Entertainment '91 Book is loaded with coupons good for savings at restaurants, motels, sporting events, auto rentals and much more. The coupon books are available for \$35 at the Alexandria Shelter and at participating pet shops, veterinary clinics, and hospitals throughout the region. Call the Shelter at 838-4775 for the name of a location near you.

Proceeds from your purchase will benefit the homeless and injured pets entrusted to our care at the Shelter.

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Largest Turnout Ever

Annual Dinner Is Big Success

The banquet hall in the historic Gadsby's Tavern building was filled to capacity on October 25 as the Animal Welfare League held its annual dinner and general membership meeting. The extremely large turnout reflected the dramatic increase in League membership during the past year, and the increased concern on the part of Alexandria citizens for animal welfare.

Among local City officials attending the event were Mayor Jim Moran, Vice Mayor Patsy Ticer, City Council members Bill Cleveland and Del Pepper, State Delegate Marian Van Landingham, City Manager Vola Lawson, Deputy Chief of Police John Streeter, Commander of Police Special Operations Lt. Harry Lane, and Sgt. Ron Graves of Police Special Operations. Sixteen area veterinarians participated in the evening's festivities, as well as many members of the Alexandria business and professional community.

The evening's activities included a presentation by Mr. Pat Halpin of the architectural firm of Wiesnewski Blair. Mr. Halpin is the firm's project manager for the proposed new animal shelter. He presented architectural drawings of the shelter, which will be a state-of-the-art, totally in-



Dr. Richard S. Hawe (center) was honored for his many contributions to animal welfare. Presenting the plaque was Jack Steele, President of the Board of the League. At right is Shelter Director Brenda Purvis.

door facility which will meet the City's needs well into the 21st Century. Because everything will be indoors, including all kennels, runs, and cages, there will be absolutely no noise, odor, or pollution of any kind.

The principal speaker of the evening was Richard S. Hawe, DVM, of the Alexandria Animal Hospital. Dr. Hawe's presentation, "Veterinary Medicine in the 1990s," focused on recent high-tech advances in veterinary medicine. The League presented Dr. Hawe with a plaque in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to animal welfare in the City of Alexandria.

Pet Portraits

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pose with their pets, or the pets may pose by themselves with Santa. Both dogs and cats are welcome, and every animal will receive a gift of "treats" from Santa.

Photographs will be taken by appointment only. Call the Olde Towne School for Dogs, 836-7643, to make your appointment.

Remember: Last year all appointments were filled, and we even had a waiting list, so call early!

**Animal Welfare League
of Alexandria, Va., Inc.**
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