



Veterinary Care & Specialty Group

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March 2019 Newsletter

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

Naughty Cat Cafe Opening

March 9
10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
St. Elmo

Chattanooga Chomp Flyball Club Tournament

March 16-17
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Play Dog Excellent - Red Bank

Citizens' Police Academy Health and Safety Fair

April 13
9 a.m. - noon
Eastgate Mall - Enter Door "A"

Petsense

April 13
Adoptions: noon - 3 p.m.
Easter Egg Hunt: 1 p.m.
Signal Mountain Road

Cabela's Dog Days

Featured Speaker: Dr. Jake Barnett
April 27
Time to be announced.
Fort Oglethorpe

Obedience Club of Chattanooga First Aid Class

Featured Speaker: Dr. Stefanie Sullivan
Date and time to be announced.
Flintstone

Riverfront Nights Summer Music Series

July 20, 27
August 3, 10, 17, 24
Ross's Landing

Ask the Vet:

Heartworms: What Every Pet Owner Should Know

By: Christopher D. Perry, DVM (VCSG Emergency Service)

It is 1 am and my nurse and I are standing next to the lab bench as a 10 minute timer goes off. We look down at the heartworm test in front of us and two bright blue dots are readily visible. I brace myself for going back into exam room 2 and explaining to the owners of this handsome Golden Retriever that the reason he has lost weight, can't stop coughing, and has a large belly full of fluid is because he is losing a battle with heartworms. To make matters worse this could have all been prevented.

What are Heartworms? Mosquitoes transport immature microscopic heartworms. One bite from an infected mosquito can transmit heartworms to our dogs and cats. Over the course of the next 6 months these microscopic worms develop into adult heartworms. Adult heartworms live in the heart, lungs, and associated vessels and have the appearance of angel hair spaghetti. These foot long worms can then live for up to 5-7 years and produce many baby worms!



Adult heartworms in canine heart

What are the symptoms of heartworm infection?

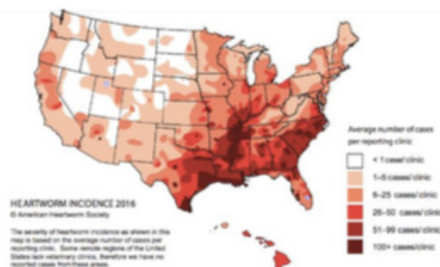
In the early stages of the disease, most pets do not show any symptoms. As the disease progresses, a persistent cough, fatigue, weight loss, and decreased appetite are noticeable. In advanced stages of the disease, heart failure is evident by an abdomen full of fluid. Heart failure can be lethal!



Positive heartworm test

Can heartworm infection be treated? Yes!

Treatment is aimed at stabilizing the patient, killing the adult and immature heartworms, and keeping the side effects of treatment to a minimum. Treatment of heartworms will take months and can even take years for the adult worms to fully disappear.



Heartworm Incidence

Can heartworms be prevented? Yes!

The first step is to get your dog tested for heartworms by your family veterinarian. If your pet is negative, an inexpensive monthly heartworm prevention can be started to keep your best friend safe!

For more information please visit: www.heartwormsociety.org/pet-owner-resources





Friends of the Month at VCSG!



NAUGHTY CAT



~ CAFE ~

Raising a Go-Anywhere, Do-Anything Puppy

By Dana O'Lone Long
Canine Training & Behavior Specialist
Valor K9 Academy – Chattanooga
www.valork9academy.com

Whether you got a puppy because you were looking for that right-hand companion to go on adventures with you or your kids begged until you gave in, raising that puppy into a well-rounded, confident adult dog is a huge priority. Puppies go through their main socialization developmental period between the ages of 6 and 16 weeks. This is when puppies are most open-minded about the world, and this is the time frame we must take advantage of to help them mature into happy, confident adults. Utilizing the concepts of **positive exposure, socialization and confidence building**, we can do just that!

Positive Exposure means giving your puppy the opportunity to experience things in the environment that he may come across as an adult. The key word there is "positive" – your puppy's experience with this new thing must end on a successful note in his mind. That means using whatever motivates your puppy the most (high value food rewards are perfect here) to make the experience as pleasant as possible.

I use a Rule of 7s – exposure to 7 new people, places, surfaces and noises a week. That may sound like a lot, but generally you can accomplish this with 1-2 field trips to new places a week. Experiences from automatic sliding doors to the slippery concrete floors in a store are novel to your puppy - you want him to be exposed to these things in such a way that they don't cause alarm or concern. That may mean walking in and out of those automatic doors a few times until your puppy's expression relaxes, and he becomes more interested in other things. If your pup is especially small or anxious, you may want to carry him first until he starts to build some confidence and interest in exploring. Remember, it needs to be a POSITIVE experience!

Field trips aren't the only place for exposure - the list of household items you want your puppy to be comfortable around is long! Think of vacuum cleaners, bicycles, blenders, hair dryers, brooms... I could go on but you get the idea. The more your puppy can be positively exposed to in the first few months he spends with you, the more comfortable he will be when he inevitably comes across something brand new as an adult.

Socialization means making sure your puppy has a chance to interact with people of different ages, genders, etc. Good socialization around kids is especially important, whether you have children yourself or not, because children behave very differently (and unpredictably in a dog's eyes) than adults do. You don't

want your puppy to be afraid of anyone, big or small, family friend or stranger.

Your puppy having the opportunity to interact with other dogs of varying sizes and ages is important, too. Other well-rounded adult dogs are your best resource here, as well as your puppy getting supervised play time with other puppies, if possible. Again, it is incredibly important that your puppy's experience with new people and animals ends on a positive, successful note! A negative experience now is potentially detrimental to your pup's confidence and needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

Confidence Building. While it may seem helpful that your young puppy doesn't want to stray too far from your side, we want to encourage him to explore, try new things and overcome some of his reservations about our world. Encouraging your pup to climb over that tree stump or go up and sniff around that small flag flapping in the wind, those are the activities that build not only your puppy's confidence in himself, but his trust in you as well. Take note of little things your puppy may show reservations about (keeping in mind they may seem silly to you) and take a few extra minutes working with him so he sees that his fears are unfounded, and you'll find he needs your help less and less!

You may be thinking that you don't really want your puppy to be into everything he can get his paws on and I am in no way advocating that you allow your pup to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants. That, however, is another topic to be addressed! Know that teaching a well-adjusted dog that there is a time and a place for certain expectations (obedience vs social time) is so much simpler than teaching those concepts to a fearful, insecure dog. It is worth your time now to have less work (and a happier dog!) down the road.

A few quick notes on safety:

- Please take into consideration your puppy's vaccine status when deciding on field trip locations. I never recommend field trips to places like PetSmart and Petco because of the amount of dog traffic through them. Some far better alternatives include the Barn Nursery, Ace Hardware, Lowe's, Tractor Supply and Stockdale's in Hixson. Use your best judgment on the environment they're exposed to as they are not completely protected from contagious canine diseases until they're fully vaccinated.

- Be cautious introducing your puppy to unknown dogs (ideally don't do that at all and use dogs you know and trust) as not all dogs are tolerant of puppy antics.

And lastly, it's never a bad idea to consult a professional trainer, even if you've successfully raised puppies in the past. Having some extra direction and guidance **BEFORE** behavior issues develop can literally be a life saver!