



DOG Watch

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

Vol. 16, No. 11 ♦ November 2012

INSIDE

Short Takes 2

Tail chasing; financial help for owners of dogs with cancer.

Holiday Overload and Health 3

Sleep, appetite, the immune system, even personality can be affected.

Natural Preservatives on the Job 4

Some manufacturers use artificial ones to prevent food from going rancid.

Ask the Experts 8

An otherwise loving Dalmatian is aggressive toward other dogs.

IN THE NEWS ...

Omega-3 fatty acids boost pups' health

Healthy puppies fed a diet fortified with fish oils rich in the omega-3 fatty acid DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) showed better cognitive, memory, psychomotor, immunologic and retinal functions than those on reduced DHA diets, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. (Psychomotor is the relationship between cognitive functions and physical movement.)

Researchers assigned 48 Beagle puppies to three groups after weaning. One group was fed a diet low in DHA, another was fed moderate DHA and another high DHA. The diet of the third group also contained higher concentrations of vitamin E, taurine, choline and the amino acid L-carnitine.

After a year on the regimen, the high-DHA group had significantly better results for visual contrast discrimination and early psychomotor performance in side-to-side navigation through an obstacle-containing maze. ♦

When You Discover a Fatty Tumor

It can be difficult to decide if you should wait and see if it will grow larger or have it removed now



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Imagine that you notice a lump while rubbing your dog's abdomen. Defined yet soft and smooth, the lump lies just beneath the skin. You're alarmed. Could this jelly-like growth be cancer?

Your discovery warrants an examination. The veterinarian will do a needle aspirate of any lump to remove a small amount of material. "It looks almost like grease when it's squirted under a microscope slide," says surgical specialist James A. Flanders, DVM, at Cornell University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Often the growth will turn out to be a lipoma — a benign fatty tumor. However, the diagnosis will likely spark a discussion between veterinarian and owner to decide on the course in the dog's best interest: Should

(continued on page 6)

Safely taking in the sights and sounds

Practice dog-walking diplomacy, but be prepared to encounter potential dangers like roaming dogs

Mention the word "walk," and you'll trigger happy tail wags and a dash to the door from most dogs. Grabbing the leash and taking your dog out for a brisk, daily 30-minute walk can help keep him at a healthy body weight and lower his risk for obesity-related conditions such as diabetes, pancreatitis and heart disease.

Moreover, the benefits of walks extend far beyond exercise for dogs of all ages, sizes and breeds, says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "During a walk, you can reinforce basic obedience commands, such as sit and stay, and provide environmental enrichment opportunities for dogs to take in smells, sights and sounds."

As a savvy owner, however, you'll want to be aware of the risks other dogs might pose and prepare for them:

- ♦ Take a canister of compressed air or citronella spray with you to repel a roaming dog on the attack.
- ♦ Size up the body language of approaching dogs — leashed or loose — and act protectively. If you see an excited dog yanking his owner toward you, cross the street or move off the sidewalk and get your dog to sit, stay, and look at you as they go by.
- ♦ Politely decline invitations for the two dogs to meet, especially if the other owner doesn't have good control of his dog or you see either dog tensing his body or snarling.

(continued on page 5)

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DogWatch® (ISSN: 1098-2639) is published monthly for \$39 per year by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1631. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation. ©2011 Belvoir Media Group, LLC.

Postmaster: Send address corrections to *DogWatch*, P.O. Box 8535, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535.

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SHORT TAKES

Why they tail chase

Researchers at the University of Helsinki used a questionnaire survey of 368 owners of dogs who obsessively chased their tails to determine the possible effects of personality and environment. Tail chasing is a classic obsessive compulsive disorder in dogs. A variant is spinning, in which the dog spins in circles.

Tail chasing is believed to have a genetic predisposition because it's more common in certain breeds, such as Bull Terriers, German Shepherd Dogs and Staffordshire Bull Terriers. OCD also includes freezing, staring, flank sucking (common in Doberman Pinschers) and chasing light and shadows.

In the Helsinki study, which researchers said could have implications for humans, they found that:

- ◆ Tail chasing had an early onset of 3 to 6 months of age.
- ◆ Almost half of the dogs showed lowered responsiveness during bouts of tail chasing and also displayed other types of compulsions more often than the control group.
- ◆ Neutered females had less tail chasing, suggesting an influence of ovarian hormones.
- ◆ Tail chasers were shyer and had been separated earlier from their mothers than the controls.
- ◆ Most intriguing, dogs who received dietary supplements, especially vitamins and minerals, exhibited less tail chasing.

"Our study does not prove an actual causal relationship between vitamins and lessened tail chasing, but interestingly similar preliminary results have been observed in human OCD," said researcher Katriina Tiira, Ph.D. Additional studies will investigate whether vitamins could be effective in treatment.

"In conclusion," the researchers said, "the early onset and the variable nature of the repetitive behavior, which is affected by environmental factors such as micronutrients,

neutering and maternal care, share several similar components between canine and human compulsions and tail chasing as a model for human OCD."

The study was published in the peer-reviewed journal *PLoS One*. It was part of the DOGPSYCH project, funded by the European Research Council. Participating scientists investigate the genetic background of anxiety disorders, such as timidity, compulsive behavior and sound sensitivity, along with their similarities to human diseases.

Passing on pets

"Reasons for Not Owning a Dog or Cat," the first of a three-part study by the American Humane Association's Animal Welfare Research Institute, has revealed obstacles to pet ownership. Interviews with 1,500 former pet owners and non-pet owners found they don't have pets now because of the costs, perceived lack of time, dislike of companion animals and — in one of five respondents — enduring grief over the loss of a previous pet.

Help for cancer victims

In the last quarter alone, the Petco Foundation awarded \$1.8 million to scores of animal welfare groups around the country. Proceeds from its Pet Cancer Awareness benefit, with support from Blue Buffalo Co., included a grant of \$50,000 to the Magic Bullet Fund, which provides financial help for veterinary care to owners of dogs with cancer.

The fund has helped more than 200 dogs with chemotherapy, radiation and

surgery. Author Laurie Kaplan launched the effort to honor her own cancer survivor, Bullet, and in conjunction with the release of her book "Help Your Dog Fight Cancer." She works with 12 volunteers around the U.S. and logs success stories at www.themagicbulletfund.org. They include Bullit, shown on this page romping on a hike with his owner after treatment. His left foreleg was amputated after a diagnosis of osteosarcoma. ♦



Having three legs doesn't slow down cancer survivor Bullit on a hike with his owner.

Holiday Overload Can Affect Their Health

New people and situations can impact sleep, appetite, digestion, the immune system — even personality



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Avoidance is often the reaction to continued stress, with or without vocalizations.

Between shopping, traveling and entertaining, the weeks from Thanksgiving through New Year's are anything but relaxing. However, humans aren't the only individuals to suffer holiday overload. Dogs can also have difficulty at this time of year, reacting to new people, animals and situations. If prolonged, the stress can result in changes in health and behavior.

In addition to increased activity in the household, visiting dogs and mixed signals can cause conflicts that lead to frustration and anxiety, says Germain F. Rivard, DMV, Ph.D., a resident in veterinary behavioral medicine at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Unpredictability of interactions and unsafe situations can create conflicts, as can competition for resources such

as consumables, possessions, attention, affection and activities."

No Coping Mechanisms. Among the immediate results: "A dog under stress could change personality as he loses his coping mechanisms," Dr. Rivard says. "Often, the reaction is avoidance with or without vocalizations, and if he

(continued on page 7)

PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE TO AVOID THE HUBBUB

Avoiding the manifestations of stress during the holidays requires your vigilance and common sense:

- ◆ **Watch for triggers.** Be alert to your dog's body language, and remove him from stressful situations. For example, if he's turning his body away when a visiting child tries to hug him, call the child away from the dog.
- ◆ **Provide a safe place.** "A sensible dog will excuse himself from a stressful situation," says Dr. Houpt. Give him a place to escape the hubbub, such as a closed bedroom or a crate away from the action. "But make sure he realizes he's not being punished — give him a stuffed Kong to chew," adds Dr. Houpt.
- ◆ **Manage canine guests.** For many dogs, a visiting canine can be a source of stress. Until you know how your dog will react, keep the guest dog on leash, Dr. Houpt says. "Use baby gates, and walk both dogs together. And if there's a big size difference, muzzle the bigger dog."
- ◆ **Forgo costumes.** Think twice about putting your dog in any sort of costume. "Lots of dogs don't like having to wear antlers," Dr. Houpt says. And consider taking holiday pictures in your dog's own familiar home rather than at a public event with many stressed dogs attending.
- ◆ **Reconsider seating arrangements.** Many dogs start fighting if they're each seated with their owners on the same couch. Instead, "Have one human-canine pair sit in another chair entirely," Dr. Houpt says. "Better yet, put both dogs on the floor."
- ◆ **Chill.** Dogs may become stressed if they sense that's the case with their people. "Reduce your own stress," Dr. Houpt says. "Don't be a perfectionist."

Finally, when the holidays seem to overwhelm you, set aside some private time for you and your dog to enjoy each other's company. Time spent with loved ones is what the holidays are really all about.

Are Natural Preservatives Up to the Job?

Some manufacturers use artificial ones to prevent spoilage, especially in high-fat food

Food preservatives labeled “natural” sound healthy, but they’re not necessarily better at keeping dog food fresh. Depending on the level of fat in the food, artificial preservatives can sometimes do a better job, says nutritionist Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., Associate Professor at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. “The chemical preservatives are typically used with high-fat products because fats will go rancid pretty quickly.”

Manufacturers add preservatives to foods to prevent spoilage caused by bacteria, molds, fungi or yeast. The preservatives also slow or prevent changes in color, flavor or texture, and maintain freshness by delaying the onset of rancidity.

Artificial preservatives include sodium erythorbate, sodium nitrite, sodium benzoate, calcium sorbate, potassium sorbate, calcium propionate, BHA, BHT and EDTA.

Commonly used natural preservatives are ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and tocopherols such as vitamin E and its derivatives. When the label on the bag says “naturally preserved with mixed tocopherols,” that means that vitamin E is on the job.



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Second Most Popular. After vitamin E, the second most utilized natural preservative is rosemary extract, Dr. Wakshlag says. It contains ascorbic acid and other types of antioxidants that work to quench free oxygen, which can damage the proteins and fats in your dog’s food.

Despite their “natural” label, natural preservatives are usually formulated in a laboratory. According to the FDA, some ingredients found in nature can be manufactured artificially. Production in a laboratory is usually more economical and ensures the preservatives have greater purity and more consistent quality than their natural counterparts, the FDA says.

Most dry dog food has a shelf life of about a year, but Dr. Wakshlag has his own rule for any foods that contain more than 20 percent fat: “I like to use it within six months.”

If you feed your dog what’s known as a “performance” food formulated for working dogs or canine athletes, chances are it’s high in fat and preserved artificially. The main chemical preservatives are butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) and ethoxyquin.

Chemical Antioxidants. BHA and BHT are phenolic compounds — chemical antioxidants that have a preservative effect on fats. Oxygen reacts to them instead of oxidizing fats or oils, which causes them to spoil. BHA has been found to cause cancer in various animal studies, leading the National Institute of Health’s National Toxicology Program to describe it as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.”

Both BHA and BHT fall under the category of additives labeled GRAS, or generally recognized as safe. Although no available evidence demonstrates a hazard when BHA and BHT are used at current levels, the FDA says uncertain-

ties exist, requiring that additional studies be conducted.

Ethoxyquin is a chemical preservative that helps to prevent the destruction of some vitamins and related compounds in animal food and to prevent peroxide from forming in canned pet foods. In the 1990s, dog owners attributed many health problems such as allergic reactions, skin problems, major organ failure, behavior problems and cancer to the presence of ethoxyquin in dog food. No evidence supported those claims, but ethoxyquin has been linked in manufacturer studies to increases in the levels of liver-related enzymes in the blood and a dose-dependent accumulation of a hemoglobin-related pigment in the liver.

Unknown Effects. The health effects of these changes are unknown, but in 2009 the FDA asked the pet food industry to voluntarily lower the maximum level of use of ethoxyquin in dog food from 150 ppm (0.015 percent) to 75 ppm. Most pet food that contained ethoxyquin never exceeded the lower amount, even before this recommended change.

Should you worry about these three preservatives in your dog’s food?

Dr. Wakshlag says no. “They get a bit of a bad rap because they are not natural chemicals, but anything that’s chemically based in the food industry typically goes through toxicity studies. If you give enough of certain chemicals from green tea extract to dogs, you can cause the liver failure.

“Most chemically derived preservatives added to food have undergone toxicity studies while things like rosemary extract have not. And typically the amounts added to pet foods are 1/100th to 1/1,000th of what is found to cause physiological problems. I’d rather see my dogs eat a very small amount of a chemical preservative and ensure that they aren’t eating rancid food. In the best of all worlds, you get a bag that has natural preservatives and you use it within three to four months, and you don’t have to worry about chemical preservatives at all.” ♦

WALKING ... (from cover)

Pack spare dog waste bags and treats, keeping in mind these tips from Dr. Houpt for a successful outing:

- ◆ *Schedule regular veterinary visits to make sure your dog is in good health for walks.* Make sure he's current on all necessary vaccinations and parasite preventives and undergoes a thorough physical examination twice a year so a medical problem can be caught and possibly treated early.
- ◆ *Reinforce and reward sit, stay and "look at me" cues.* "Always make your dog sit and stay before you open your door and reinforce this on walks," says Dr. Houpt. "You can save his life by stopping him from bolting out and getting hit by a car."
- ◆ *Select the best walking gear for him.* To prevent yanking and pulling, consider fitting him with a Gentle Leader or Halti HeadCollar. Both allow effective control of dogs, even large breeds.
- ◆ *Avoid routine.* Vary the tempo, route and duration of your walks to keep you both engaged in the activity. It



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A daily walk provides health benefits and environmental enrichment for you both.

- can become boring for a dog to sniff the same hydrant on the same route each day.
- ◆ *Consider your dog's personality.* If he's shy or highly reactive, time the walk when neighbors won't be out and about. And avoid dog parks.
- ◆ *Be alert to your surroundings to spot potential dangers and sidestep them.* Avoid high-traffic areas with skateboarders and bicyclists if your

- dog has noise sensitivities or a strong prey drive to give chase.
 - ◆ *Don't let him walk on chemically treated lawns or sniff or ingest another dog's feces that may contain parasites.*
- Parting advice from Dr. Houpt: "Don't ask your dog to heel for the whole walk. Part of the time should be sniff time. Make the walk fun for the both of you. This is a chance to bond with your dog." ♦

'YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO DEFEND YOURSELF AND YOUR DOG'

Taking your dogs on walks can trigger unexpected confrontations and potential legal issues. Jonathan Rankin, an attorney in Framingham, Mass., who specializes in animal law, offers this advice for problems you might encounter:

SCENARIO A: A neighbor leaves his front door open, and his dog charges you and your dog on the sidewalk. Can you defend yourself by spraying mace on his dog?

Atty. Rankin: "If you are on public property and have mace and a dog comes up to you and starts to attack, you have a right to defend yourself and your dog. If you are being attacked, you do what you have to do to protect yourself, including kicking an attacking dog. Your neighbor could be found guilty of negligence as well."

SCENARIO B: A dog attacks and injures your leashed dog while he's urinating or defecating in that dog's front yard. Who's at fault?

Atty. Rankin: "You could be charged with trespassing,

but the owner of the dog that caused injury could be sued for any injuries to you or your dog. And if you have a service dog, one who can no longer do his job due to these injuries, you could sue for the financial cost and emotional distress."

SCENARIO C: Your leashed dog nips or scratches a passerby who reaches down to pet him on a walk.

Atty. Rankin: "Even though sometimes people will come up without asking and start petting someone's dog, the owner has to be proactive about his dog. You could make the argument that you didn't give permission, but it depends on the judge as to the decision. My advice if you have testy dog is to put a Gentle Leader or Halti on him to give you more control over your dog during walks."

Legally, companion animals are considered property, Rankin says, "but courts are becoming more aware that animals mean more to people than a piece of property like a TV or stereo. I predict we will see cases in which animals are seen as family members — the courts are moving in that direction."

TUMOR... (continued from the cover)

he have surgery now to remove the lipoma? Or wait and see? "A lipoma should be removed before it gets to be a big problem, but it is difficult to predict if a small lipoma will continue to grow," Dr. Flanders says. "That's the dilemma."

Remain Static. A classic lipoma is a mass of fat — a tumor that can stay static in size and raise no problem for years or the dog's entire life. Or it can grow in size and, depending on its location, eventually impede a dog's gait and require removal. In rare cases, the lipoma can be one of two more difficult types to treat called infiltrative lipoma or a cancerous form called liposarcoma.

Lipomas as a group are among the most common canine tumors, affecting every breed, often in middle age, particularly females. Some breeds seem especially prone to them, including Labrador and Golden Retrievers, Doberman Pinschers and Miniature Schnauzers. The cause is not known. "It's probably just one of those things that happens with age, where there're some fat cells that tend to proliferate in a certain area and then continue to grow without regulation," Dr. Flanders says.

A dog can develop multiple bumps, some the size of walnuts or even bigger.

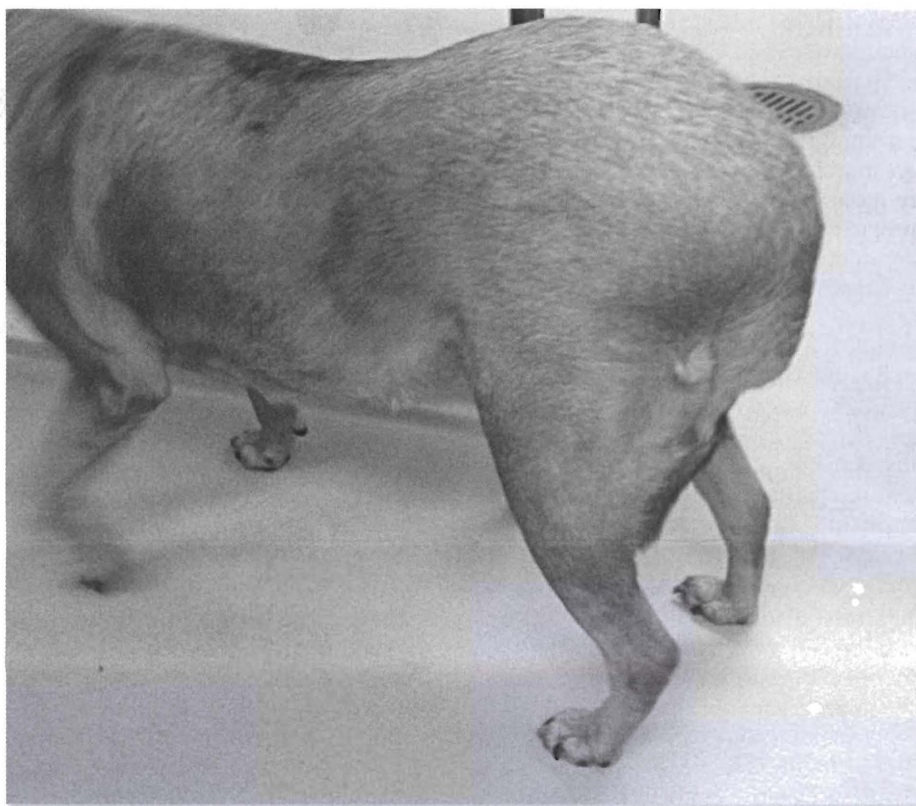
Here are two scenarios to help you gauge when it's time to remove a lipoma:

THE CLASSIC LIPOMA

An 11-year-old Golden Retriever arrives at the veterinary office after his concerned owner notices a lump near the navel while petting the dog. A test determines it's a lipoma. If it's small — several inches in diameter — most veterinarians will say: "Let's just watch it and see if it becomes a problem." The lump will be rechecked in a month or two. Often that suffices. The lipoma remains small. No need for surgery or treatment.

THE GROWING LIPOMA

If a lipoma continues a growing phase, then the recommendation might be to remove it before it reaches the size of a softball. "When they start getting



The decision was made not to remove the lipoma on the dog's lower back because it didn't impede movement.

that big, they become a problem and cause some discomfort for the dog," Dr. Flanders says.

While a lump usually forms in less problematic areas such as the dog's trunk, near the abdomen or the upper part of a limb, sometimes it grows in more troublesome areas — near the armpit, for example, or in the groin area. If a large lump there pushes on the leg, it can make it difficult for a dog to walk. Time to have it removed. "If they can't lie on their favorite side because there's a lipoma there," Dr. Flanders says, "often that's a recommendation to remove it."

If you have a geriatric dog, then you and your veterinarian will weigh if it's worth the risk of general anesthesia to remove the lipoma. If the lump is causing a problem with ambulation, probably surgery is worth the risk, Dr. Flanders says, unless the pet has major health problems such as severe heart disease. Usually, though, because the surgery itself is minor, it's considered a good option. Among all types of lipoma, 99 percent of surgical excisions are considered curative.

Straightforward Surgery. The surgery is straightforward and can be a day case. The dog arrives at the clinic in the morning. A blood test is taken to assure he can handle general anesthesia, and he's prepared for surgery. Usually the surgeon makes a single incision, running the length of the lipoma. He "shells" the lipoma, as if spooning a pit from an avocado, and closes the incision.

The dog often returns home that evening. Typically, the lipoma won't recur. Prognosis is excellent. "But," Dr. Flanders says, "a dog who gets one lipoma may very likely get another lipoma someplace else."

Liposuction is another method to remove a growing lipoma, though it's not routinely done. A suction device liquefies and extracts the lump. The procedure usually requires general anesthesia and takes about as long or longer to perform as traditional surgery, so it doesn't present much of an advantage other than perhaps a smaller incision, Dr. Flanders says.

A study published in 2011 in the British-based *Journal of Small Animal Practice* reviewed the success rates of 20

dogs with 76 lipomas in which dry liposuction was tried. Simple lipomas smaller than about six inches in diameter were the most easily removed and had minimal risk of complication, researchers found. However, they concluded that re-growth can be expected in a high proportion of lipomas, so that should be considered when choosing liposuction over conventional surgery.

The Rare Case. An uncommon form of lipoma — called infiltrative lipoma — is “more of sort of an angry lipoma,” Dr. Flanders says. An infiltrative lipoma invades into muscle and can run deeper into the tissues. They can be difficult to distinguish from normal lipomas because the subcutaneous portion of an infiltrative lipoma can be fairly smooth and spherical like a normal lipoma.

Infiltrative lipomas can occur in odd places. Dr. Flanders has seen infiltrative lipomas on an ear flap, under a dog's chin, over a dog's sternum and growing into the chest cavity or growing along a dog's sciatic nerve and into the pelvis. Infiltrative lipomas will continue to grow, so surgery is needed. Unlike typical lipomas, they don't shell out nicely during surgery because they grow into muscle fibers. Surgery tends to leave some

lipoma behind and they can regrow. Still, infiltrative lipoma is benign and rare — perhaps one in 1,000 lipoma cases, Dr. Flanders says.

The Cancer Case. Cancerous liposarcoma is extremely rare. Unlike the classic squishy lipoma, liposarcoma is usually lower, flatter, more nodular and very fixed to the underlying tissues. It typically doesn't push up from under the skin as much. It usually affects a distal limb — farther out on the leg — or in another area where classic lipomas aren't normally found. It starts out small and grows slowly. Often it doesn't appear to be a lipoma, but a biopsy reveals the diagnosis, Dr. Flanders says.

Surgery is needed and may be extensive if amputation is required when the growth has spread over a limb. Radiation therapy is another possible treatment. “Those are tough to cure by excision,” Dr. Flanders says.

Fortunately, owners have an option to consider if their overweight dog has a classic lipoma: Put him on a diet. The lump won't disappear. But it likely will shrink as his weight drops, Dr. Flanders says, because the lipoma's cells are functional fat cells. Perhaps it will never grow larger for years or ever, but he'll be a healthier, leaner dog. ♦

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

It's a common misconception that a classic lipoma is cancer. It's not. It's a mass of fat. Rest assured that if a veterinarian tests the lipoma and finds it benign, the lump always will remain benign, no matter what the size it grows to be, says surgical specialist James A. Flanders, DVM, at Cornell.

Lipomas rank in the top three most common skin tumor types, along with adenoma (a type of benign tumor) and mast cell tumor (cancerous skin cells), according to a study published in 2011 in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*.

The age range for affected dogs is 10 to 15 years old, according to the study, which searched the Veterinary Medical Database for the records of the 1.1 million dogs seen at veterinary teaching hospitals in North America between 1964 and 2002. Nearly 26,000 of those dogs were diagnosed with “cutaneous neoplasms” (skin tumors).

Sometimes young dogs develop lipomas, says Dr. Flanders, who wasn't involved in the study, but usually they affect middle-aged and older dogs. It seems to be somewhat related with tending toward the obese side, he says, “but you definitely see them in slim dogs, too.”

The wisest course: A veterinarian should examine a lump of any kind.

HOLIDAY... (continued from page 3)

cannot escape, he will defend himself aggressively.”

Two body systems come into play in the way dogs respond to stress:

- ◆ One consists of the hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands (HPA).
- ◆ The other is the sympathetic nervous system, which controls heart rate, blood pressure, glucose production and availability of energy.

The sympathetic nervous system also releases the hormone adrenaline, also called epinephrine. The neural and hormonal actions prepare the body to deal with stress by running from it, freezing in place or aggressively fighting.

“Chronic stress disrupts the HPA axis, and several brain structures can be affected by excessive hormone exposure,” Dr. Rivard says. “Some negative effects include increased sleep time, decreased appetite, behaviors that are out of context or stereotypic (compulsive) behaviors like barking.”

Continued stress can also suppress the immune system, says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at Cornell. “When the immune system is suppressed, sub-clinical problems may become clinical. For example, a dog who's susceptible to ear infections may actually get one if subjected to stress for too long a period.”

Signs of Stress. Physical signs of stress include vomiting, diarrhea, refusal to eat and skin problems. Behavioral stress signals can start with yawning (except when the dog is waking up), lip licking, panting, paw lifting, showing the white of the eye, trembling and flattened ears. Raised hackles, frequent shifting of the body position and excessive salivation also signal the onset of stress. If the dog's stress is about to prompt an aggressive response toward a person or other animal, he may stiffen his body, stare at the offending individual, growl and/or snap before he bites.

Therapies including pheromones and anti-anxiety medications such as anxiolytics prescribed by a veterinarian can alleviate the response to stress, Dr. Rivard says. “Medical treatment in combination with a behavior modification plan should be considered.” ♦



Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, provided the answer on this page

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 ...

PANCREATITIS



BEGGING



**GIVING
MEDICATIONS**



HYPOTHERMIA



Q I have an adopted 2-year-old Dalmatian named Lady. She is very affectionate and loving. However, she doesn't like other dogs, and she is very sneaky about it. Sometimes she will touch noses and everything seems fine, and then she will lunge or try to grab the other dog with her jaws. She gives no warning — no growls, no hair raised, just attacks. I try to keep her away from all dogs, but it's difficult when walking in our neighborhood.

She loves people, just not their dogs. She also does not know how to play — she ignores stuffed toys, Frisbees and balls. I've tried to get her interested, but nothing seems to work. She also pulls terribly on the leash. I've tried pinch collars and the choke collar. Nothing seems to deter her, although I have noticed after the first half mile or so that she does seem to be much better.

A Lady's aggression toward other dogs is a serious problem. Unfortunately, many dogs exhibit similar behavior, initially appearing friendly or neutral toward a strange dog and then suddenly attacking. I think Lady is assessing the other dog and, if she sees or smells some weakness and knows she can win, she attacks.

She may be acting like this for several reasons, including fear, territorial behavior and dominance. It is difficult to determine which factor may be responsible for your Dalmatian's behavior without further history and, ideally, seeing her.

There is an excellent collar on the market called a Gentle Leader (Premier Pet Products), which should help with both the pulling and the dog aggression problem. The collar fits behind the back of the ears and has a portion that goes over the nose. It allows the dog to still open his mouth and is, therefore, not a muzzle. It also

allows the dog to bite, so don't rely on it to protect her victims.

The collar works by placing pressure on certain areas, so that, when the dog pulls forward, the head is turned to the side. Once the collar is correctly fitted, it may be an excellent tool for you and Lady. The collar comes with a DVD explaining how it works, how to fit it and some basic training methods.

While you are out walking Lady in your neighborhood, you shouldn't let her approach other dogs or allow them to approach her. When you see another dog coming toward Lady, give her a treat immediately so that she associates good tastes with other dogs. Lead her away from the other dog at a 45-degree angle so they don't approach frontally. Continue to reward Lady. If she tenses up or refuses the treats, have her sit and look at you.

As the weeks progress, you may be able to let the other dog approach more closely before veering off. If you suspect that she is fearful of the other dog, then it is important that you not show anxiety by tightening the leash at the approach of the other dog and that you reward her only for quiet, settled behavior. If Lady is at risk of biting another dog, it is best to avoid all such situations.

If you must be in a multi-dog situation, then she should wear a basket muzzle. As for Lady's problem with playfulness, it is difficult to teach an adult dog to play. You may start by talking in a high pitched "happy voice," leaning over and slapping your knees and then presenting a toy. If she were not an aggressive dog, I would recommend ruffling her fur so she would play fight, the most common type of dog play.

You may initially have to rely on rewards when teaching Lady to play. Several excellent toys on the market may help with this: Buster Cubes for kibble and Kongs for cheese, peanut butter, liverwurst or other gooey things as well as kibble. ❖

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\$39 per year (U.S.)
\$49 per year (Canada)

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