

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



F118

Dentistry for pets

Fido's bad breath can be key to more than a social problem

By Mary Rodrigue staff writer

When the dog has breath that could kill a mouse or the cat won't eat, a serious dental problem could be the culprit, warns a Farmington veterinarian.

"A dental problem often acts as a catalyst for other possibly fatal illnesses in pets," said Dr. Thomas H. Kavanagh, one of a handful of Michigan veterinarians who specializes in animal dentistry.

"Once an infection from a sore it has free access to all the organs in their body, including the heart, kidneys and liver."

Kavanagh, who operates Village Animal Clinic in Farmington and County Ridge Animal Hospital in Farmington Hills, offers these tips to pet owners.

• Hard dry dog food is the best food for dogs. The worst is canned dog food, even worse than table scraps, because of the tartar that accumulates on teeth, he said.

• Bones and dog biscuits aren't good for dogs. Bones cause constipation and could cause choking. Dog biscuits do as much for a dog's teeth as a piece of cheesecake does for humans.

"A 15-pound dog eating a 32 calorie dog biscuit is similar to a 150 pound human eating a 320 calorie piece of cheesecake," Kavanagh said.

• A dog or a cat's teeth should be brushed. Start with a wet cotton ball, eventually working your way up to a soft toothbrush. Use baking powder or pet toothpaste.

"Dogs and cats over the age of 6 should have their teeth checked once

a year," Kavanagh said. "After age 10, (teeth) should be checked more often. Tartar and periodontal disease is present in over 30 percent of (dogs and cats) over age 6 and in over 50 percent of pets over age 10."

Kavanagh uses ultrasound equipment to check for irregularities below the gum line. Tooth polishing and fluoride treatment is part of a general oral checkup and is done under anesthesia.

"Periodontal disease is a major cause of aging in pets," he said. "Bacteria goes through the bloodstream and can cause heart, liver or kidney problems. It's rare to find these (problems in) pets with normal teeth."

Just like with humans, abscesses and tartar buildup are common dental problems found in animals. Root canals and extractions are common procedures.

Kavanagh displayed the X-ray of one canine patient suffering from a large tooth imbedded in his skull, puncturing the sinuses. The excruciating pain made it impossible for the dog to eat, he said. Kavanagh displayed the culprit tooth, which he extracted, and reported the dog is doing fine.

While general tooth care for pets is relatively inexpensive, the cost can skyrocket with special procedures.

Although pet health insurance is available through various organizations, Kavanagh doesn't favor such policies.

"Primarily when there is a third party carrier, they need to make a profit," he said. "So they use gimmicks — qualifiers and exclusions, co-pays and limits. A premium system is set up charging frequent users more money."

"If we're asked about insurance, we tell the customer what's available. We haven't had a taker in two years. It's really not a good benefit. We don't like to try to fool people into thinking they're going to get something for nothing."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Dr. Thomas H. Kavanagh, a veterinarian specializing in animal dentistry, examines one of his patients, an Irish setter, at the Village Animal Clinic in Farmington.

Yule cards welcome for fall publication

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers carries on its tradition of publishing holiday greeting cards for non-profit and non-political organizations.

The annual special promotion for the numerous charitable organizations that work year around in the battle against diseases or social problems will appear in all 12 O & E newspapers Thursday, Oct. 29.

Non-profit and non-political groups are invited to submit five copies of each card they will be selling. The newspaper reserves the right to select one sample for publication if more than one style of card is submitted.

Every effort will be made to publish all cards received by Tuesday, Oct. 20. Cards received later will be published throughout the holiday

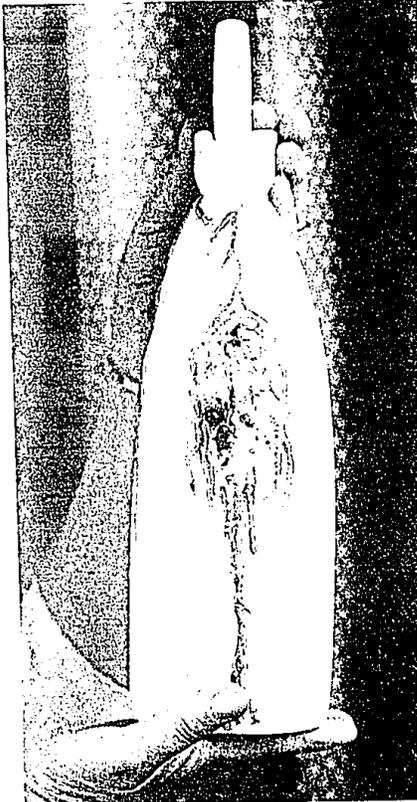
season as space permits. Information pertaining to ordering cards will appear with the photos of the cards to aid readers in making their selection.

Those submitting cards are requested to include such information as price per box, number of cards per box, price for imprinting and deadline for imprinting, addresses and phone numbers for ordering.

The cards are to be mailed to: Lorraine McClish, Farmington Observer, 32203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

The display of cards in several O & E offices is another tradition that will continue.

The greeting card duplicates will be mounted in display books for our readers to view at their leisure and select the card they want to order.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer



Blue ribbon winners

Dolores Petachenko won a host of blue ribbons for her china painting at Michigan State Fair this year, one of them for her display of pendants (above). The Danish-styled contemporary technique used for the jewelry as well as the wine decanter at left is something new she'll be offering visitors during Farmington Community Center's Arts and Crafts Show Saturday, Oct. 17. The Farmington Hills resident, a member of Michigan Porcelain Artists, joins about 70 artisans for this year's fall sale. Show hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the center and on the grounds, 24705 Farmington Road. Admission is \$1 at the gate.

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