

DOG Watch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine

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IN THE NEWS ...

The Best Music for Positive Behavior

Want a happy dog? Play reggae for him. That's what researchers at the University of Glasgow in partnership with the Scottish SPCA did. They piped five types of music to shelter dogs to evaluate the effect on behavior — soft rock, Motown, pop, reggae and classical. Reggae was the clear victor, according to their report in *Psychology and Behavior*.

Previous studies at the university and elsewhere have shown that classical music can reduce stress in kennelled dogs, but they can also adapt to it. Researchers believe the effect of habituation could be reduced by increasing the variety of "auditory enrichment."

"Overall, the response to different genres was mixed, highlighting the possibility that like humans, our canine friends have their own individual music preferences," says researcher Neil Evans, professor of integrative physiology. As a result, the Scottish SPCA will pipe music in its shelters and develop a dog-friendly playlist for them. ♦

A New Definition for Animal Hoarding

It's no longer considered obsessive compulsive behavior but paranoia, depression and an attachment disorder

Animal hoarders come from all age brackets, income levels and geographic areas. While hoarders were once believed to have a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), the American Psychological Association suggests they actually suffer from a different spectrum of mental illness, including attachment disorders, paranoia and depression.



The ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement Department found more than 50 Dachshunds adults and puppies in one New York City home.

Each year, between 900 and 2,000 new cases of animal hoarding, impacting as many as 250,000 animals, are reported in the U.S. Sadly, the number of cases has doubled in the past four years, according to the Animal League Defense Fund.

Often in Denial. Experts credit the increase in reported

cases to greater public awareness and cooperation among law enforcement, animal

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Neutered Dogs Can Still Scent Mark

Perhaps not as much as their intact brethren but enough to communicate their stress and establish their territory

Scent marking is a common behavior in dogs. You can see them in action on walks, in the house and at locations and objects of interest. Any dog and breed will scent mark by lifting a leg and marking or urinating small amounts on vertical surfaces.

Science and anecdotal evidence have shown that intact male dogs are the most active markers. Female dogs before and after estrous will also mark. Neutering reduces urine marking in the home by about 50 percent, according to at least one study.

Early Effect. "The brain is affected by hormones during development in utero, so even

if you neuter the animal, you cannot undo this early effect of hormones on the cells in specific parts of the brain," says Pamela J. Perry, DVM, Ph.D., a lecturer and resident in animal behavior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Therefore, many dogs who are enthusiastic scent markers may continue the behavior after they are spayed or neutered."

Their motivation is simple: They're communicating. "It is a territorial behavior but also occurs in response to an anxiety-related situation," Dr. Perry says. "In most cases, neutering is a sufficient solution. Because marking is all about defining territory, given the opportunity,

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SHORT TAKES

Survey Finds Decline in Shelter Euthanasia

No government agency tracks shelter dogs — those surrendered, adopted, returned to owners or euthanized. Their population has often been extrapolated from small studies. The result from various sources usually estimates the shelter dog population at about 4 million annually, with 1.2 million euthanized, 15 to 30 percent reclaimed and 18 percent adopted.

In the latest study and one of the most ambitious, researchers at Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine say their findings bring U.S. animal shelter canine populations into sharper focus. Kimberly Woodruff, DVM, a resident in shelter medicine, and David R. Smith, DVM, Ph.D., ACVPM in epidemiology, found that commonly quoted figures underestimate the number shelters take in every year and overestimate the number of dogs those shelters euthanize.

They surveyed 413 brick-and-mortar animal shelters and those that adopt out dogs to learn that:

- ◆ 5.5 million dogs enter shelters annually.
- ◆ 2.6 million are adopted.
- ◆ 969,000 are returned to owners.
- ◆ 778,000 are transferred.
- ◆ 776,000 are euthanized.

“For many years, people have quoted numbers of animals going in and out of shelters, but there’s never really been any research behind them,” Dr. Woodruff says. “Even beyond that, nobody really knows how many shelters are in the United States. There’s no official registry for shelters and no group providing oversight. Shelters can be anything from a few kennels to a huge facility that adopts out thousands of animals a year.”

The study also examined geographical areas, size and funding to determine the effects on dogs. One growing trend is transport services moving dogs to less crowded shelters. “Prior to those programs developing,



Shelters underestimate the number of dogs they take in annually and overestimate those they euthanize, according to the latest research.

there were probably more dogs in the Southeast that got euthanized because there were more dogs in shelters in the Southeast,” Dr. Smith said. “Those transport programs have at least given dogs an opportunity to go someplace else where they have a better chance of being adopted.”

Dr. Smith noted possible future studies could help develop animal health policy. “For example, there are a lot of dogs moving out of the Southeast and into other regions. This is a highly endemic heartworm disease area. We possibly could be transporting heartworms across the country. That means we need to do due diligence to control that disease. We may need to ask those shelters about how they’re addressing heartworm disease and other regional diseases.”

The Pet Leadership Council, which funded the study, lauded the findings. “When you consider that it’s estimated as many as 20 million dogs were euthanized a year in the 1970s, it’s truly astounding to see how effective the efforts of shelters and the responsible pet industry have proven,” says council chairman Bob Vetere. “We believe this new research demonstrating the progress we have made will inspire an increasingly strong demand for and focus on efforts to ensure responsible breeding and opportunity to meet the growing desire for dogs in our country.”

Vetere is also president and CEO of the American Pet Products Association, which conducts its own biennial survey of pet owners, including shelter issues. ◆

Keeping Medicines Safe and Effective

Avoid storing them in sunlight, high heat and humidity, and label them for easy identification

When you pick up antibiotics at the veterinary clinic for your ailing dog, your handling, storage and disposal of the medication can go a long way toward improving his health, safety and the environment.

A risk of medicine-related calamities exists inside every home with dogs. They include accidentally mixing human and pet medications and storing them in a manner that may reduce their effectiveness.

Case in point: Don't stash medicine for you or your dog inside the bathroom cabinet. "It's one of the worst places to store medicine because the potency of many medicines is impacted by exposure to extreme temperatures — such as the humidity generated from people taking hot, steamy showers," says Lisa Penny, director of pharmacy and a registered pharmacist at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "And don't leave your medicine or your dog's medicine on a kitchen counter where

he can easily reach it or on a shelf exposed to sunlight."

Safer storage locations include dresser and nightstand drawers, kitchen cabinets and a shelf in an enclosed china cabinet.

Penny has been a pharmacist in human and veterinary medicine for 25 years. She shares her home with three dogs and two cats. All are on preventive medicines to keep them free of fleas and ticks. Each day, she gives vitamin supplements and anti-inflammatory pills to Mac, her 12-year-old Great Pyrenees.

Watch for Toxics. Knowing that permethrin, an insecticide commonly found in canine flea and tick preventive topicals, can be highly toxic if exposed to her cats, Penny purposely gives her three dogs a safer alternative: chewable versions.

"If you apply topical flea and tick medications on your dogs, you are advised not to have your cat around them for 48 hours," she says. "Separating your dogs



Ask the veterinarian or pharmacist about special syringe stoppers that fit on top of bottles of liquid medicine. You can turn the bottle upside down and draw out the right dose without spilling.

from your cats for that time can be challenging. Also, consider the weight differences. The flea and tick medicine I give my 130-pound Great Pyrenees would be a toxic overdose to my nine-pound cat, Lilly, because cats cannot tolerate permethrin, especially at that high dose."

If you have a dog who loves to sleep under the covers, it is advisable to discuss with your veterinarian whether topical flea control product might not be the best things to use. Penny says "There are no studies out there, but logically, if a pet snuggles under the covers, there is a risk of the topical pesticide not only coming into contact but being absorbed in the person's skin. Why take that risk?"

By law, prescription medicine must be in a childproof container, but Penny knows that many people like the convenience of pill organizers, where they store daily amounts of pills and vitamins for themselves or their pets. Again, stash these organizers in a drawer or enclosed shelf to prevent a curious pet from accessing them. "Yes, there are childproof containers, but nothing exists in life that is truly pet proof," Penny says. "Your dog can quickly chew through a bottle of pills."

When to Get Help. If your dog does ingest pills, call his veterinarian immediately. The same is true if your dog vomits after taking medication. Do not simply

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HOW TO SAFELY DISPOSE OF MEDICINE

To minimize the health risk to you, your dog and the environment, it's important to follow local laws on the disposal of unused or expired medicine. Never flush them down the toilet because the medicine can affect the community water supply, says Lisa Penny, director of pharmacy and a registered pharmacist at Cornell. And never toss them in the trash.

Instead, Penny offers these safe measures:

- ◆ Crush the pills and mix them with kitty litter or laundry detergent and bleach, place them in a sealed bag and throw it away.
- ◆ Inquire about medical "take-back" programs. Hospitals, some veterinary clinics and community news bulletins in supermarkets often have information on these programs.
- ◆ Follow guidelines on disposing needles and syringes. Inquire about obtaining approved syringe containers that can be sealed and delivered to designated medical recycle centers.

"Remember, what you put in the environment eventually goes back into your body, so take the proper precautions," says Penny.

HOARDING... *(continued from cover)*

humane societies, social services and mental health agencies.

"Animal hoarders do not recognize that they're failing to provide adequate care, and they may not even recognize death," says Elizabeth A. Berliner, DVM, ABVP, director of Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Berliner has participated in more than a dozen hoarding investigations and says, "The lack of insight into the poor welfare they are providing is a key element of this challenging mental illness."

Some animal hoarders begin collecting after a traumatic event or loss, while others see themselves as rescuers who save homeless animals. Identifying a hoarder can be difficult because some isolate themselves. Others may be regarded as champions of homeless pets in their communities.

The majority are women and the most common animal victims are cats, with dogs second. Animal hoarders generally fall into three categories, which can also impact how they are handled most effectively:

◆ **Overwhelmed caregivers:** They have a large number of animals under their care, realize they need help and may ask for it.

◆ **Rescue hoarders:**

They start by trying to help dogs, cats, horses and other animals in need but take in far more than they can handle and fail to recognize the problem. They're usually very resistant to help that is offered.

◆ **Exploiter hoarders:**

They make money by breeding animals and are often hostile to offers of help.

Randy Lockwood, Ph.D., senior vice president for Anti-Cruelty Initiatives and Legislative Services for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, has been involved in hoarding cases for more than 30 years and says, "I have found that hoarding cases tend to be an interesting but strange juxtaposition of people thinking they are helping animals but in actuality are killing them with kindness."

As it turns out, animal hoarding is a complex mental disorder challenging to diagnose and to treat, and also difficult to stop due to a nearly 100 percent recidivism rate. "By increasing the number of professionals from various agencies, we are better able to share information," Dr.



The ASPCA helped the Gilchrist County Sheriff Office with evidence collection and removal of 47 dogs, four cats and a horse at an overcrowded home in Bell, Fla., in February 2016. Many animals were in critical condition, and no food was on the property.

Lockwood says. "This is critical because animal hoarders can be mobile, and if they feel threatened, they often move to a neighboring town or the next state. We are much better at sharing information when we hear a hoarder has moved."

Little Self-insight. The big difference between OCD and hoarding is the level of insight and self-reflection of the individual, Dr. Lockwood says. "People with OCD perform certain compulsive rituals that they are often aware of and uncomfortable with and OCD is relatively treatable. However, a prime



Many communities provide "harm reduction," limiting pets hoarders can have and managing and monitoring them, says Elizabeth Berliner, DVM, MA, ABVP, director of the shelter medicine program at Cornell, here with a happy shelter dog.

CORNELL TEAMS TRIAGE HOARDING CASES

As part of their training, veterinary students at Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell participate in teams to treat and rescue animals in hoarding cases. In November 2015, Dr. Elizabeth A. Berliner, director of the program, and her students worked with the SPCA of Tompkins County and other agencies in Newfield, N.Y.

In addition to the remains of three animals, they found 28 dogs, cats and small mammals inside a single-wide trailer. The Cornell team worked closely with SPCA officials and provided triage, documentation and veterinary management. Five years earlier, the owners had been found guilty of hoarding 100 animals in similar circumstances in Caroline, N.Y.

The veterinary team follows health and safety protocols by wearing heavy gloves, masks, respirators and knee-high boots. Animals are quickly triaged based on their levels of need. Humane restraint equipment is used, including catch poles, transport cages and humane traps to safely remove scared or potentially aggressive animals, Dr. Berliner says. "It takes a team and we are fortunate to have this collaboration between the college and the SPCA in our community."

'DO NOT TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM ON YOUR OWN'

These signs may indicate an animal hoarder, according to the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium from Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, which gathered early research on the subject:

- ◆ The person has numerous animals and may not know the total number of animals in his care.
- ◆ The home is cluttered and may have holes in the walls and broken windows.
- ◆ The floors are caked with dried feces, urine and vomit.
- ◆ A strong smell of ammonia is evident.
- ◆ The animals are emaciated, lethargic and not well socialized.
- ◆ Fleas and vermin are present.
- ◆ The individual is isolated and appears to be in neglect himself.
- ◆ The individual insists animals are happy and healthy — even when they have clear signs of distress and illness.

If you suspect a person is hoarding animals, contact your local humane investigator or law enforcement agency. "It takes someone calling attention to the problem to get it solved," says Dr. Elizabeth Berliner at Cornell. "Do not try to solve the problem on your own because it is very complex and requires concerted efforts among various agencies."

characteristic of a hoarder is the lack of insight. Hoarders may otherwise function at high levels and can be highly educated, but don't seem to realize the harm they are doing to animals."

Denial is also major element of the condition. "You see the conflict of a person wanting to care for animals, but the animals in their care are dying, and the only way for this person to reconcile this is denial," Dr. Lockwood says. "When you go into a hoarder's home and see all the clutter and the presence of dead animals, you find yourself wondering why they can't see it or smell it."

Impact on Animals. Far more evident is the medical and emotional toll on the animals, Dr. Berliner says. "We were part of a team that investigated a hoarding case in a single-wide trailer in 2015. It was shocking. The floors were soaked with fecal matter and the air was unbreathable. While it is hard to fathom how a person can choose to live in this environment, it is also striking that these poor animals had no choice."

Dogs rescued from hoarding situations often suffer from one or more of these medical conditions, Dr. Berliner says:

- ◆ Upper respiratory conditions, including difficulty breathing, chronic bronchitis and pneumonia.
- ◆ Skin conditions, including flea and mite infestation, ringworm, lice, mange, infected open sores and overgrown nails.
- ◆ Gastrointestinal conditions, including diarrhea, urine burns, and parasites.
- ◆ Nutritional conditions, including starvation.

"Dogs in these hoarding situations often incur diseases of neglect and poor husbandry," says Dr. Berliner. "Sadly, some animals we find are dead. Sometimes they are in such bad condition that they need to be humanely euthanized. And those we are able to save are usually under socialized. They may be socialized toward other animals but not to people. They can be difficult to re-home. Shelters need to be sure the people who adopt

them are informed of their history and are committed to keeping them physically and behaviorally healthy."

Some of the dogs may never be social or house trained but the people who adopt them are often very committed to working with them and making their lives better, Dr. Berliner says.

Hoarding is not simply a humane investigation issue. "It impacts social services, housing values and more," Dr. Lockwood says. In wider recognition of the problem, animal hoarding task forces are being created at community and statewide levels.

Mental illness plays a big role, so criminal prosecution is not always the most effective approach, Dr. Berliner says. "When animal hoarders are prosecuted, it is usually under anti-cruelty statutes. However, in cases involving overwhelmed caregivers and rescue hoarders, multi-modal, multi-agency approaches are much more successful at providing long-term management of an animal hoarder."

Many communities are providing more of a "harm reduction" approach by offering assistance to animal hoarders allowed to maintain a limited number of pets and who are carefully managed and monitored over the long term, Dr. Berliner says. "This requires cooperation among human health providers, housing services and humane investigation units to be successful and guarantee that the animals are provided proper care and kept to a reasonable number." ◆

TO LEARN MORE

These sites have information about animal hoarding:

- ◆ Animal Legal Defense Fund at <http://aldf.org>
- ◆ Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium at <https://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/>
- ◆ ASPCA at www.aspc.org/animal-cruelty/animal-hoarding/closer-look-animal-hoarding

MARKING... (continued from cover)

a dominant dog will often mark near desirable resources and along territory borders."

Dog will also mark where other dogs' have deposited their scent. "It may be to guard potential mates," Dr. Perry says. "It also appears to be related to social status."

Behaviorist Katherine A. Houpt VMD, Ph.D., professor emeritus at Cornell, has treated fewer than six cases of urine marking in dogs — a fraction of the number of cat patients she's seen. "Marking is generally less problematic in dogs than cats because dogs tend to do their marking outdoors while on a walk rather than indoors," she says.

"In my experience, owners of toy dog breeds are most likely to report problems with marking territory, perhaps because they consider their owner's house to be



Toy breeds like Poodles and Yorkies are most likely to mark, perhaps because they consider the house their territory, so they mark inside more often than larger dogs.

their territory, so they may mark inside the house more often than larger dogs. Toy Poodles and Yorkies are among the breeds that may mark."

Book an Exam. Both behaviorists recommend that if dogs have already been spayed or neutered and still mark excessively, a veterinary examination is needed to rule out underlying medical problems. Incontinence, in which the dog dribbles urine, is a common problem of older

females. Sometimes dogs with incontinence problems seem unaware or will urinate while asleep. In other cases, the dog completely voids the bladder because he's become diabetic and produces a lot more urine. A urinary tract infection can

also cause a dog to void small amounts of urine frequently.

"A complete medical workup is very important," Dr. Perry says. "Any disease that causes polydipsia (excessive thirst) and/or polyuria (a large volume of urine) can contribute to an increase in marking behavior."

The main problem with marking is odor, Dr. Houpt says. "However, the degree of the problem depends significantly on the owner's level of fastidiousness. Some have higher standards for cleanliness, and some are more willing to do frequent cleanup. For some owners, marking might not be a problem — until it's done on their bed!"

If marking is not a medical issue, then environmental or social factors should be explored, Dr. Houpt says. You may be referred to a veterinary behaviorist. (The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists lists board-certified members by region at www.dacvb.org.)

500 DOG WALKS LATER, RESEARCH IDENTIFIES AGING'S IMPACT

A Cornell study of 500 juvenile, adult and senior shelter dogs found a significant effect of age on urinary behavior. Seniors urinated more frequently than adults and directed more of their urinations than adults, and adults urinated more frequently than juveniles and directed more of their urinations than juveniles.

The dogs' age influenced frequency of urination and likelihood of directing urine at targets in the environment, says lead researcher Betty McGuire, Ph.D., senior lecturer at Cornell University in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. "Thus, owners should not be surprised if they see changes in urinary behavior as their dog ages, but it is always best to check with their veterinarian," Dr. McGuire says. "Age did not influence frequency of defecation in shelter dogs."

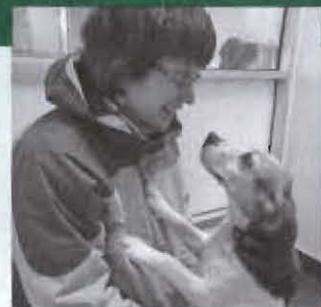
Her research, published in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, was based on observations of dogs during walks on a leash at the Tompkins County SPCA and Cortland Community SPCA in upstate New York.

"The development of scent-marking behavior from puppyhood to early adulthood has been well studied in dogs, but there is a distinct lack of information for older dogs," Dr. McGuire says. "The findings indicate that some marking behaviors continue to change even after a dog has reached adulthood."

At a presentation at the Tompkins County SPCA, Dr. McGuire further noted that neutered male dogs tended to urinate less frequently than intact males, which substantiates owner observations of less in-house marking among neutered dogs. However, she found no difference in urination frequency between spayed and intact females.

In a more recent paper in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, she and co-author Katherine Bemis reported that small dogs urinated at higher rates than medium and large dogs, and tended to direct more of their urine at targets in the environment. These findings for shelter dogs agree with owner reports of more in-home marking by small dogs.

"Each of our studies is a win-win-win," Dr. McGuire says. "Researchers get their data, undergraduate students receive training in animal behavior, and many, many shelter dogs get walked!"



Dr. Betty McGuire at Cornell worked with undergraduate students in her research on marking in shelter dogs and took her turn walking shifts, including ones with this older Beagle.

PREVENT PROBLEM MARKING WITH SUPERVISION, A HEAD HALTER AND OBEDIENCE TRAINING

Cornell animal behaviorists offer this advice to reduce problem marking:

- ◆ Avoid or outwit triggers such as keeping neighboring dogs off your property with a fence.
- ◆ Have your dog wear a leash and head halter so you can interrupt him when he begins to mark.
- ◆ Train him to mark a particular location outdoors, such as a stake in the ground.
- ◆ Prevent access to novel odors and new items — like shopping bags and boxes coming into the house — until he has had time to acclimate to them.
- ◆ If marking occurs on furniture, temporarily block access or cover the furniture with plastic sheeting. “When the dog approaches the new object without marking, reward this appropriate behavior with treats, praise, or play,” says Pamela J. Perry, DVM, Ph.D., a resident in animal behavior.
- ◆ Initiate or review obedience training. It helps with almost all behavior problems, says Katherine A. Houpt VMD, Ph.D, professor emeritus. Classes are fine, but it is most important to do obedience homework. The dog will be less anxious if he has learned behaviors that result in praise or food rewards.

“The veterinarian might recommend reducing the number of dogs — or not owning toy dogs — which may or may not be an option for the owner,” Dr. Houpt says.

Population Control. It’s not clear-cut if the number of dogs in a household is a

contributing factor in marking. “Although people who own many dogs may be more tolerant in general, there are many multi-dog households with no marking problems,” Dr. Houpt says.

Owners should try to reduce stress or anxiety that might be contributing to their

dog’s urine marking, Dr. Perry says. Dogs who mark in response to changes in the household — a new baby, houseguests or renovations to the home — will benefit from reward-based training and time to create positive associations with the use of treats, toys or praise.

Dr. Houpt cautions that in dog parks where dogs are free ranging, marking may precede a dog fight, so alert owners can watch for signs and perhaps head off a scuffle.

“Many dogs who mark have not been properly housetrained,” Dr. Houpt says. She advises taking the dog out every two hours and after mealtimes. Reward him for urinating outside. When indoors, she recommends tethering the dog to the owner for several weeks. “That way the dog cannot run off and mark without the owner’s knowledge. Often when dogs mark, they get attention — and to a dog’s mind, even negative attention is better than none.”

The best prevention technique: “Spay and neuter your dogs — and don’t get that fifth dog,” Dr. Houpt says. “Think about the quality of life you can provide for the number of dogs you have.” ♦

HEALTH

MEDICINE... (continued from page 3)

re-medicate him. Call the veterinarian for instructions. “If you drop one of your pills and you’re not sure if your dog swallowed it or not, call the veterinarian,” Penny says. “Sometimes, inducing vomiting is the right thing to do and sometimes it is not.”

You can disguise the taste of medications by placing pills in pieces of hot dog or cheese or commercial products like Pill Pockets — as long as these foods won’t interfere with the medicine’s effectiveness. To ensure you are giving the right amount of liquid medicine for you dog, Penny recommends asking the veterinarian or pharmacist about special syringe stoppers that fit on top of bottles of liquid medicine. They enable you to turn the bottle upside down and draw out the right dose into the syringe without spilling.

If you want to split medications in advance to fit pill organizers, you should know some medications should be left whole. “Always check with the veterinarian or registered pharmacist,” Penny says. “In addition, splitting a dose to save money is never a good idea. The dose prescribed is what is needed to treat the condition. If cost is a challenge, some companies offer online rebates or discounts, or ask a registered pharmacist.”

If your dog has been on antibiotics and seems to be recovered, continue to give him the prescribed course. “Do not stop halfway and think you can save these antibiotics for the next flare up,” Penny says. “You don’t want to unintentionally create antibiotic resistance in your pet.”

In choosing the form of the medication, Penny says some medications to treat hyperthyroidism or infections can be made

more palatable by compounding pharmacies that add meat flavoring that will not detract from the medicine’s potency.

If your dog has diabetes and requires insulin injections, Penny stresses the importance of not trying to save money by re-using the needles or syringes. “There is a concern of infection development if you re-use syringes, and every time you use the needle, it gets a little duller and a dull needle hurts more. And never use insulin beyond its expiration date, as it becomes less effective.”

Her final tip: Use visual markers to easily distinguish your medicine from your dog’s. Prescription bottles from Cornell feature images of dogs and cats. You can go an additional step by placing something brightly colored like neon orange duct tape on the top of the bottles. ♦



Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., here with her West Highland White Terrier, Yuki, provided the answer on this page. Dr. Houpt is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus professor at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Please Share Your Questions
We welcome questions of general interest on health, medicine and behavior. We regret however, that we cannot comment on specific products and prior diagnoses. Please send correspondence to:

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COMING UP ...

HOT SPOTS



DISASTER PLANS



LIMPING



FEARS AND PHOBIAS

It's Time for the Yorkie Terror to Wear a Muzzle for Repairmen

Q My house is 22 years old, just at the point when it needs repairs and upgrades. I budgeted for them, so I'm in good shape but didn't plan on my 8-year-old Yorkie going crazy with every house call from a repairman — and they are all men.

I ask electricians and plumbers to meet Bailey outside — so he won't exactly be defending his territory — and let him sniff them. I also ask that they don't bend directly over him and keep my voice light and friendly: "Here's Mike and he's here to help."

Indoors, Bailey will quietly sit on leash about 10 feet from the man working. I ask that the man not make quick movements. One did and Bailey yanked on his lead, barked wildly and tried to bite the guy on the knee. Luckily, Bailey just hung on the fabric, and we barely escaped his injuring the guy and a possible lawsuit.

How to do I control Bailey for these house calls? If I put him in another room, he barks non-stop. He's become a Yorkie Terror. My neighbors are too elderly for me to ask them to dog sit, and I don't have a fenced yard. I would sure appreciate your advice.

A Congratulations on persuading workmen to come do repairs. You must be very persuasive. Now we must persuade the Yorkie Terror that these workmen are good guys. You have done most of things usually suggested for introducing dogs such as greeting outside and allowing olfactory contact.

Nevertheless, your dog is probably still afraid. He is really a Yorkshire Terrified. The only thing that you have not done is to use food rewards. Find something that he really, really likes. For some reason, I think of cocktail sausage as the Yorkie equivalent of a hot fudge sundae. The only time he gets a piece of the sausage is when the workmen come. They could toss — not hand — the treat to him.

Putting him in a room is a good idea, but he barks. You might choose another room and make

this be his Pup Cave with a really comfy bed, calming music, a dog video playing, and a long-lasting treat such as a stuffed Kong or even a rawhide that he gets at no other time. Use a white noise machine just outside the door so he will not hear the workman arrive. Put him in that room for practice sessions so he learns to love it before the day the workmen come.

Finally, for your peace of mind and the workmen's safety, he should be muzzled when outside his safe room. A Yorkie can certainly hurt someone and even an ounce of flesh missing can be a serious injury and one that might indeed get you sued. The first thing to know about muzzles is that they will not make dogs more aggressive, nor will they make dogs less aggressive. They will prevent bites.

Not all muzzles are the same. Sleeve muzzles are good to protect handlers for a quick procedure such as a nail trim. Basket muzzles are more comfortable for the dog, although they may look worse to you. It is very important that you are positive about the muzzle, "Look Yorkie, here is your lovely new collar" rather than "Oh, Yorkie, I am so sorry to have to do this to you!"

Smear the end of the muzzle with peanut butter, Cheez Whiz or liverwurst, so he's rewarded when you put it on. Let him lick the muzzle a few times and then put it behind your back before he has finished. Present it to him again so he learns that the muzzle means good things. Repeat several times a day for a few days then put it on him. Fasten tightly and take him for a walk to distract him. Give treats such as squeeze cheese or beef strips through the muzzle.

Here are some sites to demonstrate the techniques. Be sure to put the muzzle on before the workmen are expected, so he is not aroused already, and so he does not associate it with them:

- ◆ **Muzzle training** (Blue Cross): www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BjPpXer8IE
- ◆ **Muzzle training** (Melissa Spooner): www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuZR_9_DvCQ

You can ask Bailey's veterinarian for a medication to reduce his fear and arousal that you can use on those days that the workman will be there. He will be less terrified and therefore less likely to bite. ♦

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