

HEALTHY PET MONTH!

Healthier Pets, Healthier Lives

APRIL 2021



Healthy Pets Are Happy Pets!

Illinois Healthy Pet Week focuses on the importance of keeping pets healthy and the role that everyone plays in animal health. This handout covers some things you can do at home to keep your pet well and your family healthy, too!

Vaccines: Why They Matter

Vaccinations are an important part of keeping pets healthy. There are certain vaccines considered “core,” which means that every animal should have them regardless of the type of environment in which they live. Your veterinarian can decide if other vaccines are appropriate for your pets.

Vaccines protect your pets from life-threatening diseases, all of which can be present in the environment. Protect your pet; keep them up-to-date on vaccinations!

Develop a Great Relationship With Your Veterinarian!

- Have your pet seen twice yearly for check-ups. This ensures your veterinarian is familiar with your animals and family. Regular visits allow your veterinarian to make recommendations for the best care for your pet.
- Know your veterinarian’s policy on emergencies. Many veterinarians do not see emergency calls after normal business hours. What should you do if your pet has an emergency after your veterinarian’s office closes?
- Ask your veterinarian about costs of services. No one likes surprises, and knowing ahead of time what routine care costs and what surgeries, dentals and other health services cost can help you work with your veterinarian to make sure your pet is as healthy as possible.
- Ask questions! If you have concerns about your pet’s health or questions about recommended treatments, speak up. Most veterinarians are happy to have a conversation about why they make the recommendations they do.

Ask Your Veterinarian!

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Did you know?

- To earn their degree a veterinarian undergoes years of schooling and training.
- Veterinary medical curriculum is very similar to human medical curriculum, with the exception that veterinary doctors learn about 10 or more different species, and people doctors learn about one (humans).
- Veterinary school is extremely competitive. There are only 33 accredited veterinary schools in all of the United States.

Before Veterinarian School

- Two to four years of undergraduate studies in math, biology, physics, chemistry ... and more.
- Typically, pre-veterinary students graduate at the top of their class.
- They have hundreds of hours in animal and leadership experience.

During Veterinarian School

- They complete four years of in-depth medicine and surgery classes covering multiple species.
- They spend two to three years in classroom training.
- They spend one to two years training on practical issues under the supervision of experienced veterinary doctors.

Ask the Veterinarian!

Tips for At-Home Care for Your Healthy Pet

- Keep your pet lean. Studies have shown that lean pets live up to 20 percent longer than their obese counterparts. This could mean you experience an extra three-to-five healthy years with your pet! If you are unsure, talk with your veterinarian. They can help you with a weight loss or weight maintenance plan.
- Brush your pet's teeth. Dental disease can lead to heart, liver, kidney and other organ failure. Brushing is the single best thing you can do for your pet's dental health. Don't rely on chews; brush those pearly whites!
- Feed your pet a high-quality diet. Grain-free options are not necessarily high-quality, nor are limited ingredient diets. If you are unsure, ask your veterinarian. They can help you determine a food that will be great for your pet's needs.
- Don't feed your pet table scraps. Even a small amount of food can alter your pet's ability to absorb its regular food or can add too many unbalanced calories. For example, one ounce of cheddar cheese fed to a cat is the equivalent of a person eating four hamburgers! Even supplements, like coconut oil, can cause an imbalance in your pet's diet.
- Keep them up-to-date on preventative medications, including flea, tick and heartworm. These parasites don't take a break, even in the winter. Keep your pet on them monthly, all year long.
- Set aside an emergency fund for your pet. You can never be over-prepared for an urgent problem. Emergency care for your pet can be expensive and you often need to make decisions quickly. Having a fund set aside can help remove financial concerns from your decisions.