



# DOG Watch

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



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## IN THE NEWS ...

### A New Preventive-Care Service for Vets

PurinaCare Insurance Services Inc. and Idexx Laboratories Inc. have unveiled a preventive-care plan service for veterinary practices called Partners in Wellness, which will handle client billing and administrative tasks in exchange for a portion of the revenue from services. Through Partners in Wellness, clients can sign up for the plans as one-year contracts. Clients pay a \$50 enrollment fee, of which half is reimbursed to the clinic.

"According to the 2011 Bayer Veterinary Care Usage Study, the veterinary industry has experienced a steady decline in patient visits over the last 10 years," explained Dr. David Goodnight, president and chief operating officer of PurinaCare Insurance. "Partners in Wellness enables veterinarians to create a preventive-care program for their clients. Routine exams, screenings and services are bundled into a simple, affordable monthly payment plan for participating clients." ♦

## The Importance of Bloodwork

*A blood count and chemistry panel can reveal countless health issues to your dog's veterinarian. Here's how.*

Given the indisputable value of a thorough physical examination, veterinarians generally recommend that all dogs undergo a procedure that includes two tests — a complete blood count and a blood chemistry panel — at least once a year. This is especially true for those animals that have reached six years of age or so, when they are approaching or are well into their geriatric years and are susceptible to a variety of age-related disorders.

During a routine physical exam, a veterinarian will begin by reviewing the results of the dog's previous clinic visits and will probably interview the owner to find out whether the animal has recently exhibited any possible signs of illness, such as noticeable changes in eating, drinking or excretory patterns. Next,

the veterinarian will check the animal's temperature, pulse and respiration and give the patient's body a thorough physical exam.

Then come the blood tests, requiring nothing of the dog but to sit quietly for a moment while the veterinarian or a technician draws a small amount of blood from its veins. Thanks to a variety of sophisticated laboratory techniques and equipment, this sample is enough to reveal the presence of many infections, diseases and blood abnormalities that would be undetectable during the other phases of the routine physical exam.

**A Valuable Process.** Veterinarians regard a thorough physical examination that includes

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## Making Safe Dog-Cat Introductions

*Some people want as many furry family members as possible, but it's important to take it slowly — and safely.*

Some folks are "dog people," while others have an affinity for cats. But what do you do when enthusiasts of both persuasions share the same home? Despite the conventional wisdom that dogs and cats can't peacefully coexist, both species can inhabit the same space without the fur flying. However, introducing a cat into a dog-centric home requires planning, patience and a commitment to the process.

How long it takes to successfully integrate a new cat with a dog depends on the situation, says Katherine Houpt, VMD, PhD, emeritus



James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "It can take anywhere from days to weeks, and it varies a lot with the dog's reaction," she says. "I think it's important to increase exposure gradually when doing an introduction so you can monitor both animals' reactions.

That usually happens over a number of days."

Throwing the two animals together and letting the dust settle is almost universally a bad idea. "The worst danger is the death of the new animal. Secondly, there's a danger of

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## SHORT TAKES

### A Cable Station Just for Dogs

DogTV appears to be a whole new breed of television — an eight-hour block of on-demand cable TV programming designed to keep your dog relaxed and entertained while you are at work. There will be no commercials, no ratings and no reruns.

One million subscribers with two cable companies have access to DogTV in San Diego. It is doing so well that parent company PTV Media plans to offer it nationally in the next several months, according to Gilad Neumann, chief executive officer of DogTV. It will cost about \$4.99 a month, says Neumann. If you figure more than 46 million U.S. households have dogs — according to the American Pet Products Association — and 97 percent of U.S. homes have televisions, the future looks promising.

To get the right footage, cameramen got on their knees and shot low and long, from the point of view of the dog. In production, they had to mute colors, alter sound and add music specially written for dogs.

For years, pet owners have been leaving a television or radio on when they go out so their pets have company, said Dr. Nick Dodman, director of the Animal Behavior Clinic in Department of Clinical Sciences at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in Massachusetts. But Dodman said that according to research on the canine brain, with analog television, dogs could only see a flickering screen. New technologies like digital TV, high-definition cameras and enhanced production have changed the way dogs perceive the images, while big screens allow them to see from anywhere in a room, according to Neumann.

Do dogs really understand what they're watching? Dodman said research is ongoing, but it appears that dogs not only recognize other dogs on TV, they may even respond differently to their own breed.

### Help for Dogs with Epilepsy

Research conducted by the University of Minnesota's College of Veterinary Medicine could potentially help owners of severely epileptic dogs predict, control and more effectively treat their pets' seizures.

The research focuses on a small implanted device that continuously monitors brain activity using EEG — or electroencephalography — readings. The likelihood of a seizure is then reported using a series of colored lights on a device worn outside of the patient's body — for canine patients, it's a small vest. The device, which has already been proven to detect seizures

in certain species, is now being developed for preemptive seizure treatment in dogs, and humans as well.

"What would be more important, which nobody's done yet, is can you predict a seizure before it occurs, and then intervene with drugs," said Ned Patterson, principal investigator of the study and co-founder of the Canine Epilepsy Network. While the device is not currently implanted in any dogs in Patterson's clinic, he predicts that the device will be "fully up and functional" in canine patients within the next six months.

Across the country, a reported 2.1 million dogs — between one and five percent of all dogs in the U.S. — suffer from some form of epilepsy or recurring seizures. Patterson's research, including his current work with the implanted device, aims to help dog owners achieve peace of mind by knowing if and when their pet will have a seizure and how they can treat them using medication.

The device study, and collaboration between several health researchers interested in both human and dog seizures, may also help give people with epilepsy the same peace of mind.

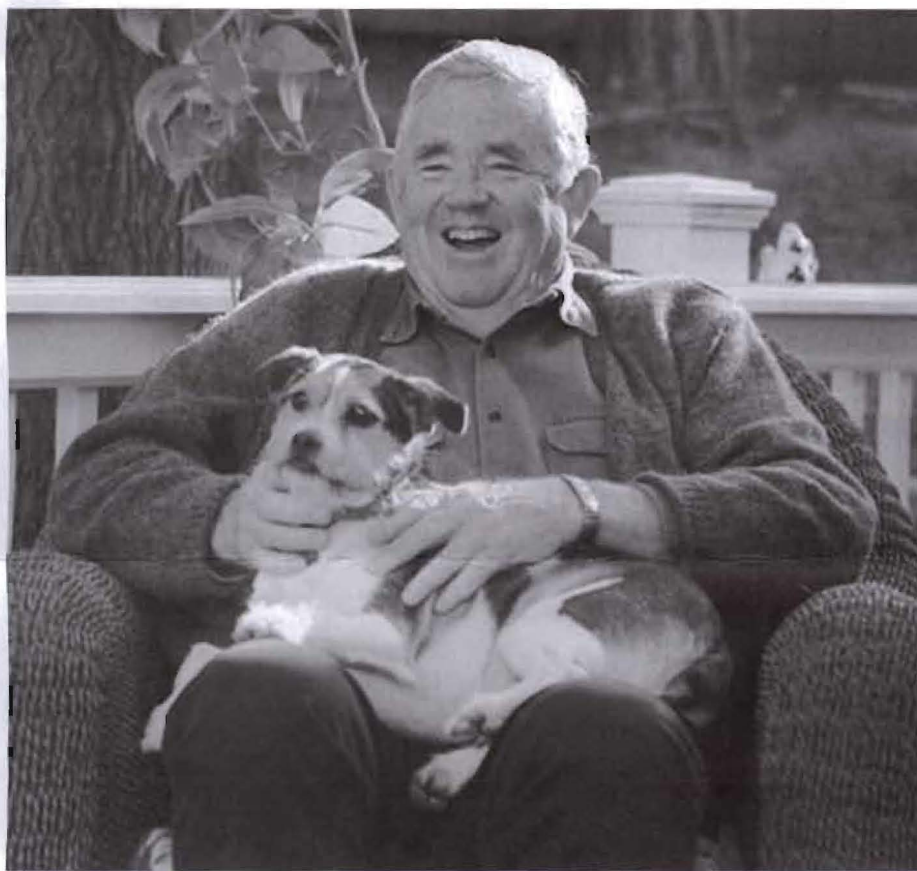
Funded through a grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the research is a partnership between the University's veterinary school and College of Pharmacy, the Mayo Clinic, the University of Pennsylvania and NeuroVista Corporation, the company behind the device. Preliminary tests of the device's effectiveness in humans are currently being carried out on 15 human patients in Australia, Patterson added.

With the device, a person with epilepsy would be warned when a seizure will occur and prevent it with fewer drugs than it takes to stop a seizure that's already occurring, said James Cloyd, a professor in the College of Pharmacy and an investigator in the study.

In the research, Cloyd focuses on using preexisting drugs to effectively treat seizures predicted in patients wearing the implanted device. "This study gives us this wonderful opportunity to determine how this system might work, and we can do it in dogs that have almost the same type of epilepsy as humans," Cloyd said.

While Patterson's research typically focuses on animals, he is excited about the potential benefits this study presents to human patients. "I'm first and foremost a veterinarian, so I'll only do research if it's going to help dogs," he said. "But if it also helps humans, that's really cool." ♦





**DOGS ARE GOOD MEDICINE.** An aging family member or neighbor may need a little extra help in providing proper care.

Older people must also have the mental clarity to remember when the dog was last fed, seems ill or needs to go outside. "But disability or age should not determine whether or not a person can take care of a pet," says Buchwald. "We see people in wheelchairs walking dogs and homebound people taking good care of their dogs."

The important thing is that when people become frail or disabled, there is help so that they can keep their pets.

"We adopt pets out to older people all the time," says Buchwald. "We don't turn down adopters based on age. We do have an in-depth discussion as to the responsibilities of caring for a dog. In many ways, retired pet owners are ideal because they tend to have plenty of time to spend with their pets."

**How You Can Help.** The ways in which you can assist older people and their dogs will depend on the specific problems they may be facing, and how those problems affect the dogs' care. Here are some options:

Start by making simple modifications in the home. "If an individual has trouble bending over to put the leash on a dog, you can train the dog to hop up on the sofa or put its front paws on an ottoman, making it easier to attach the leash to the collar," says Buchwald. "You can also make feeding easier by rigging up an elevated feeding station for the dog. As long as the dog can easily reach the higher-level water or food bowl, this will work for someone who has back problems or arthritis," says Buchwald.

If walking is an issue for an older person, some small dogs can be trained to use wee-wee pads or even use a doggie litter box. Elevate the litter box so that the dog can jump in, and the dog's companion can more easily reach the litter box to clean it. "Since most dogs do need to go outside for exercise and socialization, a neighbor can come over and take the dog out once a day," says Buchwald.

For advice or assistance on modifying your home, consult with private dog trainers who can give you some tips, suggests Buchwald. Check out the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT)

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## Helping Elderly Keep Their Pets

*Planning for the future is important, but some present day modifications can help, too. Here's how.*

Six years ago, a 75-year-old woman adopted a three and a half-year-old dog — part poodle, part terrier. There had been many dogs in her past. And before she adopted her dog, she had a cat that lived to be twenty one.

"My mother had that dog until she died six months ago," says Gail Buchwald, senior vice-president, overseeing the adoption center of the ASPCA in New York. "The dog was a wonderful companion; my mother would have been lonely her last years without him. They were walking companions. He kept her fit, and she gave him one-on-one attention. The thing that made it work is that we had a plan in place to help her care for the dog, and there were friends, relatives and neighbors who cared."

We've heard a lot over the past several years about the emotional and physical benefits of older (and younger!) people keeping pets. The problem is this: As people get older, they often experience

disabilities which may prevent them from fully caring for the pets they love. What can older people (or their loved ones) do to make pet ownership easier?

**The Challenges.** Seniors face a number of issues in keeping their dogs or cats. One of the most important concerns is physical disability. Sight may begin to fail, walking or bending may become more difficult and memory may wane at times. The expenses of food, routine medicine and veterinary bills may be overwhelming for a person on a fixed income. Family members may discourage an older person from keeping a dog because they worry the dog could knock over or bite the individual — or just be too much to care for properly.

Pet ownership does require some mobility. A person must be willing and able to take responsibility for another life — whether it's feeding the dog or taking the dog outside for exercise.





## Recognize Anal Sac Disorders

*Infection in these structures can cause scooting and other problems. Here's what you should know.*

It's an alarming, puzzling, rather unpleasant and — especially if you're entertaining guests over a fancy dinner — maybe even somewhat embarrassing sight. Your typically fastidious and well-behaved dog gets kind of a faraway look in its eyes and, perhaps whimpering a bit, starts dragging his butt across your living room carpet, pausing occasionally to lick the area immediately beneath his tail.

Is he simply trying to get your attention? Just showing off for the guests? Probably not. This bizarre behavior — often described as “scooting” — is more likely to be an indication that the poor creature's anal sacs are acting up. In most dogs, these minuscule pouches remain hidden away harmlessly for life. In some cases, however, they can be a source of irritation, inflammation, infection and worse. The best thing is to seek out veterinary consultation.

**Tiny Structures.** Dogs have two anal sacs, which are embedded within the tissue of the external anal sphincter — the expanding and contracting muscle surrounding the anal opening. Each sac, explains James Flanders, DVM, is typically about a quarter-inch to a half-inch in diameter. In a small dog — a Chihuahua, for example — it will be about the size of a pea; in a large dog, such as a Great Dane, each anal sac will be about the size of a kidney bean.

The sacs themselves are not externally visible, says Dr. Flanders, an associate professor of surgery at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. The only evidence of their presence, he notes, are the openings of two slender tubes (ducts) that lead from the anal sacs to areas directly adjacent to the anus. These ducts, says Dr. Flanders, are visible as pinhole-size openings at the four o'clock position on one side of a

**CONSULT YOUR VETERINARIAN.** If you notice your dog having any issues in the anal area, you should bring him in for an examination.

dog's anus and at the eight o'clock position on the other side.

The purpose of the ducts is to transport a smelly, viscous fluid (secreted by many tiny glands within the walls of the anal sacs) from the sacs to the anus. This movement of fluid is initiated by muscle pressure exerted on the anal sacs, usually during defecation.

What is the purpose of this slippery, foul-smelling fluid? Says Dr. Flanders: “Some people think that it serves as a lubricant for the feces or that dogs use it for marking their territory. Maybe that's the case, but no one really knows what its purpose is, since dogs can function fine without it. They mark with their urine, and the amount of fluid that comes out during defecation is minimal. But the sac and the way it is designed to function is probably vestigial — something passed down from a prehistoric animal but really serving no essential purpose today.”

Although most dogs will live out their lives totally oblivious to their anal glands, sacs, ducts and secretions, a few may experience problems that range from mild and easily treatable to serious and, at worst, even life-threatening. Owners should, of course, take seriously any signs of trouble in the rectal or anal area, since these might signal the presence of, for instance, a tumor, gastrointestinal disease or parasitic infection.

When problems are manifested by scooting or persistent licking of the anus, however, they usually have to do with the consistency of the glandular secretions or the anatomical structure of the anal ducts, says Dr. Flanders. “The secretions can become thicker than they should be, perhaps due to bacterial infection,” he notes, “or a duct may be abnormally shaped or not as wide as it should be.” Some breeds — poodles for example — seem to be more susceptible than others to anal sac problems; middle-aged and old dogs are at greater risk than younger dogs; and obese dogs are more likely to experience the condition than are animals whose proper weight has been maintained.

**Dangerous Blockage.** Although tumors can develop in the anal glands and



possibly pose a lethal threat, they are extremely rare, says Dr. Flanders. The vast majority of problems are associated specifically with the sacs and occur when secretions cannot escape naturally through the ducts, either because the secreted fluid is too thick or because the ducts are too narrow. It is also possible for an animal's diet to play a role. Dogs that routinely consume food that is high in cereal fibers may produce soft, mushy stools that do not exert the pressure on the anal sacs during defecation that is required to force evacuation of the fluid.

As the backed-up fluid grows thicker and possibly bloody, the sacs become progressively more irritated and then inflamed. When the sacs eventually become filled, they are likely to be distended, and the ducts may become plugged. This process (impaction) may lead to infection, because the clogged fluid provides a hospitable environment for bacterial growth. This process — from inflammation to impaction to secondary infection — can pose a serious health threat to a dog that is not treated promptly.

In most cases, says Dr. Flanders, impacted anal sacs will not obstruct defecation. "But the dog will have the feeling that it has to defecate even when

it really doesn't," says Dr. Flanders. "You'll often see it straining to move its bowels. It will drag its bottom across your lawn or a carpet in order to relieve the discomfort, and it will bite and lick at the anal region. Sometimes you'll be able to see that the area is irritated and red." If these signs persist, he says, veterinary examination is needed to determine whether the cause is an anal sac problem or some other condition associated with the anus, rectum or colon.

**Relieving the Backup.** If initial examination rules out other possible causes of the condition, the veterinarian will relieve the pressure in the anal sacs by inserting a gloved finger into the anus and applying gentle pressure to the swollen area in an effort to express the retained secretions. "This can be painful for the dog, but it is typically done without sedating it," says Dr. Flanders. "If the sacs have become impacted, however, the veterinarian will probably sedate the animal."

Once the excess fluid has been expressed from the sacs and the ducts have been relieved of blockage, the veterinarian will usually put an antibiotic solution into the sacs. If significant swelling remains, the veterinarian will

advise the owner to apply hot packs to the dog's anal region until the swelling subsides. In addition, the dog will probably be prescribed an oral antibiotic — or a combination of antibiotic and anti-inflammatory medications — to reduce pain, swelling and inflammation.

In order to avoid the inconvenience and expense of repeated visits to a veterinary clinic, it is possible for owners of dogs that are chronically afflicted with anal sac blockage to learn how to periodically express the fluid at home — lifting the dog's tail, delicately squeezing the anal sacs to express the contents, and applying appropriate antibiotics. However, Dr. Flanders says that he is not in favor of such do-it-yourself anal sac expression. He recommends that the procedure be done only in a veterinary clinic by an experienced practitioner.

"Hopefully," says Dr. Flanders, "this course of treatment will resolve the problem. If it recurs a few times, the same treatment can be repeated. But if it recurs frequently — every month or so — the anal sacs may have to be surgically removed." Given the limited role, if any, that these sacs play in a dog's life, this procedure will bring relief without much loss to the animal. ♦

## ELDERLY AND THEIR PETS

... (continued from page 3)

at 800-738-3647 or visit the website at [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com).

**Choose the Right Dog.** If you know an older person who wants a dog, encourage him to adopt an appropriate dog. It's best, according to Buchwald, to avoid puppies and adolescent dogs that are high energy pets. Get a mel-lower dog. "When choosing a dog for an older person, go by disposition — not just size," says Buchwald. "This may surprise you, but Greyhounds actually make great couch potatoes," she says. On the other hand, the Jack Russell Terrier is a high-energy, demanding dog. Even if it's small, it may not be the best choice for an older person."

**Build a Support System.** Arrange for local friends and relatives to help older people care for their dogs. Sometimes just checking in to see that every-

thing is all right is sufficient to give a senior the confidence to keep on going. And if there is something wrong with the dog (or person), you can pick it up quickly. You can do a variety of things to help, including walking the dog, taking the dog for veterinary and grooming appointments, buying dog food — or even offering your home to board the dog if the senior companion must go away or has to go into the hospital. An older person should have a call-list of friends, relatives and neighbors who are available to help in case something happens.

"Some cities have programs that provide volunteers to check in on people and pets," says Buchwald. "In New York City, there is a small program called the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA) Pets Project, which is dedicated to helping older people and their pets stay together." Call your local humane society or city's elderly services to see if there is a similar program. ♦

## PLAN FOR YOUR PET'S FUTURE

*If an older person loves his dog, it's important to encourage him to plan for what happens to the dog if he can no longer care for it — or if he dies before his dog. Most elderly welcome the idea of talking about this; it's often their younger relatives or friends who resist the subject. Older people should arrange for an appropriate person to adopt their dogs or cats if and when the time comes. This way, the pet owner can feel like he or she has some control over the animal's future.*

*You can contact the Humane Society of the United States for a free kit 'Providing for Your Pet's Future Without You.' Contact them at 202-452-1100, or visit their website at [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org). ♦*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOODWORK

... (continued from cover)

routine bloodwork as the “first tier” of defense against countless life-threatening canine diseases. The second tier can involve specialized tests to examine an animal’s blood for signs of any suspected organ disease or the presence of infectious agents. These blood tests often support or confirm preliminary diagnoses of specific canine disorders. Experts feel that it’s money well spent; obviously, it’s better for the health of the dog to spot a health problem early and try to prevent it from getting worse.

**The CBC.** The chief function of canine blood, like that of human blood, is to carry oxygen and nutrients to the body tissues and to transport carbon dioxide and wastes away from them. It also serves in such processes as cell development, tissue repair and the warding off of infection.

Also like human blood, canine blood is made up of red cells (erythrocytes), white blood cells (leukocytes), platelets and a colorless fluid (plasma) in which these and other life-supporting blood components — such as hormones, proteins and salts — are suspended. All of these ingredients in their proper balance are vitally important to a dog’s health.

The CBC (also known as a hemogram) includes the following major measurements and evaluations:

◆ *A packed cell volume (hematocrit) reveals the concentration of red blood cells in the plasma.* A low red cell concentration might indicate that the animal is anemic — either its bone marrow isn’t producing the cells in sufficient number or they are being lost or destroyed. A high concentration could mean that the animal is dehydrated.

◆ *A red blood cell count measures the actual number of red cells in a given amount of blood and discerns any abnormalities in their shape, size or color.* The amount of hemoglobin is also assessed.

◆ *A white blood cell count evaluates and counts the number of leukocytes, all of which are produced in the bone marrow or other tissues and play various roles in attacking and destroying disease-causing organisms.* A high white cell count may

indicate, for example, that an animal is harboring an infection, is under extraordinary stress or is affected by a serious and chronic illness, such as leukemia.

◆ *A platelet count measures the concentration of thrombocytes, disk-shaped blood cells that promote blood clotting.*

The CBC also measures the protein levels in blood plasma. Low levels of these proteins suggest, for example, the possibility of liver, kidney or gastrointestinal malfunction, while high levels may indicate the presence of infection, chronic inflammation or some types of cancer.

**Chemistry Panel.** The chemistry panel focuses on the chemical components suspended in the clear, watery content (serum) of the blood after it has been separated from the cells and from certain proteins that are needed for clotting.

In these tests, the presence of a dozen or more substances is evaluated in order to assess a wide range of health-determining factors. The chemistry panel can reveal problems in an animal’s organ function. It can measure the levels of necessary hormones. And it can determine whether the blood is sufficiently rich in electrolytes — chemical compounds that regulate the exchange of necessary electrical charges across cell membranes.

Abnormal (or subnormal) blood levels of various substances may indicate damage or disease involving the kidneys, liver, muscles or glands. For example:

◆ *High levels of creatinine and blood urea nitrogen (BUN) may indicate kidney failure.*

◆ *High levels of alkaline phosphatase (ALP) or alanine aminotransferase (ALT)*

*may indicate liver damage.*

◆ *Elevated amounts of amylase may indicate kidney or pancreatic disease.*

◆ *Abnormal calcium levels may indicate the presence of tumors, kidney disease or other disorders.*

◆ *High levels of blood sugar (glucose) may indicate diabetes.*

◆ *Low levels of potassium may explain an animal’s chronic lethargy or lack of muscle control.*

In addition, a chemistry panel measures total proteins, including one called albumin and others known as globulins. High or low blood levels of these proteins can influence many bodily processes, including the ability to retain water and to defend against infection.

**Additional Testing.** The value of basic bloodwork is indisputable and — along with patient history and a thorough physical exam — is well established as a fundamental element of modern veterinary practice. The use of blood testing, however, is not limited to routine preventive medicine. Animals who are about to have serious surgery, for example, will almost always undergo a CBC and chemistry panel to make sure that they can tolerate anesthesia. And blood serum tests have been developed to help identify substances that produce allergic reactions in animals.

Results of routine bloodwork and most specific blood tests can be available almost immediately. Occasionally, the results of basic bloodwork may be confusing or not readily explicable, in which cases additional tests would be required. And some complex and rigorous tests will require blood samples to be shipped to a specialized lab. ♦

Owner: **DAWG**  
Patient: **HEIDI**  
Species: **CANINE**  
Breed: **DOXIE**  
Age: **15Y**  
Gender: **FEMALE**

Requisition #: **1731813**  
Accession #: **L4856831**  
Order rec’d: **8/15/2007**  
Ordered by: **QUINN**

**D.A.W.G.**  
5480 OVERPASS RD.  
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93111  
1-805-681-0561

Account # 5756

TOTAL HEALTH		CHEM 27			
Test	Value	Ref Range	Flags	Bar Graph	
ALK. PHOSPHATASE	430	10 - 150 U/L	HIGH		
ALT (SGPT)	76	5 - 107 U/L			
AST (SGOT)	31	5 - 55 U/L			
CK	219	10 - 200 U/L	HIGH		
GGT	7	0 - 14 U/L			
AMYLASE	1117	450 - 1240 U/L			
LIPASE	1160	100 - 750 U/L	HIGH		
ALBUMIN	3.0	2.5 - 4.0 g/dL			
TOTAL PROTEIN	6.5	5.1 - 7.8 g/dL			

**A LOT OF INFORMATION.** The results of your dog’s bloodwork can give your veterinarian a good picture of his overall health.



## CAT AND DOG INTRODUCTIONS...

(continued from cover)

injury to the dog; thirdly, you can cause a fear reaction in either animal that may be difficult to overcome," says Dr. Houpt.

The best way to facilitate an introduction and eventual integration is to follow a carefully orchestrated strategy — one that begins before the cat even sets foot into the house.

### Screen for Predatory Behavior.

If your dog has a history of flying after squirrels or other small animals, it's safe to say that he has a well-developed prey drive or has simply learned to enjoy the thrill of the chase. Either way, this poses a major challenge to your success. When threatened by a larger predator, most cats react by fleeing. Unfortunately, this plays right into a primary canine instinct — to chase smaller creatures, either for amusement or to hunt. That's not to say that this drive can't be overcome; but you must take extra precautions when the two animals first meet and expect to spend a significant amount of time using positive reinforcement techniques to keep the dog's chasing behaviors in check.

If you don't know how your dog will behave around a small animal, test it out, says Dr. Houpt. "You can simply take it to visit other animals — on leash — to see if your dog is really predatory."

If your dog has caught and killed cats or other animals in the past, you're beyond red flags: **Do not try to convince yourself that you can successfully eradicate or contain this type of behavior.** "I've seen cases where dogs have broken into homes through screened porches to kill cats," cautions Dr. Houpt. In this case, it's better to resign yourself to life without cats or other small animals in the home.

**Create Positive Associations.** The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recommends a very slow introduction that uses food and smell to get the animals used to each other. First, they suggest, confine the cat in a room with her litter box, food, water and a bed — but with no possible contact with the dog. Feed your cat on one side of the door and your dog on the other. Doing this will create pleasant associations with the presence of the other animal. (Depending on how eager your dog is to meet the newcomer, you might consider keeping

her on a leash or crated for this process.) In addition, you can rub the cat with a cloth and leave it for the dog to examine, and do the same for the cat.

When your cat is comfortable in her new room and is using the litter box, switch things up by confining your dog in the room and allowing the cat to roam the house. This gives the dog the opportunity to explore the cat's domain and scent in more detail, while the cat can begin to get comfortable in her new surroundings.

**Exercise Restraint.** When you feel the dog and cat are ready to come face-to-face, says Dr. Houpt, start with the cat in a carrier and the dog leashed or restrained so she can't charge the container. Assess your dog's reaction. If she seems mildly curious or friendly and the cat doesn't seem panicked, you can allow the dog to investigate the carrier and the cat. You can reinforce the experience for both pets by feeding them treats (you may need to recruit a partner so you can each focus on one animal). Keep the meeting short and repeat this step several times over several days until both animals are tolerating each other's presence and seem relaxed.

Next, set up a barrier the animals can see through, such as a baby gate, and let the cat free on one side with the dog on the other. "If the dog is going up to the barrier and doesn't seem too interested, that's a good sign," says Dr. Houpt. "Danger signs are intense interest, staring and attempts to get at the cat through the barrier. If you have a dog that just lies staring at the cat, that's probably not a friendly interest. That's a predatory behavior and that dog may try to kill the cat."

Again, reinforce calm behavior for both animals with treats. Practice putting your dog in a down/stay while the cat roams around and reward him for staying in this position quietly.

### Preparing for Free Interaction.

When you feel that both animals are sufficiently used to each other, it's time to try a face-to-face meeting. Keep your dog on a leash, put her into a down/stay, and allow the cat to approach on her own terms. This is a great time to give your dog high-value treats for staying in position. If she leaves her down/stay, lure her back into position or, if she shows signs of getting too excited, calmly remove her from the room. If the cat runs away

or shows aggressive behavior toward the dog, return to the previous step.

If your dog shows signs of chasing, don't punish her; simply encourage her back into a down/stay, redirect her attention, calmly leave the room with her, or remove the cat from the situation. If you respond with a correction or a punishment to the dog's actions toward the cat, she will begin to associate the cat — rather than her own reactions to the cat — with the negative consequence. This can create an association that will be very difficult to remove and can lead to increased aggression in the future. It's also important that you freely reward "appropriate" behaviors from your dog, including sitting, lying down or just plain ignoring the cat.

Make no mistake: This is the hard part. "We have had people who've done months and months of obedience work with the dog in the presence of the cat," says Dr. Houpt. "Every time the dog made a move toward the cat, the owner used a Gentle Leader head harness to have him sit. If the owner is committed, that can work, but it takes a long time." ♦

## IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS

**Supervise:** Even if things seem to be going well, don't assume that you can casually leave the two animals alone together. It's safest to keep them separated when you are not at home, at least until you are completely sure the cat will be safe.

**Provide an Escape Hatch:** Make sure that the cat has a place, preferably a high one, to which he can retreat. A high bookshelf or a kitty condo are good options; just make sure your dog can't reach it.

**Separate the Food:** Keep the cat food out of the dog's reach (to prevent unwanted snacking) and make sure the cat doesn't approach the dog at mealtime (to prevent a dangerous food-guarding reaction).

**Avoid the Chase:** Never encourage chasing, even if it seems to be done in fun. You never know when the game will get serious and one or both animals might be injured. ♦





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We regret that we cannot  
respond to individual  
inquiries about canine  
health or behavior matters.

**Q** I have recently adopted a rescued Shih-Tzu, a three-year-old male named "Skiddles." He has a wonderful temperament and is great in every way, but he howls! He even howls when I take a shower. I sing to him to let him know where I am in the house. His howls are not consistent, and frequently occur at 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. My neighbors don't need to think I'm hurting this little dog. I would appreciate any suggestions you may have in this matter.

**A** There are several reasons why Skiddles may be howling and several strategies you can use to help him stop this behavior. The first step in managing this problem is to determine why he howls. Once we understand why he howls, we can develop a specific management plan. Given that I have very little information about Skiddles's environment, personality, daily routine, relationship to you, etc., it is difficult to narrow down the reasons why he is howling. I have included a list of the most likely reasons for his howling and some general strategies for dealing with this problem.

The reasons that dogs howl include (1) separation anxiety; (2) attention- or companion-seeking; (3) response to certain noises, such as sirens.

You will need to determine all stimuli that lead to howling. Exposure to these stimuli can then be avoided or the dog's response to the stimuli altered. I suspect that Skiddles may be suffering from separation anxiety because he howls when you are out of sight.

The first thing you should do is to teach him to sit and stay; when he can sit for a whole minute while you are in the room, begin to leave him by going to another room for gradually increasing times. Be sure that you reward the sit-stays with delicious tiny treats.

Prevent access to the stimuli (for example, play loud music to drown out the siren). Alter your response to the howling. Avoid responses that reinforce the vocalization, such as excess verbal reactions. Depending on your voice, your singing, for instance, may be a big reward for him. He will learn that his howling leads to hearing your voice, so that when he is really alone he may howl and howl because previously that has resulted in your presence.

You should train him for the "quiet" command. Whenever the dog vocalizes, say "quiet." Call the dog to you, ask him to "sit," and praise a quiet response.

Gradually expose the dog to the stimuli (other than separation that induces vocalizations) while using favored rewards and praise to ensure a calm, positive response during the exposure. Reward quiet behavior, especially in response to provocative stimuli.

A head halter (pictured below) can be used to reorient the head away from the stimulus, focus Skiddles on you, and prompt him to sit with his mouth closed. As soon as the dog is relaxed, the leash is relaxed.

If all else fails, bark-control devices can be used. Some, but not all, bark collars respond to howling as well as barking, but you don't want to use these if he howls because he is anxious.

I hope these general guidelines help. Again, I must emphasize the importance of recognizing the stimuli that cause Skiddles to howl in order to begin treating the problem. ♦



## COMING UP ...

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