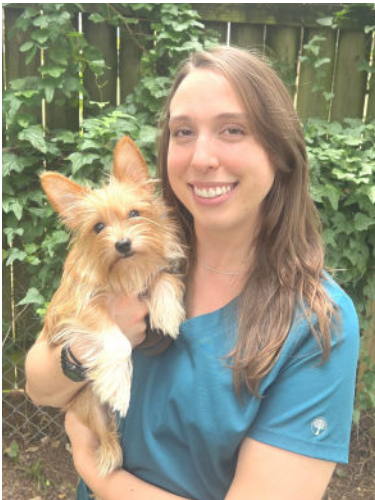


CRITTERS!

Newsletter of
South Huntsville Veterinary Hospital
Late Summer 2025



Meet Dr. Ashleigh Nicaise

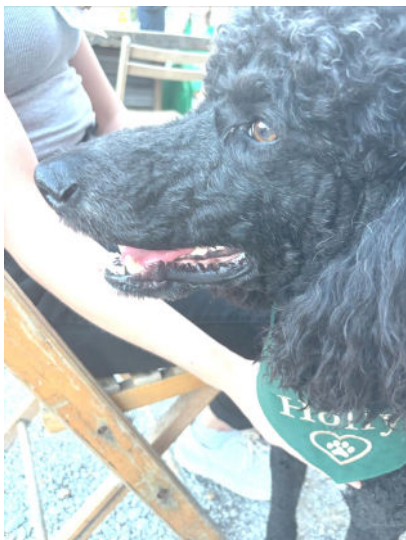


Growing up in Gulfport, Mississippi, Dr. Ashleigh Nicaise was “hands-on” caring for animals long before earning her DVM at Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Through high school and college, she volunteered with a wildlife rehabilitation group, and spent time shadowing professionals in various aspects of animal research and care.

Working in a research lab, she gained an appreciation for advancing the field of veterinary medicine. Joining the pre-veterinary club at Mississippi State during her freshman year led to her decision to pursue a doctorate in veterinary medicine (DVM).

At home she has a guinea pig named Cory and a Yorkie mix named “Wrigley,” who was adopted from a shelter.

Dr. Nicaise is happy to see people being more pro-active in their care for their pets and considering them “part of the family.”



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- Ask The Veterinarian
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The sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*) is a small, omnivorous, arboreal, and nocturnal gliding possum. The common name refers to its predilection for sugary foods such as sap and nectar and its ability to glide through the air, much like a flying squirrel.

Ask The Veterinarian

Honey asks:

We recently adopted a kitten from our local shelter. We have never had a cat before, so we wanted to do everything right for her. She has a litter box that she has access to 24/7, but she doesn't always use it, and she is leaving little "surprises" all over the house. We do not know what to do about it. Is she marking her territory? She is strictly an indoor cat, and we have no other pets. Please help!

Each cat is unique and there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to your cat's preferences. Try two litterboxes, one with low sides, easy to get into and out of, and a second, enclosed box which you keep in a more secluded part of the house.

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Naughty Dog Fergus

A lot has happened in the past few months. Chaz has visited a couple of more times with his friend Halley, and she is now part of the family.

As you may remember from last Christmas when I met her, Halley was not friendly toward me at all during that first visit. In fact, she asked me to stay away from her. That made me very sad and confused, because of course I am used to people saying "aww," and telling me how adorable I am.

And not only that, but Chaz and I had been best buds before she came along. Nobody could rough-house—without being too rough—like Chaz. We had so much fun. He'd even growl.

It turns out that when Chaz and his brother Jack were growing up, the family always had at least one dog, sometimes two. I heard Chaz say to his Mom, "I've been looking forward to having a dog once Halley and I get married."

So Chaz and Halley had a long talk while they were here that first time, and when they came back in the spring, I don't know what had happened, but Halley actually said hello to me, and extended her open hand for me to sniff. It was a little awkward, and I wasn't sure how to respond, but I've learned that with anyone who doesn't appreciate my adorableness, it's better to hang back and let the human take the lead.



(continued on page 4)



Late Summer Checklist

Heartworm and intestinal parasites are at their peak this time of year. It is important to keep up with medication, whether administered via vaccination or orally. Many parasites present similar symptoms such as lethargy and vomiting, making it important for an ailing animal to be tested so the right treatment is administered.

Giardia is a microscopic parasite that lives in the intestines. Testing for giardia is greatly improved, which is especially vital in a dog that has been exposed but does not have symptoms. As a “zoonotic” disease, it can pass from dogs to humans, although it is not a common occurrence. Antiparasitic medications treat the disease. There is no preventative medication; good hygiene is the best deterrent.

Parvovirus thrives in heat and moisture, so at this time of year it is everywhere. It can be deadly. Fifty years ago, the mortality rate was 75%, and it is still too high in light of the fact that a preventative vaccination is available. We strongly urge that this vaccination be kept updated, and that people avoid it by keeping dogs away from places where other, less cared-for dogs may have been.

(continued on page 4)



Ask The Veterinarian (cont'd)

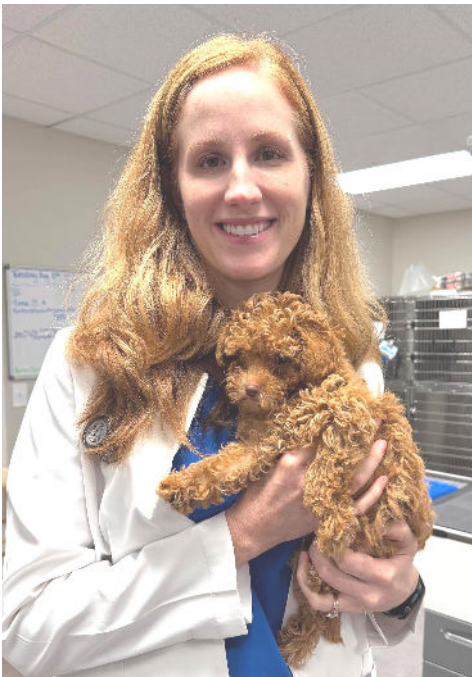
Your cat could have a preference for a certain litter, so try different ones. As to the “surprises,” it’s a good idea to have an enzymatic cleaner on hand to break down the odor so she doesn’t associate a spot in the house as “the place to go.”

All cats are highly responsive to chemical compounds called pheromones, which their bodies produce and which they detect through their sense of smell. Cat pheromones help cats feel at home. A product called “Feliway” mimics these scents to create a calming effect around the litter box.

Leptospirosis is a bacteria that can be picked up by a dog through the soles of his feet in damp places where infected animals have urinated or defecated. When the dog licks his paws, the bacteria enter his system. Like giardia, leptospirosis can also be passed to humans. There is a vaccination for preventing the disease, and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) keeps track of the number of cases in a geographic area; when the number of cases reaches a certain percentage, the vaccination becomes the “standard of care,” regarded as a “core vaccine.” The people who do the lab tests see the results day-to-day, and they too keep veterinary clinics apprised when the number of diagnoses increases.

At this time of year, there is danger of thermal injuries to a dog’s foot pads. If the ground is too hot to rest the palm of your hand on it for a few seconds, it is probably too hot for your dog. The dark surface of asphalt is particularly heat-retentive.

Also note that a dog’s foot pads get softened in damp or wet ground, making the pads vulnerable to cuts and scrapes.

**Naughty Dog Fergus**

(cont'd)

On that first occasion with Halley, the tension was so thick you could practically smell it. Well, I *could* smell it, actually.

Having Halley get close to me that way was a very big deal for all the humans. After I sniffed Halley’s hand, she made like she was going to try to pat me on the head, but then pulled her hand away. I would usually kind of prance and wave my tail, but I sensed that this wasn’t that kind of greeting. I simply sat down and waited. All the humans moved on, chattering away.

At the time, I wasn’t sure what to make of it, but it turned out that sitting quietly was the right thing to do. It was the beginning of Halley starting to get to know me, and actually like me. Now she calls me, “Sweetie Baby.”

I like her, too.

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Wesley Clendinen, DVM Lauren VanKeuren, DVM Ashleigh Nicaise, DVM
8416 Memorial Parkway SW, Huntsville, AL 35802

SHVHVet@southhuntsvillevethospital.com

256.223.3230

Editor: Pauli Carnes

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