

Veterinary specialists tackle tough cases

A few years ago, I became ill and couldn't eat for three days. My staff forced me to go to an emergency room, because they cared so deeply about me.

OK, they were really just sick of hearing me whine. After the examination, the doctor stepped back, furrowed his brow and said "hmm." Patients perceive this to be the sound of the doctor wrapping his intellect around a solution to your problem.

What it really means is "Yikes...this is a hard one."

He sent me to a specialist, a gastro-entologist, who diagnosed esophagitis. A few days of medicine and my car was again filled with fast food bags.

In human medicine, specialists handle very individual types of problems, specializing as minutely as they can. I'm fairly certain there's a right earlobe specialist somewhere.

I'm not criticizing. It makes sense. It allows the professional to focus.

A heart expert seeing rashes every third patient would be absurd. Few physicians become general practitioners anymore.

Veterinarians, on the other hand, tend to be general practitioners. In a day we may see a gunshot wound, ear infections, a heart work-up, eye problems, dog teeth. The variation increases when you throw in exotic pets, and even large animals. (Personally, I'm too lazy for either of

ABOUT ANIMALS



BRAD DAVIS

To a veterinary specialist.

Stand-outs

Our area boasts many specialists, but three locations stand out. Michigan Veterinary Specialists in Southfield, Oakland Veterinary Referral Service in Bloomfield Hills, and Michigan State University's Teaching Hospital in East Lansing.

Still the king of Michigan's referral medicine, Michigan State has all the bells and whistles...even their own TV show on *Animal Planet*. They deal with all species, and hold costs down pretty well (probably because of free labor from vet students, but I digress). MSU's care compares favorably with any institution.

The problem is convenience. Time rarely allows people to make the long drive to East Lansing once, much less a number of times. Those who go to MSU usually come back satis-

those.)

With the huge number of possible cases, eventually every vet will say "hmm." Where do vets send cases that are difficult, confusing, or require more advanced diagnostic testing?

But the location can be impractical. Closer to home, Michigan Veterinary Specialists started operations 11 years ago, has 22 doctors on staff and sees 20,000 cases a year. MVS tries to "extend the practice of the regular veterinarian," Dr. Brent Calhoun, the hospital administrator, said, and tries to form a "partnership with the veterinarian and the owner for the pet's health."

Having a Cat Scan on premises indicates the technological level of MVS. Dr. Daniel Degner, a surgeon at the facility, has a growing reputation for his microsurgery skills. Dr. Calhoun said. A recent surgery involved replacing a damaged section of esophagus with a piece of healthy colon. (If you are unsure what those two terms mean, you probably should be glad.) North of MVS on Telegraph Road is Oakland Veterinary Referral Service, with seven specialists, and, like MVS, an emergency service. Although a friendly and homey place, OVR also has advanced equipment, such as being the only private veterinary clinic in Michigan to do laparoscopic surgery, said Jim Thompson, OVR's Practice Manager.

"Veterinary medicine is changing...people want more state-of-the-art (diagnostics and treatments)," Thompson said. "The clinics in this area are unbelievable...There are about 35 veterinary neurologists in the world, and two are in our area. There are about 40 veterinary oncologists in the world, and two are in our area."

gists in the world, and two are in our area.

"We're lucky. Some states don't have one single specialist. We have so many here."

Seeing a specialist

How would you get Fluffy seen at one of these clinics? Usually you can just call and make an appointment, and your vet will forward the information to the referral clinic by fax. Then your pet will see the ophthalmologist, or neurologist, or cardiologist, even dentist. Ask your vet which facility might better suit your needs. Vets usually like seeing a patient go to a referral clinic, because the focused knowledge of the doctors and the higher level of technology help ensure their patients get the best care, and the best chance for diagnosis and cure. It sure makes those "hmm" cases easier to deal with.

Take Home Message: When your pet has a difficult, long term, or frustrating problem, consider a referral to a specialist center. You might never need them, but it's good to know they're there.

Dr. Brad Davis is the Medical Director for the VCA of Garden City, 2085 Inkster Road, Garden City, MI 48135. Feel free to write him there with questions and comments. He is also one of the hosts of the nationally syndicated radio show "Animal Talk." Visit the Web site at www.Animaltalkradio.com. You can send E-mail questions or comments to DrBrad@animaltalkradio.com

Your castle: Is it really safe?

(NAPSI) - Do you think your home is safe? Think again, says a recent home safety survey.

Feeling safe at home is on the decline, according to a poll of The State Of Home Safety In America, conducted by Lowe's Home Safety Council. While more than 60 percent of families believe their home is very safe, that number is down from 72 percent in June 1998. This decline may be reflected in the growing problem of common home accidents and injuries. Nearly 7 million people suffer from injuries in the home every year - one injury every 5 seconds.

"It's concerning that while many people believe their home is safe, the number of home-related injuries continues to rise," said David Oliver, executive director, Lowe's Home Safety Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving home safety. "The fact of the matter is that most home accidents and injuries are preventable. Families simply need to be aware of the dangers and how to avoid them."

Among the 1,000 parents who were asked what home safety issues were important to them, the overwhelming majority (90 percent) mentioned fire safety specifically, preventing and escaping fires.

"The irony here is that the majority of households placed the greatest concern on fire safety, however falls are the leading cause of injuries in the home," said Oliver.

The study indicated some good news:

- 36 percent of households stated they have a carbon monoxide alarm, a slight improvement from 30 percent in 1998.

- 66 percent of households have a home fire evacuation plan, up from 58 per-

cent in 1998.

■ 96 percent of families have a smoke alarm in the home.

Room for improvement:

- Only 29 percent of families test their smoke alarm once a month, as recommended by the Lowe's Home Safety Council and other national safety organizations. That means the remaining 71 percent (70 million households) are at higher risk of being caught in a home fire, if their smoke alarms are not operable.

- 34 percent of families don't have a home fire evacuation plan.

- More than one million accidental poisonings occur every year among small children, yet 41 percent of families with children ages six and younger don't have cabinet latches.

- Furthermore, 64 percent of families don't have safety handrails or grab bars installed in their homes, which can prevent falls - the leading cause of home accidents.

"This study confirms what we already suspected," Oliver said. "Although more than half of respondents think their home is safe, it's clear that a majority of American homes are not as safe as they could be."

For additional home safety information and free brochures, please call 1-800-SAFE-HOME or visit loweshomesafety.org.

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Home business to be awarded to contest winner

Why would anyone willingly give up a profitable business? Given the current economy, it doesn't make sense, but Carl and Barbara Johnson are about to do just that. The Johnsons started making soap as a hobby 14 years ago. Since then, they created numerous original herbal formulas for their popular CompanySoap, which they sell by mail order and at fine arts and crafts shows throughout Michigan.

"We love making the soap and really enjoy talking about it to people at the shows," says Carl, who was nicknamed "Soap Dude" by a youthful customer several years ago. "Now that we both retired from our previous jobs, and our home business

has grown, it takes more time than we want to give it. We are ready to retire, for real, this time."

It is heart warming to have people enjoy our soaps and return year after year to the shows to keep supplied," adds Barbara. "We created the business out of nothing. It was a wonderful gift for our quality of life. It is ready for expansion, for new owners to take it to the next level and to enjoy the benefits of a home-based business, as we have. We'd like to see someone take over who would appreciate it and continue to develop it."

To that end, they are holding an essay contest, and their CompanySoap business

will be awarded to the winner. The Johnsons ask contestants to tell, in 500 words or less, why they want to own their own home-made soap business. The entry fee is \$75, a percentage of which will be donated to Habitat For Humanity. Should there be an insufficient number of entries to make the contest worthwhile, all entry fees will be returned. Complete contest details are available online at: www.bestsoapbus.com. Contest guidelines may also be obtained by writing to CompanySoap, 1141 Vail Ct., Lansing, Mich. 48917 (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope).

This contest has been reviewed by the Michigan Attorney General's Office.

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