

InTown Veterinary Group is dedicated to providing our clients with an unparalleled range of veterinary care options.

The doctors at Bulger Animal Hospital & Essex County Veterinary Emergency Hospital are always on hand no matter how seemingly small the question. We care about you and your animals. No question is too small. If you're worried, call us.

Bulger Animal Hospital:

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(978) 725-5544

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Fire Dangers - More than Just Burns

The loss of one's home in a fire can be devastating, and this heartbreak is compounded if any pets are trapped inside the blaze. On January 3rd 2007, 24 units in a Georgetown apartment complex were destroyed by a fire. However, thanks to the efforts of firefighters, emergency response units and the staff of Muddy Creek Animal Care Center in Rowley, 18 pets were rescued, including cats, dogs and a rabbit. All the animals were housed at Muddy Creek until their owners could be found. Only one animal was in critical condition: a Domestic Short-Haired cat named Smudge. Smudge arrived at Muddy Creek for emergency treatment with soaked and matted fur. He was severely hypothermic & weak.

As in humans, smoke inhalation is a potentially life-threatening condition in animals. Heat from the smoke can cause thermal injury to the lungs, and burning chemicals irritate and damage lung tissue. In the most severe cases, smoke inhalation can cause respiratory distress, cardiac arrhythmias, and brain damage.

Luckily Smudge only suffered from mild to moderate smoke inhalation. Smudge became more responsive after his temperature normalized. Following initial emergency treatment at Muddy Creek, Smudge was transferred to Essex County Veterinary Emergency Hospital (ECVEH) for 24 hour care. He responded well to intravenous fluids, oxygen and bronchodilators. Smudge's family was located shortly after Smudge was brought to ECVEH.

Twenty-four hours after the fire, the whole family had been reunited, with Smudge well on his way to recovery.



Smudge in the ICU at Essex County Veterinary Emergency Hospital

Emergency Preparedness Tips

Emergencies are, by their nature, panic-laden. First and foremost, before the event of any type of emergency, whether it is a fire, flood, storm, or any other disaster, have a plan. This is true for your entire family, but should also include your pets. Never sacrifice your own life or your family's to save a pet, but make sure fire department personnel are aware that your pets are still inside.

- Purchase window stickers to notify firefighters of your pets if you are not there.
- Try to locate a hotel, boarding facility, friend, or relative's home where your pets might be able to stay if you need to evacuate your home.
- Consider having your pet microchipped so that he or she can be identified if lost in an emergency.
- If your pet is lost in an emergency situation, call your local veterinary hospital, regional veterinary emergency hospital and shelters to find him or her.

Medical Notes

Cat Corner

Easter Lilies & Kidney Failure

Easter lilies are a beautiful harbinger of the spring, however they are extremely poisonous to curious cats who nibble on them. Cats are adept at jumping onto countertops and bookshelves, so it is especially important to place plants in inaccessible areas.

Please contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your cat has eaten any part of a lily.

Which part of the plant is toxic?

The whole plant is toxic. The leaves, petals, and even the pollen can make cats sick if ingested. The specific toxic compound in Easter lilies is unknown, but every part of the plant, even when consumed in small quantities, can be poisonous. Dried lilies also contain the same toxin.

Are any other types of lilies toxic?

Several types of lilies have been known to cause poisoning in cats. Some of the more common lilies include tiger lilies, stargazer lilies and day lilies.

What should I look for if I suspect my cat has nibbled on an Easter lily?

Initial symptoms most commonly include vomiting, lethargy and loss of appetite. Less common symptoms include tremors, salivation, dizziness, and seizures. If the cat is not treated, he or she may develop kidney failure within 24-72 hours.

Signs of kidney failure frequently include increased drinking and urination in addition to the vomiting and loss of appetite.

What does treatment involve?

Treatment heavily depends on the amount of time that has elapsed between the cat eating the lily and being admitted at Bulger or Essex Emergency. If it has been up to 2-3 hours, it may be a matter of inducing vomiting and performing blood work to determine if any kidney damage has occurred.



If more time has lapsed since ingestion, activated charcoal may be administered to prevent further digestion of toxins into the bloodstream. An enema may also be performed to evacuate the lower intestinal tract.

Additional treatment may involve hospitalization for IV fluid therapy to flush the kidneys for a minimum of 48 hours. During this period blood work is repeated several times to monitor kidney and electrolyte values to assess the degree of kidney damage.

Will my cat recover?

Cats who are treated immediately following ingestion of Easter lilies have the best chance for a full recovery. Cats who develop kidney failure may still do well with appropriate treatment, depending on the degree to which the kidneys have been damaged.

Unfortunately, many times owners are not aware that their cats have ingested part of the plant until kidney failure has already occurred and the cat has developed symptoms consistent with kidney failure. Many cats can live for several years with kidney failure as long as appropriate home care is initiated.

Will Easter lilies harm my dog?

Dogs may develop gastrointestinal signs like vomiting or diarrhea following ingestion of Easter lilies, however kidney failure is uncommon.

Things to Remember:

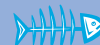
Start flea and tick preventative on your outdoor cat in April



Make sure your cat's wellness care is up-to-date



Call your veterinarian if you suspect your cat (or dog) is showing any of the signs discussed in the article on lily toxicity.



Lyme Disease

Let's face it - we live in a high-risk area for Lyme Disease. While Lyme is potentially very serious in humans, it affects our companion animals very differently.

Below are some frequently asked questions about Lyme Disease. The answers may clarify some misconceptions about this often misunderstood disease.

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme is caused by infection with the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* which is transmitted via the bite of an infected deer tick, *Ixodes scapularis*. Don't let the name fool you though - deer ticks feed on many other hosts such as birds and mice, so suburban and urban pets are still at risk.

What are the symptoms of Lyme Disease?

Many dogs experience a sudden onset of joint pain, often accompanied by a fever, lethargy, and decreased appetite. Limping is the most consistent clinical sign.

Note that it may take between 2 and 5 months for your dog to exhibit any of these signs. Many dogs that have been exposed never show any symptoms at all.

How serious is Lyme Disease?

Unlike humans, severe long term effects of Lyme Disease in dogs are very rare. In these cases, dogs may develop *Lyme glomerulonephritis* - a severe form of kidney disease. Because of this, we recommend that all Lyme positive dogs have bloodwork and urinalysis to rule out this potentially life threatening complication.

How is Lyme disease treated?

Most dogs respond very quickly to antibiotics; oral doxycycline is the treatment of choice for a minimum of 21-28 days. Some dogs may benefit from anti-inflammatory therapy as well. Your veterinarian can recommend which anti-inflammatory medication is best for your dog.

Can cats get Lyme Disease?

Yes and no. Cats can become infected in the same manner as dogs. However, clinical disease has never been reported in cats and most veterinarians do not screen for or treat Lyme Disease in cats.

How can I prevent my pet from getting Lyme disease?

Check your dog regularly for ticks. It can take up to 48 hours for the tick to transmit Lyme disease, so early detection and removal may be the most critical step in prevention of transmission. Topical products like Frontline Plus® or the Preventic® collar are recommended as well.

Should I vaccinate my dog against Lyme Disease?

Vaccination against Lyme Disease is controversial. Since there is no definitive answer, lifestyle, previous exposure, breed of dog and external tick prevention all play a role in whether vaccination makes sense for your pet. Talk to your veterinarian for more details about the pros and cons of vaccination.

It's winter, yet I'm still seeing ticks!

Yes, ticks are hardy little critters that often ignore the calendar. Ticks thrive in the cold and damp, so most transmission in New England occurs during the spring and fall. However, ticks will continue to be a problem during mild winters. Consult your veterinarian regarding year-round tick prevention for your dog and your lifestyle.



Black legged deer tick



Things to Remember:

Keep chocolates away from dogs



Make sure your dog's wellness care is up-to-date



Start your dog's seasonal heartworm preventative in April



Start flea and tick preventative in April, or when you start to see ticks



For more information on this or any topic, feel free to use the medical index on our website.
www.InTownBulger.com, then click "Medical Index".

Pocket Pet Pen

Is it time for your ferret to visit the veterinarian?

When should my ferret first visit the veterinarian?

Just like puppies and kittens, baby ferrets (called kits) require a series of vaccines starting at 8 weeks of age.

What vaccines does my ferret need?

Ferrets should be vaccinated against Rabies and Canine Distemper. Their vaccines are formulated differently than those given to dogs and cats so be sure your veterinarian has the proper vaccines on hand.

Why does my veterinarian give my ferret a shot before the vaccine?

Vaccine reactions are very common in ferrets. Your ferret is getting a Benadryl shot to decrease the likelihood of an anaphylactic reaction.

Here at InTown Veterinary Group we use the most up to date vaccines to keep your ferret safe. The newer Purevax vaccine for Canine Distemper has a reported reaction incidence of only 0.3%.

Does my ferret need to be spayed or neutered?

The vast majority of ferrets were spayed and neutered at a very young age before they entered the pet trade and became part of your family. This is because the reproductive physiology of ferrets is very different from dogs and cats.

Intact female ferrets that are not used for breeding will remain in heat for very long periods of time resulting in potentially life-threatening illness.

How often does my adult ferret need to see the veterinarian?

Adult ferrets need to see the veterinarian once a year for vaccines until they are four years old. Twice yearly visits are recommended after the age of four.

Older ferrets are very prone to a number of serious illnesses that, if caught early enough, can be treatable.



Rabbit Nutrition

When adopting a pet rabbit, many owners are unaware of the special nutritional needs that rabbits have. Some may be tempted to feed them as we do our dogs and cats, with a pre-formulated, pelleted diet as their exclusive source of food.

However, rabbits are herbivores (meaning they eat exclusively vegetables) and pelleted foods cannot meet this need!

Here are some tips for feeding your rabbit to help him or her stay in the best health:

- Minimize pellets. As easy as it seems to feed rabbits pellets, they are designed for commercial rabbits to put on weight FAST. They are not intended for a rabbit who will be living a full life outside of the laboratory. Feed a high fiber pellet with no more than 3% fat. Once a rabbit is an adult, they only need 1/8 - 1/4 cup per 5lbs body weight of pellets.



- Free access to fresh, good quality hay is necessary both to wear down the teeth, and for the gastrointestinal tract to function properly. Rabbits typically munch on hay all day. Grass hays such as timothy hay are preferred over alfalfa hay, which has too much calcium.

- Fresh, leafy greens should also be available daily. Greens should be washed prior to feeding and should be removed from the cage if they are not eaten within a few hours. A guideline for how much to feed is 1 heaping cup per 4lbs of rabbit body weight. Some examples of nutritious greens include: dandelion greens (and flowers), raspberry leaves, kale, mustard greens, escarole, endive, radicchio, collard greens, beet greens, carrot tops, parsley, turnip tops, romaine, Swiss chard, bok choy, mint leaves, and cabbage (red and green).

For further information, please see www.rabbit.org, www.mahouserabbit.org, or www.veterinarypartner.com.