



**Blue River**  
Veterinary Clinic, P.A.

**(785) 363-2222**

Winter  
2019

# Pet News Quarterly

## Blue River Vet Clinic Looking to the New Year!

As we close out 2018 and look towards the possibilities of 2019, it is hard to believe that the clinic has been open for almost 6 months now! If you haven't had a chance, stop in and say hi! Also visit our website: [www.bluerivervetclinic.com](http://www.bluerivervetclinic.com). We are putting links for the newsletters and "To Your Pet's Health" articles that are appearing monthly in the Marysville Advocate.

As this newsletter slowly took shape, the idea of winter representing the senior years came to mind. Many of the articles will focus on preventative things to be done as your pet ages. However, if you have a young pet don't stop reading!! These issues are not just age related and are good to keep in mind as a general guide to keeping your pet healthy as it ages.



## Things to Consider As Your Pet Ages

Like us, our pets are living longer and healthier lives. Much of this can be attributed to the constant changes in knowledge and research. Just like advances in human medicine, these same advances are taking place in veterinary medicine. But really, what does this mean to you and your pet?

It means that there are even more ways to keep your pet healthy and happy! As your pet ages there are some important things to think about and to watch out for. Remember, aging is a process and does not happen overnight. Changes are often subtle and can seem like they just suddenly happened, when in reality it has taken months if not years to develop.

It is always important to remember that how a pet begins it's life and all the following years, will have a huge impact on what the pet's golden years will be like. Some important issues to be aware of and to consider their impact are nutrition, obesity, and how to interpret body condition score, dental disease, and vigilant monitoring of activity, behavior, lumps and bumps, eating and drinking habits, and of course general wellness examines by your pet's veterinarian. Always remember, it is hard to decide if something is abnormal if you are not aware of what normal is.

Hopefully the following articles will provide you with good advice on what to monitor and some ideas on how to keep your pet even healthier and happier in the years to come!

### Inside this issue

Healthy Weight.....	2
Body Condition Score.....	2
Arthritis.....	2
Bad Breath Blues.....	3
Bloodwork .....	3
Lumps and Bumps.....	4
Office Hours.....	4

### Did you know??

- It is estimated over 56% of dogs and 60% of cats are overweight.
- Obesity is one of the leading causes of arthritis in pets.
- The term for bad breath is halitosis.
- It is estimated 14% of the elderly dog population suffers from cognitive dysfunction.

## Maintaining a Healthy Weight.....

Nutrition is such an important topic and will have one of the biggest impacts on your pets overall health. This is a conversation that should start with your veterinarian when you first adopt your new pet, whether as a puppy or kitten, or as an adult. It should continue to be talked about throughout your pet's different life stages.

As a pet ages, his or her metabolism as well as activity levels will start to decrease. This means that they may no longer need the amount of calories that they did when they were younger and more active. However, they often feel like they need to consume the same amount of food. If these changes are not taken into account, then your pet will start gaining weight.

That dreaded word.....obesity. Similar to the obesity issues seen in today's American human population, this issue is becoming a **huge** (no pun intended) problem in

our pet population as well. It has been estimated by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) in a 2017 Survey, that over 56% of the dogs and 60% of cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Each year this number continues to rise. Check out [petobesityprevention.org](http://petobesityprevention.org).

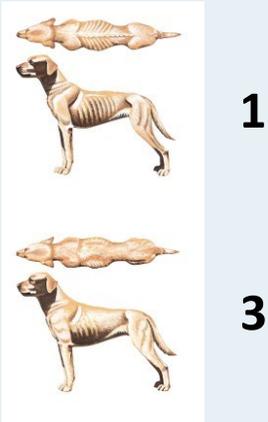
What are some causes of this epidemic? One of the biggest causes is that people love their pets, and equate love with food. It is certainly not a crime to love your pet, but a healthy weight needs to be determined and goals set to achieve and maintain that weight. We often don't take into account that as our pet ages, they do not need as many calories as they did when they were younger and more active. Diets have been formulated that take this into account. Also, remember that every treat your pet receives during the day adds extra calories. So try to minimize the amount of treats given, and look for healthy alternatives, like carrots .

It is important to become familiar with the term body condition score (BCS), how it is determine and where it needs to be maintained. Your veterinarian is a great source for the answers to these topics, and ideas on how to get your pet on target.

Why is this such an important issue? The bottom line is research has shown that if a healthy weight is not maintained throughout an animal's life it can lead to multiple health issues, including but not limited to: diabetes, breathing issues, heart disease, high blood pressure, liver disease or dysfunction, arthritis, cancer and a decreased life span. In other words, your pet may not live as long as it has the potential of living and in the process can develop a disease that may decrease their quality of life.

### Body Condition Score (BCS)

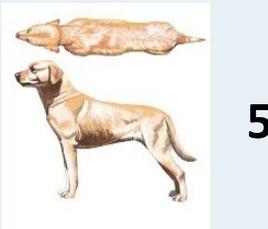
THIN



1

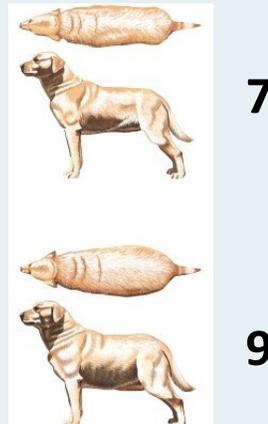
3

IDEAL



5

OVERWEIGHT



7

9

## Arthritis

Have you started to notice that your pet has stopped doing some of the things they used to love to do? Like the cat that was always up on the counter despite being set down too many times to count. Or the dog that was in bed or up in the recliner before you even had a chance to turn around. Maybe they are not as excited to chase after the ball for the hundredth time, or don't enjoy going for quite as long a walk as they once did. These could be signs of arthritis.

What is arthritis, which is short for osteoarthritis (OA)? Arthritis is a degenerative condition or disease of joints. Joints are composed of bone with a protective layer of cartilage. This cartilage allows the bones to move past one another without pain. As pets age, this cartilage starts to wear down allowing bone to rub on bone, which causes inflammation and pain. Often we think of joints like elbows, knees and hips being affected, but it happens in the back as well. If a pet lives long enough, they will eventually develop arthritis.

There are certain conditions like confirmation (how the bones align), traumatic events, and disease that can cause the cartilage to wear down faster. Surprisingly, the most common cause of osteoarthritis is obesity. It has been proven time and again that being overweight adds extra strain to joints. Even more surprising is that one of the most effective ways to diminish pain from arthritis, is to lose weight.

One of the first signs that clients often notice is that their pet is having a harder time getting up after rest, especially first thing in the morning. Other signs can include: a reluctance to climb stairs, pet is no longer following you all over the house, limping on one or more legs, or muscle loss in the affected leg. Maybe your cat is no longer using the litterbox or is going right outside of the box, or your cat is no longer perching in their favorite high place.

Although there is no cure for arthritis, there are more and more options available to help manage the pain from arthritis. There are now an array of supplements as well as foods that contain glucosamine and chondroitin, which help maintain healthy cartilage and joint fluid. Another nutritional supplement to look for in foods is high levels of fatty acids such as DHA and omega-3. There is an injection called Adequan, which is injected into the muscle twice a week for 4 weeks, that also helps with cartilage health and joint fluid quality.

At home there are a number of things to be done to help your pet get around and be more comfortable. Slick flooring is hard on pets with arthritis, so provide them with carpeting or rugs to help with traction. There are also booties with rubber grips on the bottom to provide traction. Look for a good orthopedic bed with memory foam, which will provide more support while they are resting. If a pet has a higher place they enjoy resting at, think about building some kind of ramp or series of short steps to help the pet get there more comfortably. Also, think about getting a litterbox that has lower sides that are easier to get into, or make sure that it is in a part of the house that is more accessible.

Exercise is recommended for pets with arthritis, as it helps to build back the muscle they have lost from disuse and helps with weight management that many of these animals need. Starting with short walks and gradually increasing distance is recommended. Swimming is a great exercise that is low impact which decreases strain on joints. Yes, even cats need to get to moving, so be creative in toys and rewards.

There are a number of different kinds of safe pain medications that can be prescribed. Always talk with your veterinarian about a pain management plan to help with this common and often missed problem in your aging pet.

## Bad Breath Blues

Does your pet's breath take yours away? Bad breath is often an indication that your pet has some kind of dental disease going on.

Dental disease is a major and often overlooked health concern in pets. The plaque and eventual calculus buildup that forms on your pet's teeth harbors a lot of bacteria. These bacteria are part of the cause of plaque and can be a source of infection. One possible outcome is infection and damage to the valves of the heart which can lead to eventual heart disease. This constant source of infection is especially concerning in pets that have a suppressed immune system, like diabetes, auto-immune diseases, or animals that are on long term steroid therapy.

Another concern for pets is that dental disease can be a constant source of pain. It is painful to have an infection around a tooth or to have a fractured tooth. If you notice that your pet is pawing at its face, chewing on just one side of its mouth, there is blood evident after the pet is done eating, or your pet is crying out when it tries to chew, these can be signs that your pet needs to have its teeth examined.

There are many factors that can cause a pet to be more prone to dental issues. One is crowding of the teeth. This is often seen in short nosed and small breed dogs. These dogs often require dentals to start at an earlier age and to be done more often. A second factor is some pets simply do not like to chew. They either prefer wet food, or just have no desire to chew on any kind of dental chews. On the other hand, there are those pets that chew too much, which can cause teeth to become worn or fractured.

Your pet cannot brush its own teeth, so they depend on the shearing action of chewing to get the job done. If you have a pet that has teeth that do not align well or prefers not to chew on anything, they often will need help from you. Brushing is a great way to help remove plaque on a day to day basis. This is easiest when started at a young age, but not impossible in an older dog if you are persistent enough. It is especially important after a dental cleaning is performed to start a brushing routine, which can help extend the time until the next dental is needed.

February is Dental Health Awareness month and is a great time to become more aware of the importance of dental health. So, if your pet's breath is taking yours away, you notice that your pet has pain while trying to chew, or you notice blood or redness to your pet's gums, you should really have their teeth examined by your veterinarian.



(Dental calculus (tartar) and resulting gingivitis)

### Do Pets get Alzheimer's?

Have you ever wondered if the signs you are seeing in your aging pet, is just old age?

Pets can suffer from a disease similar to Alzheimer's called Cognitive Dysfunction. Like Alzheimer's, there is oxidative damage to brain cells. This damage forms plaques in the brain cells that will lead to cell death. This death causes shrinkage in the brain size and disrupts message transmission within the brain.

What are some clinical signs that can often be mistaken as just aging changes?

- pets become disoriented even in environments that they have lived in for years
- changes in sleep patterns
- loss of housetraining or using the litterbox reliably
- no longer seeking attention
- changes in vocalization
- loss of obedience training
- increased anxiety

Often owners notice these changes but are unaware that they could be more than just old age.

What can be done to help slow down the disease process? One is feeding a diet high in antioxidants like Vitamins A, C and E. Also look for diets high in fatty acids like DHA, EPA, and lipoic acid, as well as L-carnitine. A lot of good quality commercial diets that are specifically designed for Senior pets are high in these components.

Another suggestion is engaging your aging pet in mentally stimulating activities. There are puzzle games that have been designed for pets to work at to get a treat or reward, with the idea of helping keep the brain stimulated.

Much like Alzheimer's or dementia in people, there is no cure for this disease. However, it is important to recognize that it is more than just old age.

**15% Discount on Dentals**  
**Schedule a dental now through the end of March and receive a 15% discount on the dental charge.**  
(Limit 1 pet dental discount per customer. Expires 3/31/19)

## ..... Bloodwork

Is bloodwork really necessary? The answer is yes whether your animal is sick or not. Bloodwork is a way to monitor different organ functions with the thought of diagnosing and even catching an issue early.

A yearly routine screening CBC and Chemistry Profile allows for the normal values for your pet to be set. This allows for comparison of these values from year to year and the possible early detection of any changes. Some diseases, such as kidney failure, are better treated when detected before the animal becomes sick from it.

A CBC (complete blood count) monitors the number of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets present. It also gives an estimate of the type of white blood cell present. There are an array of diseases that can be indicated by abnormalities in these counts.

A standard chemistry profile gives levels for kidney and liver enzymes which can indicate how these organs are functioning. It also indicates levels of production of albumin (a blood protein), glucose (blood sugar), and different electrolytes.

There are more in depth blood tests that can be done once there is some indication from the screening bloodwork what direction should be taken.

If your animal becomes sick, it is important to do bloodwork to help detect what may be going on. There are many diseases that can be present with the same set of clinical signs: such as vomiting, drinking too much, urinating more than normal, and weight loss. Bloodwork allows your pet's doctor a way to figure out what is going on and ways to treat it.

It is recommended to start doing yearly bloodwork between 5-8 years of age or earlier if there is any family or known history of issues. It is also a good idea to do screening bloodwork before an anesthetic episode so that any liver or kidney issues are known and can be accounted for during anesthesia. Also, if any kind of long term medication therapy (like pain medication) is going to be started, bloodwork needs to be done prior to starting the medication and at least yearly to monitor effects on organ function.

So, is bloodwork necessary? The answer is yes!

### Blue River Vet Clinic Hours

Dr. Nicole Porter and staff are available:

**Monday: 7:30-5:30**

**Tuesday: 7:30-5:30**

**Wednesday: 7:30-5:30**

**Thursday: 7:30-5:30**

**Friday: 7:30-5:30**

**Saturday: 8:00-12:00**

**Emergency Care Available: 24/7**

## When is it more than just a lump?



Sebaceous Adenoma (Cyst)

As you are doing your weekly check over of your pet for anything unusual (I would recommend at least a monthly check), you run across a new bump. Should you be concerned?

There are many different skin lesions that can affect your pet. Some are benign (harmless) and others need to be addressed.

The most common benign skin lesion that starts to arise as a dog ages is a sebaceous cyst adenoma. These are skin growths that arise from the dog's oil glands in their skin. Most of these are bubbly or warty looking, and some are smooth in appearance but have a clear oil-like fluid in them. Any breed can have sebaceous cysts, but there are certain breeds like Poodles, Yorkies, and Cockers that are more prone to them. Most of the time nothing needs to be done but monitoring. However,

some become large enough that they irritate the dog and can bleed as the dog scratches at them. If the cyst begins to ooze or is bleeding frequently it will need to be removed.

There are many other types of skin lumps, and any time one is found the size and location needs to be noted. That way they can be brought to your vet's attention at your pet's next checkup.

If the lumps are fast growing or become a sore, it is much more urgent that they be seen. Often a fine needle aspirate (a sample of cells from the lump) done by your vet, can indicate what type of cells make up the lump, and whether it needs to be removed.

When in doubt, always ask. The best that can happen is being told that it is benign and is not a concern.



104 E. Commercial St.  
PO Box 447  
Waterville, KS 66548

Phone: 785-363-2222  
Fax: 785-363-2225  
E-mail: [info@bluerivervetclinic.com](mailto:info@bluerivervetclinic.com)  
[www.bluerivervetclinic.com](http://www.bluerivervetclinic.com)

### Services:

- \*Wellness Exams
- \*Vaccinations
- \*Grooming
- \*Dental Care
- \*Surgery
- \*Radiology
- \*Pet Food & Retail
- \*After Hours Emergency
- \*Pick up & drop off services available

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE