

An Ounce of Prevention

"Measuring" the value of Ongoing Medical Care

That old saying that an ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure sometimes is overlooked as we get caught up with our busy schedules and active lives. However, there is a lot of truth in that saying and none more important than that involving preventative health care. This is especially true where our pets are involved. Annual vaccines for pets are a very important form of preventative medicine, because they prevent disease and suffering for our furry family members.

The most commonly recognized vaccine protects against the rabies virus, which can be fatal in both pets and people. Because of this, it is required by law to be given to your pets every year. There are many diseases that your pets can catch just from walking and sniffing as they explore their surroundings. That is why annual vaccine boosters, such as Distemper and Parvovirus for dogs, as well as Feline Leukemia and FIP for cats, are so important. Another important vaccine is Bordetella, which protects against a highly contagious respiratory disease that is spread through the air. Lyme disease is yet another disease for which your pets should be vaccinated and is a concern especially when and where ticks are present.

Vaccine programs are generally started between six and eight weeks of age, when puppies and kittens come to the veterinarian for their first check-up. These vaccines must be boosted several times in the next few months and then annually, or in some cases, every six months after that. These annual and semi-annual visits to the veterinarian are also an important part of preventative medicine. During these visits, the veterinarian will examine your pet to ensure that he or she is healthy. The vet

may find that your pet has dental problems or conditions of the skin or ears that, if caught and treated early, can save your pet unnecessary suffering-and you great expense.

Making sure your pets are on continuous heartworm prevention and tested yearly for heartworms and other parasites is an important part of their annual visits, as well. This is also the time to pick up annual supplies of heartworm preventative and safe, effective flea and tick control products. The vet visit is the perfect time for pet owners to bring a list of questions to ask while their pets are being examined. Your veterinarian can be a great source of information regarding pet nutrition, supplements, and new pet products on the market.

Once a pet is seven years of age or older, it is a good idea to have yearly bloodwork completed, which will not only detect problems before they become severe, but will also give you peace of mind that your pet is aging gracefully. Many veterinarians offer this bloodwork at a reduced price in conjunction with a pet's annual vaccination visit. Be sure to ask your veterinarian about a wellness or geriatric blood profile while you are at the office with your pet. Many feline and canine diseases can now be prevented through vaccination, monthly preventatives, and regular health examinations. A vaccination and preventative schedule prepared by your veterinarian can thus greatly contribute to good health and a longer life span for your pets.