

# CRITTERS!

Newsletter of  
South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital

Summer 2024



## Cicadas! Crunch Time Has Passed!

As you may have noticed, dogs love to eat cicadas. Here at South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital, we have seen only a few dogs with suspected cicada-caused gastro-intestinal issues. Most have been predator/hunting breeds, along with a few individual dogs with previously identified GI sensitivities. Happily, the worst of cicada "season" has ended.

## A Few Minutes with Dr. Wesley

The first pet insurance policy in the United States was offered in 1982 by Veterinary Pet Insurance, founded by a veterinarian in Orange County, California. The concept of insurance for the medical needs of pets was a novel one. Since then, the industry has grown significantly, with more providers and more options available. Pet insurance is not provided directly by veterinarians, but they can provide suggestions on different companies that clients can contact for quotes. If you have never considered pet insurance, it is worth looking into, especially now when breakthroughs in research are leading to a great expansion of treatment options for our pets.



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## A Few Minutes with Dr. VanKeuren

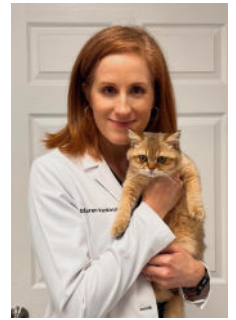
Introducing a new baby to the household pets may or may not resemble the sweet moments you see in ads and on social media.

To accomplish the introductions as positively as possible, first wait for the pet to come to the baby. You can let the dog or cat smell the baby's blanket or clothes before they actually meet. Signs of a good response from a dog would be tail wagging, ears up, and expressing interest. Ongoing good signs are interest coupled with calm behavior.

Not-so-good signs are avoidance, growling, hiding, and acting stressed. Talk to the vet if you observe these behaviors.

Older pets and dogs with known anxiety are more likely to have a difficult reaction. Young, excessively enthusiastic pets should have limited contact with the infant, while using treats to reinforce calm, quiet behavior.

Cats may require a more proactive response. Ask the veterinarian about medications and calming products that diffuse pheromones into the air.





## **Naughty Dog Fergus**

### **"Puppyhood's End"**



Life with Honey and Charlie has been great these past several months. We have lots of fun walks, and I've chosen a favorite chair where I take my naps during the day.

I'm all grown up now. Dr. W., my veterinarian, says I weigh 12 pounds. People have stopped saying, "That is the cutest puppy I've ever seen." Now they say, "That is the cutest dog I've ever seen." I can't deny it. I'm still irresistible.

It turns out that Charlie is pretty handy around the house. He punched a hole right through the outside wall of the laundry room and installed a little door with a flap that I can push to get in and out. Outside the door he built me a nice little grassy enclosure with a roof. Of course, I saw right away that the door and enclosure were for me to use, but I pretended I didn't understand what it was all about, so we had a lot of fun when he and Honey stood on opposite sides of the door flap and encouraged me with treats until I pushed the flap and came through. They were both ecstatic at how smart I was.

However, I still ask to be let outside in the big yard when the weather is nice. Honey and Charlie should always be encouraged to get up from what they're doing to let me out and then let me back inside, because I've heard that sitting for too long in one place isn't good for them.

Honey and Charlie have some nice friends who come to visit, and there's always a lot of interesting food around on those occasions. One time, they left a whole platter of meat and cheese on a low table in the living room while they were in the kitchen talking with all their friends. I was surprised that they would leave me such a huge treat, but I really appreciated it. When they came back into the living room they were upset, and to tell the truth, I got a stomach ache after eating all that rich food. Now when their friends come over, I just beg for little bits here and there. Honey and Charlie ask their friends not to feed me from the table, but fortunately there are a few who like to sneak me treats anyway. By now I know who will break the rules, so I always sit under the table by their chairs.

We've had quite an adjustment period regarding my own food. At first, they fed me plain, dry kibble, and because I had been so hungry back when I was on the streets as a puppy, I was glad to have it every day.

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### **Ask The Veterinarian**

**My neighbor occasionally "dog-sits" for me. She has a small terrier like mine, and the two get along well. Her dog has a crate that is left open all day long, and my neighbor tells me that my dog has started taking naps in the other dog's crate. My neighbor says most dogs like having a crate. Is that true? To me, it seems like a prison cell. Signed, Honey**

Your attitude vs. your dog's is not unusual: you see a prison cell, but your dog, like a lot of dogs, sees the opportunity to have private, personal space.

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## **Summer Wellness Checklist**

It's important to keep up with meds to protect pets from parasites—fleas, ticks, and heartworm—that are at their most voracious at this time of year.

This time of year we may be enjoying outdoor activities in areas with venomous snakes. It's important to stay on marked trails or areas where other people/dogs have frequented to help avoid encounters with snakes. If you see a snake, just keep your dog close and give the snake a wide berth. If your dog is bitten by a snake, contact a veterinarian. Also, try to catch a picture of the snake or a mental image to be able to describe to the veterinarian.

At any time of year, a first-aid kit for pets, tailored to the pet's needs, is a wise investment, especially when traveling. In addition to generally recommended items that you can find listed on the American Veterinary Medical Association website, your veterinarian can advise you about meds to have on hand if your pet has specific needs.

It's the time of year for noisy outdoor parties, thunderstorms, and fireworks, all of which can make pets anxious. Leave a crate with the door open in a quiet part of the house where he or she can retreat. If your pet is anxious in general, ask the vet about medication.

Heat stroke is a danger at this time of year, and entirely preventable. Watch for signs: heavy panting, stumbling, discolored gums, lethargy/agitation. Extreme symptoms include vomiting and seizures. Never, ever leave a dog in a car on a hot day, or even a warm day, because an enclosed car heats up very quickly, and if you must leave your pet outside during hot weather, provide a shady spot and plenty of water.

Monitor your pet's skin for allergy symptoms. Pollens are not as bad as they are in spring or fall, but pets are often out of doors more through the summer months.



### **Ask The Veterinarian (cont'd)**

Aside from the dog's sense of comfort and security in a crate, it can be a great training tool for behavioral modification—a "time-out"—and a familiar "home base" when you travel.

Leaving the door open during the day, as your neighbor does, makes the crate available for naps or just for withdrawing from the household noise. When the dog is in for the night, closing the door means you know where the dog is if, for example, there is a noisy thunderstorm or other event. You have a great advantage in knowing that your dog likes the crate and is comfortable in it.

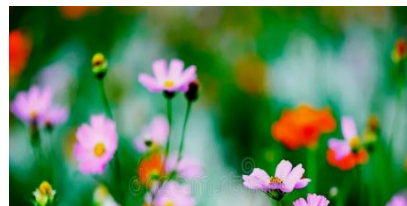
**Send your question to "Ask the Veterinarian"**

**[SHVHVet@southhuntsvillevet.com](mailto:SHVHVet@southhuntsvillevet.com)**



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### Naughty Dog Fergus (cont'd)

Then one day Honey left me with my friend Skipper next door, and while Honey was gone, Lacey, Skipper's human, gave us both dog food out of a can. It smelled very good, and it was so soft that I didn't have to chew at all. It was wonderful.

So I had to let Honey and Charlie know that all I wanted from then on was that yummy canned food. When they'd put down my bowl of kibble, I'd just stare at it for a couple of seconds, and with my head down, I'd turn and look at them from under my brows with a sorrowful stare. I'd keep my tail low and give two brief swishes to tell them, "I'm so sorry but this is unacceptable."

After a couple of days of not eating—which was very difficult because I was getting very hungry—Honey got worried and told Charlie maybe they should take me to see Dr. W.

Charlie wondered if it was something about the food. (Yes, Charlie! It's the food!) He picked up the bowl and sniffed it. Humans have an extremely limited sense of smell, so I have no idea what he was looking for, but he didn't find it. He checked the packaging, saying, "Maybe it's old and stale." No, that wasn't the answer. He picked me up and asked me if I was OK. I looked at him all forlorn.

"Maybe we should try another food," he said. (Yes!) But then they just bought another bag of little crunchy kibble.

Finally, Dr. W. suggested they try giving me some canned food. (What a wonderful, wonderful veterinarian he is!) I cleaned the bowl in a few seconds. Now they mix a little kibble into it, but I don't mind. We're all on the same page at last.

It's important to be patient when you're training.

Our sleeping arrangements have also gone through a period of adjustment.

When Honey first brought me home, Charlie said I would have to sleep in my own bed on the floor in the kitchen. I was a little lonesome when they'd turn out all the lights and leave me alone, but the kitchen is warm and my bed is cozy, and I got used to it.

Then after a few weeks there was one very cold night when Charlie himself picked me up and put me in the bed between the two of them.

Well, I sort of liked it but I sort of didn't. Everything was nice and soft, and of course, being in between two big warm humans on a cold night was great, but in general I prefer having a bed to myself.

Skipper has his own crate, with a soft pad in it, and one day when I was visiting, Lacey left the crate door open and I went inside to take a nap. Skipper is such a nice guy that he let me stay in there for a while, but then he decided it wasn't such a great idea and he came in and curled up with me. It wasn't comfortable for either of us, so I got out, just as Lacey came into the room. "Oh Fergus, do you like Skipper's crate? Maybe you could have one of your own!" (Yes! Yes!) When Honey came to get me, Lacey told her about how I had gone into the crate. Honey couldn't believe it, but Lacey suggested I ask Dr. W. about it.

**Critters!** is a publication of South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital.

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