



Bulger Newsletter

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We hope you enjoy the new look and feel of the Bulger newsletter. As IVG and Bulger rebrands, you will begin to see a number of changes to our materials. What remains unchanged is our dedication and commitment to providing you and your pets with the highest standards of veterinary medical care.

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Medical Notes

Be Safe With Sharps!

By Mary Letwin, DVM

Starting July 1st, it will be illegal in all of Massachusetts to dispose of needles and syringes in your household trash. Until now, the law has varied from town to town, but in 2010 the Massachusetts law (passed in 2006) banning the disposal of sharps in household trash will take effect. The penalty for breaking this law is a hefty fine.

What does this mean to you?

If you use a syringe, hypodermic needle, or even a blood-testing lancet to treat your pets at home, these items must be treated as hazardous medical waste, and disposed of only at approved locations.

Why is this important?

Every time trash handlers are accidentally stuck with a needle, or come in contact with a syringe, they have to worry about possible exposure to disease. They can't tell that your syringe they got poked with was used for an animal. They have to assume they were exposed to human diseases, and seek testing and treatment. This leads to a lot of worry, cost and wasted time.

What should you do?

There are a few options to choose from:

- Sharps containers are available for sale at Bulger. The cost includes disposal fees. Simply discard the sharps in this container, and bring it back to us when it's full.
- Put your sharps in a puncture-resistant plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tightly secured lid, such as an empty detergent or bleach bottle, or a coffee can. You can also purchase a sharps disposal container from your local pharmacy. This can be brought back to this hospital (a disposal fee will apply) or to any MA disposal site listed by the Department of Public Health.



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Introducing A New Cat or Kitten to your Other Pets (Part II - Dogs)

By Kathryn Wrubel, Ph.D.

Proper introduction of a new cat to your household pets can prevent a myriad of behavior issues in the future. If not done properly, problems such as cat-dog aggression, predatory aggression, fearfulness, anxiety, and bullying can result. Cats can take a while to warm up to new surroundings and it is best to take this process slowly. Rushing into it when your cat or other pets are not comfortable yet can be asking for trouble.

Below is part two of a two-part article. Part one focused on introducing your new cat or kitten to your other cats. The initial steps for choosing your new kitten and settling him or her into your home are repeated, but in this edition we will focus on introducing your new cat to your dog.

Planning Ahead

Picking the Right Cat for Your Household:

It is best to pick out a cat that you know will fit in well with your family and existing pets. You want all of your pets to have a good quality of life and to live as harmoniously as possible. If you have a dog that kills small animals and shows interest in cats that worries you (staring, stiffening, and other predatory behaviors), it isn't fair to introduce a cat to your household. If you are already in this situation, be prepared for a lifetime of avoidance, management and control measures to keep your cat safe. Your cat should never be left unsupervised with a predatory dog. If you have a cat that doesn't like other cats or has a history of fighting with them in the house, you may just be in for more of the same. Finally, if your resident cats or dogs have behavior issues that could interfere with the addition of a new cat or that require time-consuming fixes you should seriously consider attending to these issues prior to adopting a new cat.

Figure out what feline temperament or personality will fit best into your home.

Some breeds of cats are stereotypically more bold, playful, laid-back, or affectionate. More information about cat breeds can be found at: <http://animal.discovery.com/breedselector/catselectoindex.do> or www.catster.com/breeds.

When you meet a kitten or cat for the first time pay attention to his or her behavior.

- Is the kitten gregarious, outgoing, playful, or jovial? Some resident cats and dogs will benefit from an occasional swat, hiss or vocalization and will do best with a new family member who can stand their ground occasionally.
- Is the kitten more standoffish compared to his or her littermates? Is he or she fearful, skittish, shy, or hiding? If you suspect that your existing cat or dog will have a field day terrorizing the little guy - even if you feel sorry for him or her and that mommy/daddy instinct is kicking in - this is not the cat for you.



You know your pets, so use this information to your advantage when picking out a new feline family member.

If you are getting a new kitten it is best to socialize them with your other pets when they are between 6-8 weeks of age (they are more open to new things during this period of rapid learning and socialization). If you are adopting an adult cat it is a good idea to adopt a cat who has lived previously with other cats or dogs, instead of a cat from a previous home with no other dogs or cats.

Make sure to take your new cat to the veterinarian for medical tests, deworming and vaccinations prior to bringing him home. You don't want to double or triple your medical bills by skipping this step.

Introductions

Phase 1. Your New Cat's First Few Days: Provide a comfortable closed room for your cat to spend his first few days in. The room should have food and water dishes, comfortable resting spots, a new litter box, a scratching post, toys, and several hiding locations (cardboard boxes or tunnels made out of paper bags work great). The litter box should be on

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the opposite side of the room from the food and water dishes, as cats don't like to eliminate where they eat.

When you arrive home with your new cat take him directly to this room in a carrier and open the door. If your cat is nervous and won't come out of the carrier, leave the room to give him time to adjust to his new surroundings. If your cat has a blanket or other item that smells like a previous home, put that in the room to make him more comfortable. A lot of cats will hide when they first come to a new house; don't force your new cat to come out or push him beyond his comfort zone; be patient and be upbeat and calm when you visit. Sit on the floor and see if he will come out to say hello for treats or petting. This time of separation will give him time to explore his new environment without the stress and interruption of your existing pets. You will also have some special alone time with your new cat so you can work on building your relationship. During this time your other pets may investigate the door area and you may hear some vocalizations. Make sure to keep your resident pets' schedule as close to normal as you can once your new cat arrives. Cats in particular are creatures of habit and if the new cat disrupts their routine, they will be paying attention.

After a couple of days, take items with your pets' odors to areas where they can be investigated by your other pets. Cats' and dogs' senses of smell are finely tuned and provide them with lots of useful information. Try rubbing clean socks on the cheek of your cat(s) or the body of your dog(s) and put the socks in the other rooms so your pets can familiarize themselves with each other.

Phase 2. Cat/Dog Introductions: After your new cat has settled into his room and seems comfortable around items with your dog's scent, and your dog seems comfortable with that of your new cat, you can start to switch territories so they can familiarize themselves with each other's smells. This will also allow your new cat to explore the rest of the house without being frightened. Let your new cat leave the room on his own while your dog is securely confined so they do not interact yet. Once your new cat is safely in another room (preferably with the door closed) you can bring the dog to the cat's territory on a leash, and close the door. Drop the leash and allow

your dog to sniff around the room. Pick up food and litter boxes since your dog may eat the cat's food or stool. It is best to introduce one dog at a time to the newcomer's room (start with the dog you think will get along with the new cat best). In this case put your other dogs in a separate room, crate them, or take them to a friend's house. Switch territories a couple of times per day.

During the next phase, you should feed your new cat and your dog(s) simultaneously near the door to the room where your new cat resides. This will cause them to associate each other with positive experiences and should take the focus off of concerns they have about each other as they focus on enjoying their meals. You can begin with the bowls at a comfortable distance from the door and gradually move them closer. Once your pets are on opposite sides of the door eating comfortably you can open the door a pinch so they can see each other while eating (if your dog is food aggressive this step may need to be omitted or altered). Keep the door open but don't allow the space to be big enough for them to push through (you can use a doorstop at first). Eventually you can put up a tall gate or screen to separate your pets at the door.

If things are going well you can consider doing a formal introduction with your dog on leash. You should have two people for this and have high-value treats and toys for both pets on hand in case you need to provide a distraction. Again, only introduce one dog to your new cat at a time (in order of suspected difficulty).

During the introduction, have your dog sit or lie down and let the cat explore the area from a distance. Do this for a brief time period and, if possible, end on a positive note every time. Gradually extend the time for exposure. If your dog gets too excited or your new cat gets scared or aggressive, end the session and go back a step or two. If your dog is intensely staring at your cat, stiffening, whining, pacing, salivating, or poking your cat with his or her nose and then backing up again (a predatory dog's way of saying "Just give me a reason") then you should stop the sessions entirely and consult with a behavior specialist. If your dog is calm and behaving well, praise him and give him treats. If this goes

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Spring has Sprung

By Amber Burns, DVM

With warm weather comes more outdoor fun, and hazards for our furry family members. It has been a long, cold, inclement winter and everyone wants to get outside and play. Here are some things to consider and prepare for as the warm weather brings us out to explore.

1. Parasites Abound

With the amount of moisture and wildlife in our area, we need to be vigilant about keeping insect infiltrators at bay. Dogs and cats are more susceptible to unwanted inhabitants such as fleas, ticks, digestive parasites and mosquitoes. These interlopers can create disease and illness not just for our pets but also for our families. To minimize the risk of disease it is important to use a preventative program: check your pets' fur for pests before coming into the house, and clean up all fecal matter in the lawn. Preventatives can include topical or oral medication, or medicated collars. There are many items available through your veterinary hospital or over-the-counter, and not all are created equal; talk with your veterinarian to see what product is best for your pet's lifestyle and exposure level. Heartworm, a potentially lethal blood parasite that can end up in the heart and lungs of our pets, is transmitted by mosquitoes. Although mosquitoes are tough to avoid, the heartworm parasite they transmit can be intercepted by a simple (tasty) monthly preventative medication. Parasites of the digestive system can be checked for with an annual fecal test.

2. Temperature Risks and Dehydration

It is up to us to know when our pets need to rest, as they may not be able to tell themselves. Older dogs are at a potential risk of overheating just from overzealous play or even a short romp on a particularly hot day. Just like us, our dogs need to be conditioned to the warmer weather and outdoor activities. Be sure to take plenty of rest breaks in the shade or back indoors even if your dog seems to be fine. Sometimes heat exhaustion and fatigue can be delayed. On very warm days, it is best to avoid the heat of the afternoon, so limit active times to dawn or dusk when the temperature is less severe. Water should always be clean and clear and readily available for any activity. Car rides are great fun for dogs, but cars heat up extremely quickly and can be

extremely dangerous if dogs are left unattended, even with all the windows down.

3. Outdoor Injuries

Not all dogs get along at the dog park. No matter how hard we try, sometimes accidental encounters happen. Keep your dog on leash if you are not sure how he will act during a meeting. If a bite wound occurs, see your veterinarian immediately. The higher danger is often below the wound and can worsen if left untreated. Dogs and cats can also get cut on glass, fencing materials, or organic debris, all of which can fester and become infected if left untreated. Torn nails can also be a source of pain and discomfort. Sometimes the nail has to be cut at the base for proper healing, an action that should only be performed by your veterinarian. Finally, check your pets for burrs, sharp grasses, foxtails or other organic matter before they return inside as these can be a source of discomfort and can migrate under the skin. Dogs can also experience strains and sprains from overactivity outside. Do not give your dog any pain relief medications without consulting with your veterinarian, as many drugs we can take are toxic for dogs.

4. Wildlife Encounters

There are many wild animals in our area. Skunks emit an odiferous spray, but also can cause eye ulcerations if not rinsed immediately with a sterile eye solution. Porcupines release their quills as a defensive mechanism. If they penetrate the skin they are painful and require medical removal immediately. Rabies is also a concern with any bite wound or saliva contact. Make sure you keep your pet's rabies vaccine up-to-date and see your veterinarian if any wounds are noted.

All in all, though, spring is a great opportunity for exercise and fun for all. We can all work off those cabin fever blues and extra treats. Just be aware of your surroundings, use common sense and tend to accidents immediately after they happen so that the entire warm weather season can be enjoyed!



Chocolate

By Christina Valiant, VMD

Chocolate is one of those things that is always lying around the house, and some of our canine friends are a little more likely than others to help themselves to our sweet treats. Unfortunately, chocolate is one of those delicious human foods that can cause serious harm to dogs who indulge too much.

Just what is it about chocolate that is toxic to dogs?

Chocolate contains naturally occurring chemical compounds in a class called methylxanthines. These chemicals in chocolate include theobromine and caffeine. Dogs and cats do not metabolize these chemicals as efficiently as people do, so they can build up to toxic levels in their bodies. Dogs like sweet things much more than cats do, so although chocolate is toxic to both dogs and cats, we usually see chocolate toxicity in dogs. Signs of chocolate toxicity can vary depending on the dose consumed. At lower doses, chocolate can cause vomiting and diarrhea. At higher doses, pets may experience agitation, increased heart rate, muscle tremors or convulsions, and abnormal heart rhythms. At high enough doses, chocolate can be lethal.



The amount of theobromine and caffeine in chocolate varies depending on what type of chocolate is ingested. White chocolate is made primarily from cocoa butter, and contains very low levels of methylxanthines. Chocolates with high cacao concentrations such as dark and baker's chocolate, contain much higher levels of methylxanthines, so it doesn't take very much of these types of chocolates to cause signs of toxicity. The amount of chocolate needed to cause problems also depends upon the weight of the patient. Larger dogs can tolerate higher doses of the chemicals in chocolate than can smaller patients.

As a general rule, 20 milligrams (mg) of methylxanthines per kilogram (kg) of your dog's body weight is enough to cause mild signs, such as vomiting and diarrhea. Forty mg/kg can cause more severe signs, such as agitation, tremors and elevated

heart rate. Sixty mg/kg can cause seizures, and can be a fatal dose for some dogs. This means that ingestion of as little as 1.4 oz of milk chocolate in a 10 lb dog could cause vomiting and diarrhea, and 2.8 oz could cause severe signs that may require hospitalization. For the same 10 lb dog, only 1.2 oz of dark, sweetened chocolate can cause severe signs, and as little as 0.4 oz of unsweetened baker's chocolate is needed to cause severe problems. However, if we catch things early enough after your pet has ingested the chocolate, we can often induce vomiting and do other things to prevent some of the more severe signs from occurring.

If you find that your dog has ingested chocolate, it is always important to call the veterinarian. We can calculate the amount of toxic components present in the specific type of chocolate that your dog ingested and determine if further treatment in the hospital is needed. But more importantly: remember, try to keep all of those delicious chocolates for yourself!



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- Use this link to the document called [Proper Use and Disposal of Needles and Syringes](#) on the mass.gov/dph website, and scroll down to find the list of sites.
- Call the MA Department of Public Health at 617-624-6000, or your local Board of Health, for more help if needed.

In North Andover, the CVS Pharmacy on Main St. is the closest disposal site where you can drop off your full sharps containers for free. Make sure your container is puncture-resistant, leakproof, shatterproof, rigid, and tightly sealed for safety. No bags or glass containers are allowed. Be careful and be legal – keep sharps out of the trash!



Generosity is not a Function of Age

If the children are our future, then there may be hope yet! Young Shae, of Wakefield, MA turned eight on February 14 and for her birthday she asked her guests for one thing – to donate money towards the Pets in Need Fund at Bulger Veterinary Hospital. Shae's family pets have been coming to Bulger for several years; her own dog Keely, a two year old Golden Retriever, had been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus at a very young age. Shae has learned a lot about veterinary medical issues and understands the value of preventative veterinary care for her pets. She even wants to grow up to be a veterinarian.

What Shae also clearly seems to understand is that there are people who are less fortunate than herself and her family. When asked about her plans for next year's birthday Shae replied that she is still considering her options; right now it is looking like she will ask her friends to donate towards relief in Haiti.

Shae, her friends and family presented Bulger Veterinary Hospital with a check in the amount of \$218 for Pets in Need. Bulger's Pets in Need fund is



Shae and her new friend "Dr. Nakoshinohara"; a gift of gratitude from the staff at Bulger Veterinary Hospital.

comprised of generous donations from clients such as Shae and her family, a portion of the cost of every euthanasia performed by one of our doctors, and by bottle returns collected internally by staff.

Use of the money in the fund is at the discretion of the doctors and support staff, though it is earmarked to assist families who have otherwise practiced suitable pet ownership, but due to hardship cannot afford to perform a necessary procedure for their beloved pet. While the fund is not a tax-exempt fund, IVG is in the process of changing the status of the fund.

The doctors and staff at Bulger Veterinary Hospital were deeply grateful and extremely surprised by Shae's generosity. Forgoing birthday presents in lieu of donations for something one believes in is noteworthy at any age: Shae's parents should be very proud of her and of themselves. The future is in good hands. Thank you Shae.



Bulger Veterinary Hospital: New Name, New Logo, Same Promise. Advancing Veterinary Medicine, One Pet at a Time

Over the last few months, if you've been into the hospital, you may have begun to see some changes at Bulger Animal Hospital and Essex County Veterinary Referral Hospital.

As many of you may know, Bulger and Essex share one building and treatment space in North Andover. Though each provides different services - general veterinary services vs. emergency and specialty care. Within the scope of our overall rebranding of InTown Veterinary Group to IVG, we have made the decision to merge these two North Andover entities under one name: Bulger Veterinary Hospital.

As IVG and each of our hospitals continue to grow, we want to express our gratitude for the trust you have placed in us over the years, and thank each of you for your faith in our medical staff.

In addition to the change in the hospital and organizational name, we are also changing our logos and the overall look and feel of our website and printed materials.

This is an exciting step for us as an organization and we hope to continue to exceed your expectations with every step we take.



Pet Owner Lecture Series

Are you a pet owner with questions about your pet? If you are, perhaps you would be interested in signing up for one of our free upcoming one-hour pet owner lectures. Dates, times and locations are listed below. Go to our website and follow the links for more information and to register to attend. www.IVGHospitals.com

Upcoming Topics:

June 22: Tenacious Toys: Raising a Tiny Dog in a Big World (Muddy Creek Animal Care Center)

Toy dogs are special breeds. If you have a big dog in a little dog's body, this lecture is for you. Different toy breeds will be discussed and tips on training, management, safety, and enrichment will be provided.

July 13: What You Need to Know About Dogs Now to Prevent Behavior Issues in the Future(Mass Vet)

This lecture will cover the basics on what your dog needs to thrive in the human world. Topics covered will include the basics on socialization, enrichment, exercise, training, and leadership that every owner should know.



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well after several daily sessions let your dog and cat interact with the dog moving freely on leash, and eventually with the leash dragging behind him or her. Once you feel comfortable about things between your dog and cat you can introduce your other pets to the newcomer, or start keeping them together when you can supervise them. Put the cat in a safe room at night or when you are not home. If things are going well after this point, you can allow your cat and dog to interact freely in your home. Once your pets are living together, remember to keep your cat's food and litter box out of your dog's reach, and to provide your cat with plenty of safe hiding spaces or a baby gate he can jump over to get away from your dog when necessary.

If Things Go Badly (Cat/Dog Introductions): Always do your best to end introduction sessions on a positive note. In the case that you can't and/or a pet becomes very fearful or aggressive, separate the pets safely and go back a step or two. Do your best not to let things intensify. Progress slowly and don't force anything on your pets that they are not comfortable with. During introductions you should be calm and upbeat. Don't act upset, scared, worried, or angry around your pets as this might make them suspicious of each other.

Note for New Kittens: If your new kitten is in the sensitive period for socialization (prior to 9 weeks of age) you may consider speeding up the introduction process if things are going well. During this time your kitten is like a little sponge and can form lasting bonds with your other pets if they are willing partners. If you suspect your kitten may be injured by a large dog, make sure to supervise them carefully together. Also, just because your kitten is comfortable doesn't mean your other pets are, so don't force this if your other pets aren't willing or able to progress that quickly.

For information on introducing your new cat or kitten to your other household cats, check out last quarter's Bulger newsletter! Subscribe today to receive your electronic copy. You can unsubscribe at any time.

