



CRITTERS!

Newsletter of
South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital

Winter/Holiday
Special Issue 2023

A Few Minutes with Dr. Wesley and Dr. VanKeuren

We've all seen ads where an irresistible puppy or kitten is a surprise under the tree. What do Dr. Wesley and Dr. VanKeuren say?

First of all, do not pack a dog or cat in a gift-wrapped box or try to stuff him or her into a stocking!

Second of all, no matter how delighted the family seems to be in those TV ads, a pet should never be a surprise to anyone in the household. The whole family should not only agree to having a pet, they should agree on the choice.

Although this general agreement is important for the household, the primary caregivers should be present whenever a choice is being considered, as presumably they will be the acknowledged owners, and this fact should be agreed upon ahead of time.

The expense of a pet should also be a primary consideration. In addition to the shelter's fee for a rescue or the cost of a dog from a breeder, there will be ongoing expenses, most immediately for two to four rounds of "puppy shots," as well as food, preventive treatments, and provisions such as leashes, collars, beds, etc.

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Naughty Dog Fergus

Christmas Special

Whew! Just when everything around the house seemed to be getting into a nice routine, Honey and Charlie, my humans, went into the attic and brought down a lot of big boxes and stuck them in the living room.

Charlie opened one box and started taking things out, and whatever was in there seemed to make him quite irritable, nothing like his ordinary easygoing self. In fact, he used some language that made Honey stop what she was doing and talk to him in that soothing way she talks to me when we're cuddling, and then he calmed down. I don't remember what the upset was about. I heard the word "untangle."

Charlie went back to work, and when he was finished with whatever it was in the box, he got his ladder from the garage and went outside to work. He was out there for quite a while. After dinner, he and Honey went to the front door, and Charlie clicked a switch, and lights went on all over the front of the house. Honey clapped her hands and said how wonderful it looked, and I got into the swing of things and barked to let them know I also thought it was very nice.

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A Few Minutes with Dr. Wesley And Dr. VanKeuren (cont'd)

Pet insurance is now available and can give new pet owners peace of mind about any issues that may arise.

As far as adopting a pet during the holiday season, the family should consider what they will be doing and where. If they're not traveling, this can actually work well, because the family will be home more than usual and can spend more time with the new pet.

The AKC and American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) are both good websites to answer the thousand questions new pet owners have, and researching answers can be a great way to involve everyone in the pet's care. A child should have parental supervision when the pet comes into the household to ensure the proper interaction between child and animal.

When everyone has agreed about a new pet for Christmas, and the search begins, what happens if you check out a shelter in November and find the perfect dog or cat waiting for you there? Or what if everyone goes to meet the breeder in early December and everyone agrees that one certain pup is "the one"? When you find the right pet, seize the moment! Then have his or her gifts waiting under the tree, such as toys, a cozy bed, or a new leash.



"Maezi the Elf Eating Santa's Cookies"
© Two Little Dogs 2019

Naughty Dog Fergus (cont'd)

The next day, Honey had her own strange activities, and spent a long, long time working in the kitchen. Whatever she was working on, it smelled wonderful. When Charlie came into the kitchen, he said, "This one's broken!" but he didn't sound upset about it at all. In fact, he sounded very happy, and he held it up and then ate it! I don't know why he wanted to eat something that was broken. When Honey finished working, she flopped down on the sofa where I joined her, and we both had a nice snooze.

About those big boxes in the living room, every night for a week Honey and Charlie would open a box or two and spread the contents around the house. There were lots of lights and sparkling things, but the strangest thing they did was bring a real tree into the house and set it up right in the middle of the living room.

At first, I did not understand this at all, because Honey and Charlie have worked very hard to get me to do my business outside among the trees. You can easily understand why I assumed that they had brought a tree inside the house to make it easier for me when it was raining or hot or cold outside, but no, they definitely were not happy when I tried to use the tree for that purpose. In fact, they built a little barrier on the floor around the bottom of the tree in case I forget.

I have no idea what they are trying to accomplish with all this activity.

Human behavior can be very hard to understand.

Winter Wellness Checklist

The holiday season brings some specific concerns for pet care:

Do dogs need sweaters? In exceptionally cold weather, a dog might be more comfortable outdoors in a sweater, especially a dog with a thin coat.

Dogs that are accustomed to spending more time outdoors than indoors should always have a safe, insulated shelter from wind, rain, and cold.

Just as paws can burn on hot asphalt, paws can be frostbitten on icy asphalt. Paws can also become irritated from walking through frozen grass as well. Boots for pets are available.

In general, cats are less cold-tolerant than dogs, and should be monitored.

The excitement and noise of a holiday party can be stressful for your pets. Give them a quiet area away from the main part of the house. If a pet has been crate-trained, he or she would probably feel more secure in this “retreat” in a quiet bedroom. (We will discuss crate-training in a future issue.)

If you have observed that your pet becomes distressed during social get-togethers, ask the veterinarian about medication for such occasions.

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**“Auggie & Maezi
on Christmas Morning”**
© Two Little Dogs 2013

Auggie and Maezi were the stars of the yearly Christmas cards from Gregg Miner and Jaci Rohr. The cards featured their dogs as the actors in a story with homemade costumes and sets. The dogs really did pose for the pictures and there was very little photoshop modification.

Ask the Veterinarian

A pet owner asks:

In our neighborhood we see deer, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits and mice. We also have a feeder for wild birds in our backyard. What kinds of parasites are the dogs being exposed to, and what can we do to protect them?

Dr. Wesley says:

Generally speaking, dogs and cats become infected by parasites either by ingesting them or by being bitten by an insect—a flea, tick, or mosquito—that is carrying the parasite.

On a walk, a dog may pick up hookworm eggs or larvae on his paws, and then ingest the parasite by licking his paws. Tapeworms can be acquired by eating a flea. A mosquito bite can infect a dog with heartworms. Fleas and ticks can “lie in wait” in underbrush, waiting for a warm-blooded animal to walk by.

There are a myriad of prescription-grade flea/tick/heartworm/intestinal parasite preventatives that work for varying lengths of time and have different price points. What’s most important is finding one that keeps your pet protected and is well tolerated.

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Winter Wellness Checklist (cont'd)

Special foods come into the house now, including more candy and sweets than usual. Sweets are harmful to pets, and chocolate is especially toxic. Never leave dishes of candy or cookies where your pet can reach them. A locked or "child-proofed" cabinet is ideal for storing these temptations. If your dog or cat has eaten sweets, call the veterinarian.

Like humans, pets tend to gain weight through the winter due to reduced activity, but unlike humans, they have someone controlling their caloric intake. Be kind to your pets: don't let them gain weight.

Other nutritional concerns during this season are dry skin and allergy flares. Ask the veterinarian about supplements.



"Auggie & Maezi Celebrate Winterfest"

© Two Little Dogs 2017

Ask the Veterinarian (cont'd)

For vaccinations here in Huntsville, we recommend:

Dog Core Vaccines:

DAPPV, which is a combination vaccine for distemper virus, adenovirus (type 1 and 2), parainfluenza, and parvovirus, all of which can be picked up in the environment or be spread through direct contact;

Rabies Vaccine, which prevents rabies virus infection and is **required by state law**;

Leptospirosis, a vaccination for a type of bacteria that is endemic to our region and can cause liver and kidney failure. Animals can pick it up in standing water or even grass.

Dog Risk-Based Vaccines:

If your dog is coming into contact with other dogs regularly or is in environments with a high density of animals, we recommend:

Bordetella (kennel cough) vaccine;

Canine Influenza vaccine (bivalent)

Cat Core Vaccines:

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis (herpesvirus), *Panleukopenia* and *Calicivirus* vaccine, which protects against a host of upper respiratory and systemic viral pathogens;

Rabies vaccine, which prevents rabies virus infection and is **required by state law**.

Cat Risk-Based Vaccines:

Feline Leukemia vaccine – prevents infection with a feline leukemia virus (cancer, immune deficiency, blood disorders) that can only be spread by direct contact with an infected feline.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION YOU'D LIKE FEATURED IN A FUTURE NEWSLETTER?

Send your question to: shvhvet@southhuntsvillevethospital.com

Critters! is a publication of South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital.
 Wesley Clendinen, DVM Lauren VanKeuren, DVM
 8416 Memorial Parkway SW, Huntsville, AL 35802
SHVHVet@southhuntsvillevethospital.com
256.223.3230

Editor: Pauli Carnes
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