



# CRITTERS!

Newsletter of  
South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital

Spring 2024



## A Few Minutes with Dr. Wesley



There is good news about an effective and long-lasting medication approved for osteoarthritis in dogs and cats. Librela is the canine medication, and Solensia is the feline; both are monoclonal antibody treatments and have shown limited side effects.

The sudden uptick of “mystery acute-onset” respiratory illness in dogs that showed up last summer through late fall, largely in the northeast and northwest parts of the country now appears to have subsided. No cases have been documented in Alabama, but we will continue to monitor for recurrence.

### In This Issue:

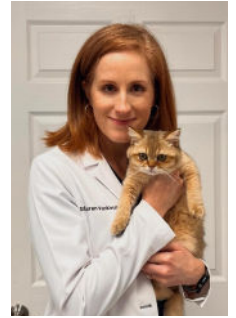
- A Few Minutes with Dr. Wesley
- A Few Minutes with Dr. VanKeuren
- Ask The Vet
- Chapter Two of “**Naughty Dog Fergus**”
- Spring Wellness Checklist
- The Cary Legacy

COMING IN OUR SUMMER ISSUE:

**CRATE TRAINING**

## A Few Minutes with Dr. VanKeuren

Cats are delightfully curious, always investigating their surroundings, so we need to be aware of the dangers of toxicity in our home and environs. Lilies, among other flowers, are especially toxic to cats, so avoid bringing them indoors.



With the weather warming up, we do see fleas, even on “indoor only” cats. Be sure they’re up to date on prescription flea prevention.

If you come across injured wildlife, whether on a walk in your neighborhood or on a hike, a list of local rehabilitators can be found here:

<https://www.outdooralabama.com/wildlife-rehabilitation/current-wildlife-rehabbers>

Volunteering to help injured wildlife is very rewarding, and these groups can tell you how to get involved if you’re interested.

Another resource for rescuing injured wildlife is:

**Huntsville Animal Services** at 1 256/883-3782

If you find an injured bird of prey, I recommend contacting:

**Auburn University Raptor Center:** 1 334/844-6943

One caution: if you come across a baby animal alone but not injured, leave it in place. Its mother is probably out foraging and will come back to feed it.

## Ask The Vet

“My dog was rescued from an abandonment situation and has always been very ‘clingy’ with us. We have to leave town for a few days. I don’t want to take him to a boarding facility, because I don’t want him to think he’s being abandoned again. What do you recommend?”

**Dr. Wesley says:**

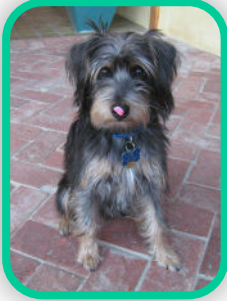
Have you considered a friend who might be available to house sit? If the house sitter is already known to your dog, even better. If you don’t know anyone, ask your friends or your veterinarian for a recommendation. If the sitter is not someone you know personally, he or she should spend time at your house getting acquainted with your dog while you’re still there.

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## **Naughty Dog Fergus**

### Chapter Two



We had a wonderful time over the holidays and through the winter.

It turned out that Honey and Charlie, my two humans, have grown-up sons, Chaz and Jack, who live far away. They came for a long visit around Christmas, and they were a lot of fun.

They were both surprised that Honey and Charlie had adopted me, so Honey told them all about going to the shelter and choosing me—I let her think that, even though I chose *her*—and how they chose the name “Fergus,” which means “highest choice” (an excellent description, by the way).

Chaz called me “Fergus Schmergus,” and “Schmergoo,” and he liked to rough-house with me. He’d grab one of my fiber toys and we’d have a tug of war, and he would actually growl just like I do. Honey would say, “Chaz, he’s just a little dog!” and he’d stop rough-housing and pretend to ignore me, and then I’d have to jump into his lap and start again. Chaz would say, “See? He likes playing this way, Mom.” Honey would shake her head and say, “Well just be careful.” Chaz was always careful. That’s why I always wanted to play with him.

Jack didn’t play, but he loved to take long, long walks with me, so I had a great time with Jack, too. I really missed them when they left. Our house is really nice, though, and there is still a lot to do even without Chaz and Jack. We have lots of glass doors and windows so I can watch what’s going on outside, like the birds and squirrels in the yard. When I try to look out there at night, however, the only thing to see is one dog, and he always sits right in front of me, looking into the house. I bark and jump up at the glass to scare him off, but he just barks and jumps back at me the same way. I even found him upstairs one day, on the other side of the mirror in the bedroom. Now I just ignore him.

There were a lot of chew toys at the house when Honey first brought me home, like the legs on the wooden table, throw pillows on the sofa, and several pairs of shoes in the closet. Charlie had some especially delicious white cowboy boots. Finally, Honey brought home a big bag of special chew toys and treats, and we agreed that they wouldn’t play with my chew toys and I wouldn’t chew on any of their stuff.

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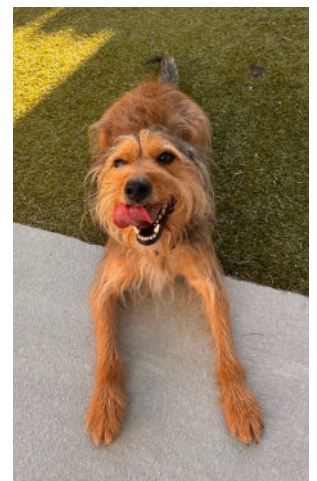


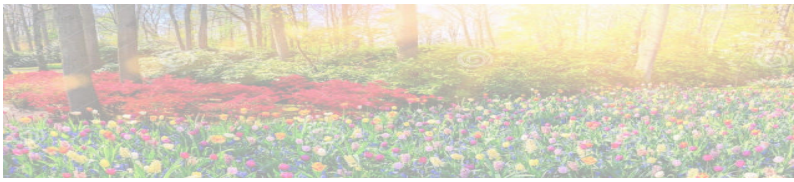
### **Ask The Vet (cont’d)**

As a general rule, there is no general rule about boarding a pet. Dogs and cats, like people, have a wide spectrum of responses to social situations, and our pets will surprise us by what they will and will not enjoy. In our next issue, we’ll discuss crate training, which most dogs love but most humans find difficult to understand.

**Send your question to “Ask the Vet”**

[SHVHvet@southhuntsvillevet.com](mailto:SHVHvet@southhuntsvillevet.com)





## Spring Wellness Checklist

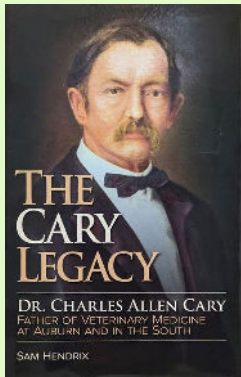
Gardeners will be out preparing and planting, including using various chemicals that may be harmful to your dog or cat. After applying any lawn or garden treatments, wait at least 24 hours before allowing your pet to walk on the treated area, and ideally water the lawn at least briefly to help the chemicals soak in. Keep all containers out of reach of pets and children.

Your pet may become distressed by thunderstorms. Consider providing a “Thundershirt,” which may have a calming effect.

If your dog feels safe in his or her crate or a certain room in the house during a loud storm, you might try opening the door (and keeping it open so that your dog doesn’t feel trapped). If your pet is typically anxious, especially if he or she tends to be destructive, ask the vet about medication.

Heat stroke is an entirely preventable warm weather danger for pets. Dogs don’t have sweat glands anywhere except the soles of their feet, and so the only way they can cool themselves is by panting and through the soles of their feet. Some signs of heat stroke are: heavy panting, stumbling, discolored gums, lethargy or agitation, and in later stages, vomiting and seizures. Never leave a dog in a car on a hot day, and be aware that even on a mildly warm day, an enclosed car heats up very quickly. If your dog must be left outside in a backyard during hot weather, provide a shady spot and plenty of water. If you suspect heat stroke, call the vet *immediately*.

Keep flea, heartworm, and tick treatments up to date. Remember, if you like the warm weather, so do these biting pests. And of course, beware of snakes when out for a walk or hike.



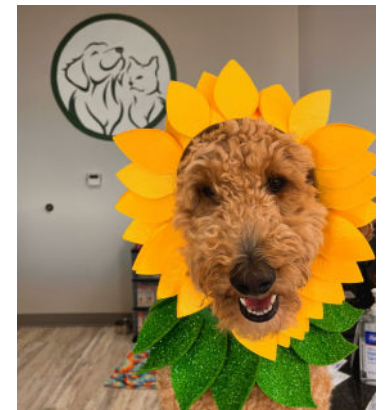
### **Book Review** *The Cary Legacy* by Sam Hendrix

Auburn University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, ranked as the eleventh best in the nation in 2023 by *U. S. News and World Report*, grew from the vision of two remarkable men: Dr. William LeRoy Broun, president of what was then known as the land-grant school Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama at Au-

burn, and Dr. Charles Allen Cary, the man he somehow persuaded to come from the Midwest to the Civil War-ravaged South to establish a veterinary science program, much to the benefit of all Alabamians and the South.

Dr. Cary, an Iowa native, earned his DVM at Iowa Agricultural College and taught at South Dakota A&M. He did additional studies with Dr. Paul Paquin at the University of Missouri/Columbia and with Nobel Prize winner Dr. Robert Koch and associates in Germany. Hired to teach three veterinary science courses, Dr. Cary devoted the rest of his life, 42 years, to Auburn, to Alabama and the South, implementing his vision of educating not only veterinary students, but farmers as well, creating programs in which local farmers could attend clinics and seminars to learn how to better manage their livestock.

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**The Cary Legacy**

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He understood the crucial importance of “one health,” the concept that the human population is only as healthy as the animals that provide our sustenance, and worked tirelessly (but to the evident exhaustion of colleagues) to eradicate such diseases as tuberculosis and cholera in livestock. He persuaded not only farmers but legislators of the importance of investing in preventive measures such as eradicating the disease-carrying cattle tick.

Dr. Cary’s achievements have been given a wider audience with the publication of Sam Hendrix’s great work of scholarship, and the veterinary profession rightly holds them both in high regard.

*The Cary Legacy/Dr. Charles Allen Cary/Father of Veterinary Medicine at Auburn and in the South*

Published by The Donnell Group, Montgomery, Alabama, 2018

Available at the Auburn University Bookstore and on Amazon



**Naughty Dog Fergus**

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In other ways, I made an effort to fit in, starting with marking some of the furniture to show I was part of the family, but Honey and Charlie were not happy about this for some reason. Eventually I went along with their idea of marking the plants and trees outdoors instead, but not when it got too cold. Or too hot. Or too rainy. In rainy weather when I reverted to marking the house, Honey started locking me in a small area of the kitchen with absorbent pads on the floor, which I found very insulting. We had a long negotiation about it, and when it became clear that I would practically live in the kitchen on absorbent pads if I didn’t comply, I gave in, although on days that are rainy, cold, or hot, I sulk a little and give them the stink eye before I walk out the door.

One thing Honey and I agree on is cuddling. We both love it, and it really helps smooth things over when I’ve done something she doesn’t like. As far as discipline, I’ve pretty much perfected the bashful, embarrassed, drooped ears, downcast eyes and slow, apologetic tail-wag whenever she gets *that tone* in her voice, and then she can’t resist. It has worked so far, and after a cuddle, we’re OK.

Sometimes when I’ve done something to make her or Charlie very angry, I just go stand in a corner shivering, looking embarrassed and ashamed at how I’ve let them down, and that usually works, too.

Sometimes I get up on her lap for a cuddle, and sometimes she sits down next to me and lifts me onto her lap. I make myself comfortable, and she rubs my adorable silky ears, and we both relax. If she rubs my ears for too long, or gets distracted and rubs them too hard, I give a low, quiet growl and she gets the message and stops. She’s learning.

**Critters!** is a publication of South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital.  
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Editor: Pauli Carnes  
Special thanks to:  
Benjamin Grant, Digital Publisher  
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