

## OPEN WIDE!

# Dental Health: More Than Fresh Breath

*Oral and dental disease in cats is perhaps the most overlooked and under-treated area in cat care. Most kitties over five years of age have some disease that requires immediate care to relieve pain. Conditions common to cats include fractured teeth, periodontal disease, tooth root abscesses (yes, kitty root canals can be done), "cavities" (more correctly called resorptive lesions).*

No different than with their human care givers, preventative care does more than save teeth. With regular dental care periodontal disease can be treated and, better yet, prevented! Unlike most people, anaesthesia is needed in all cats to do a meticulous and thorough job of examining all parts of the mouth, probing around and cleaning the teeth. Periodontal disease is caused by plaque build up on teeth, which, unchecked results in permanent damage to the ligaments that hold the teeth in place. Initially seen as redness; this results not only in tooth loss (the first place you see this is the tiny front teeth in cats), but also discomfort in eating (dropping food, favouring one side of the mouth to eat with) to outright pain resulting in decreased appetite and weight loss.

Cats also get a variety of lumps and bumps in their mouths. While these may be benign, some of them are malignant. All masses need to be investigated so they **a)** don't interfere with function and comfort and **b)** can be treated. Not all can be cured, but many can be.

The standard recommendation is that cats have their full physical examination at least once a year (some cats and all middle aged and older need to be examined twice a year) at which time the need for dental care will be discussed. On average, cats need their teeth cleaned in clinic every two years. 🐾

If you want to read more, go to All Pets Dental at:  
<http://www.dentalvet.com/Default2.htm>



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**SPECIAL**  
**MARCH/APRIL**  
**\$50.00 off the cost of**  
**any dental procedure**

# Senior or Geriatric? What's the Difference?

*How old is old? Like people, age isn't a disease. We all know that "you are only as old as you feel" and that "age is a state of mind," but does this apply to our kitties?*

It most certainly does. Cats are living longer than ever before. On average, in Canada and the USA, cats live to 14–16 years of age. It is not, however, uncommon for us to see cats in their late teens and early twenties, in fact, we do so almost every day. One can say that a cat is "adult" from one to eight years, from nine to 12, is "senior" and after 13 is "geriatric."

So, why does this matter? Just as with people, different conditions become more likely to occur at different ages. In cats, we start screening for a decline in kidney function (renal insufficiency), an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) and diabetes after their eighth year. We also check for more subtle changes carefully, such as high blood pressure, by measuring your cat's blood pressure. Small changes in weight are of greater significance, too. In fact, once a cat reaches 12, it is fairly common for them to start losing weight. This comes about, at least in part, because they aren't digesting their food as well but it can, and often is, because the early stages of renal insufficiency are gradually and insidiously starting. Don't be alarmed! Cats can often live for many years with this condition, but that requires that we recognize that it is present and help kitty appropriately. When kitties reach their golden geriatric years, we want to see them twice a year to screen them for, and monitor, these conditions. Your Mature Cat Program includes all of these tests (a comprehensive physical exam, blood and urine tests, blood pressure) was designed specifically for our special, older cats to help us help you keep them healthy and happy for as long as possible. 🐾



*André in his senior years*

**SPECIAL  
FEBRUARY**

**\$50.00 off  
the cost of your  
Mature Cat Program**

## Science and Animal Intelligence

There is a growing body of scientific evidence of animal intelligence. Alex, an African grey parrot studied by biologist Irene Pepperberg, became famous for his ability to use spoken words to communicate about the world around him. When I first met Pepperberg, Alex was already using words to name different materials (wood, metal, paper) as well as colours and shapes. Pepperberg then

began presenting Alex with arrays of various objects such as different shapes made from different materials but of the same colour. She would then ask, "What is different?" and Alex would reply, "Shape," whereas "What's (the) same?" would lead to the response, "Colour."

This and similar research had been going on quietly for decades, but a recent cover article of National Geographic magazine brought it to millions of readers. The article featured Alex and many other animals whose intelligence has been well studied and documented. Examples include a chimpanzee who communicates through keyboard sym-

bols, a border collie who recognizes 340 spoken commands, together with dolphins, octopus and crows. The scientific study of animal intelligence has now matured to the point that there are several scholarly textbooks on the subject.

Intelligence is by no means the only reason why we care about animals, but a growing appreciation of their intelligence will almost certainly help to promote more respectful treatment. *Dr. David Fraser, Spring/Summer, 2008 AnimalSense.* 🐾

## Ever Wonder... If Cats Have Different Blood Types?

They do! Cats have three main blood types: A, B and AB. When a kitty needs a transfusion, we have to know what his/her blood type is as well as whether there are any other minor reactions between the donor and the recipient of the blood before giving the product to prevent problems as well as to be sure that we aren't wasting the donor's blood. Kitty blood, as you can imagine, is a pretty scarce commodity. As difficult as it is to maintain adequate supplies of human blood for Canadian Blood Services, we rarely have blood on hand when a cat (or dog, in the case of other clinics) need it. When a patient needs blood, we have to call on clinic cats or staff and friends for their cats to donate. A donor has to be in good health, young, tested as being free from blood-borne viruses (feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency viruses). The Vancouver Animal Blood Services is the blood banking division of the Vancouver Animal Emergency Clinic. You can learn more about blood donation and blood banking in veterinary medicine at their website. 🐾

[http://www.animaler.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=20](http://www.animaler.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=20)

To learn specifically how your kitty can donate blood, go to:

[http://www.animaler.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=25](http://www.animaler.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=25)

## Towels

We appreciate donations  
of your used towels  
with thanks!

## CAT TAILS

### Fondly Remembering Mao

*Mao was a handsome Birman kitty with a beautiful disposition.*

I first met Mao at 13 years of age when he had a lump near his ear. We cleaned his teeth, removed the lump (a benign mast cell tumour) and heard from his family that all was well. Ten months later, we received a concerned call informing us that Mao was vomiting. When Dr. Wayne examined him, he found that he had lost almost 21% of his previous weight! (It can be very hard to tell that a cat, especially one with long hair, has lost a significant amount of weight; this was only a 1 kg loss for him.) Dr. Wayne also discovered a thickened area in his intestines and recommended an X-ray and some blood tests to find out whether this was a foreign body or a tumour or inflammation. Based on the results, he was referred to Canada West Veterinary Specialists for an ultrasound of his abdomen. Because a tumour was found, surgery was done to remove the mass, but the cancer was not just in the bowel, it was also spreading over the lining of his abdominal cavity. The cancer was an adenocarcinoma, (a carcinoma of the glandular tissue of the bowel). Because the bulk of the cancer was removed and he recovered well from surgery, Drs. Paula and Wayne investigated the possibility of using chemotherapy administered directly into Mao's abdomen once every three weeks to slow the growth of the metastasized cells. He tolerated the treatment very well but, sadly, the cancer started to regrow very rapidly after only eight weeks. Palliative care, providing comfort and ensuring that he was pain free became the new focus. He stopped eating and once his interest in the things he enjoyed declined, it was time to say goodbye and help him die peacefully. This was a special little person who brought his people and his cat brother a lot of joy. Rest well and know that you were loved by many, Mao! 🐾



Mao, 1994–2009

## The Danger of Hairballs

*A large clump of ingested hair can block a cat's intestinal tract and pose a deadly threat. Here's what you should know.*

Every so often, your otherwise fastidious cat will do an alarming and somewhat disgusting thing. She'll awake from a peaceful nap, rise up on her paws, retch convulsively for a moment or two, and spit up what may appear at first glance to be a damp clump. What your beloved friend has disgorged—in the middle of your kitchen floor or, worse yet, in the

middle of your prized Persian rug—is a trichobezoar, a wad of undigested hair that is commonly referred to as a *hairball*.

Despite the term, hairballs are not usually round. They are often cylindrical, shaped more like a cigar or sausage than a ball. According to Richard Goldstein, DVM, an associate professor of small

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animal medicine at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, a spit-up hairball's elongated shape is imparted by the shape of the esophagus in which it develops or through which it passes on its journey to the outside world. However, he notes, a hairball that is not disgorged and remains in the stomach will indeed be round—"like a sponge or a rolled up sock," he says.

Regurgitated hairballs are variable in size though usually about an inch long they can be as long as five inches and an inch thick. The color is mainly that of the cat's coat, darkened by the animal's food and various gastric secretions, such as green bile. The ejected matter will typically have an unpleasant but tolerable odor.

### Hazardous Potential?

Hairballs are usually the unsavory by-product of a normal habit. As your cat grooms herself she swallows a lot of loose hair. This happens because the tiny backward slanting taste buds that roughen the surface of her tongue propel the hair down her throat and into her stomach. Unfortunately, Dr. Goldstein explains, the main structural components of the hair—a tough, insoluble protein substance called keratin—is indigestible. While most of the swallowed hair eventually passes through the animal's digestive tract and gets excreted intact in the feces, some of it remains in the stomach and gradually accumulates into a damp clump—the hairball.

It's not uncommon, says Dr. Goldstein, for a cat to regurgitate a hairball once every two to four weeks. Aside from inconvenience to the owner, this is nothing to worry about. However, the wad of matted hair can pose a serious health threat if it grows too large to pass through the narrow sphincters leading either from the esophagus to the stomach or from the stomach to the intestinal tract. Also threatening, he notes, is a

### Interesting and informative websites and books to purrruse at your leisure

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20090108.wpod-facts0108/BNStory>

Jealous of My Cat's Demise: The Story of Ticket by David Townsend.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1093194/Frankie-feline-exposed-cat-burglar-stealing-toys-neighbours-homes.html?dupe=true&editpw=s>

Frankie, the Cat Burglar!

<http://www.research4cats.org/>  
Happy Healthy Cat Campaign, Feline Health Research Support & Awareness.

<http://ca.youtube.com/watch?v=vwM6f0liHpo&eurl=http://videos.komando.com/2008/09/09/cat-house-on-the-kings/>

Lynea Lattanzio owns the Cat House on the Kings. It's an animal shelter run out of her home. There are no cages on the property. Over the past 16 years, she's cared for more than 16,000 cats!

#### Books

*Cat Wrangling Made Easy* by Dusty Rainbolt; published by Lyons, 2007.

*Dewey; The Small Town Library Cat Who Touched the World* by Vicki Myron 2008, Grand Central Publishing.

hairball that manages to pass into the small intestine and become tightly lodged there. "This is uncommon," he notes, "but it is very serious when it does occur. Without surgical intervention, it can be fatal."

### When is a hairball a sign of disease?

If a cat is overgrooming, she will have more hairballs. This occurs from stress or irritated or itchy skin. Also, more than one hairball every two weeks may reflect an upset gastrointestinal system.

### Relieving the Obstruction

A cat that is lethargic, refuses to eat for more than a day or two or has had repeated episodes of unproductive retching or true vomiting **should be examined by a veterinarian without delay**, he advises. It's possible that the frequent hacking has nothing at all to do with hairballs. It may instead be a sign of another gastrointestinal problem or of a respiratory ailment, such as asthma, in which case emergency treatment may be necessary.

Diagnosis of intestinal blockage is based on physical examination, bloodwork,

X-rays, perhaps ultrasound, and a history of the animal's pattern of hairball regurgitation. If a blockage is detected, surgery may be required in order to remove the hairball. More often, however, therapy will center on protecting the intestines through several days of clinical care that includes the use of a laxative to move the hairball through the digestive tract.

Prevent buildup by giving 1" (2.5cm) of a hairball remedy every two to three days. Hairball diets shouldn't be a panacea for the cat who produces a hairball more than every week or two. Hair loss is normal. Vomiting it more often is a sign of underlying gastrointestinal disease or skin allergy and needs to be worked up properly. *Cat Watch*, April 2008 🐾

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## Tidbits

### Support a Charity

Help your favourite charity during this economically gloomy season by signing up at GoodSearch.com. The search engine company donates 50% of its revenue to the nonprofit organization you designate when you search the Net.

<http://www.goodsearch.com>

# Hide, Perch & Go

You have an appointment to bring kitty in to see us. Kitty disappears. You find kitty and it is a struggle to get her into the carrier. Paws everywhere, squirming, nails even, and a lot of unhappy cat. And then the drive to the clinic... sounds of unhappiness, maybe urinating or worse. By the time you arrive at the clinic, you feel guilty and sorry for your friend and a little worried that she'll hate you for this. And this is before you get through the door of the clinic! Sound familiar?

We know what you go through because we do too, with our own kitties! Having a carrier that kitty feels comfortable in, one she sees at home and sleeps in or on, makes it A LOT LESS stressful for her (and you). Check out this link to **Healthy Cats For Life**: <http://www.healthycatsforlife.com/clinic.html> is a program designed to make visits to the vet (or anywhere else) easier on everyone in the Going to the Clinic section. (It also

has a wonderful section on the Ten Subtle Signs of sickness: your cat can be sick without you knowing it.)

The Hide Perch Go box is a purrfect addition to your home and your cat's life. It was designed by a welfare expert at the BC SPCA, Nadine Gourkow, to allow cats in a shelter setting to feel that they have some control over their lives by hiding in, or perching on top of the box. This is a great piece to have at home as "furniture" if you wish to think of it as such, for your friend. When you need to go to the clinic, leave any bedding or toys in it and it converts in single step into a carrier. Voila. A piece of home to feel secure in. You can see this demonstrated at: [www.sPCA.bc.ca/hideperchgo/HidePerchGo.asp](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/hideperchgo/HidePerchGo.asp)

And don't worry, the design is prettier now. If you are interested in seeing one or purchasing one, they are available at the clinic as we use them in some of the cat's kennels/beds if they are staying with us for any length of time. 🐾

# Homeless!



**Diesel** is about 12 years of age. A very sweet girl, she is a black and white short-haired kitty who you may have heard greet you at the top of the stairs when you come in. She loves to be in your lap... and is very patient. We met her when she was surrendered to us because we refused to euthanize her for having diarrhea. She needs to be on an intestinal diet so she doesn't get another tummy. Can she come and live with you???

**Dolly**, a beautiful Himalayan cross-long-haired kitty, is approximately 6-7 years young. She came to us through Dr. Janet. Her previous person had health issues and was unable to give her the injections required for her well-regulated diabetes. She has a sweet nature and loves attention. She has been with us for two months now...one of our clients has been paying for her "room and board." We'd really like to find her a wonderful home, too.



# Folklore and Superstitions

The sneezing of a cat is good luck for all who hear it.

If a black cat comes to you, or follows you, it will bring good luck.

Tom cats, when they fight, speak English and swear at one another.

If you sleep with a cat, its tail will go down your throat.

Never stroke a cat backward or your luck will turn bad.

If a cat comes to your home and won't leave it, it will bring good luck if taken in.

A strange black cat on your porch brings prosperity.

It's bad luck if you put the cat out before you wind the clock.

If a calico cat comes to your door, she will bring you good luck

To keep a cat at home place a piece of food under your armpit and give it to him to eat.

To keep cat at home butter her feet.

When moving to a new home, always put the cat in through the window instead of through the door, then it will not leave.

It is bad luck to see a black cat before breakfast.

To ward off bad luck from superstitions, like seeing a black cat, wet your index finger, press it on your palm, and then slap your palm three times with your fist.

When a cat is washing under her tail, grab the leg that is up in the air and make a wish.

In the interpretation of a dream, cats mean craftiness.

*Encyclopedia of American Folklore* 🐾

# Meet the Team—

Your Team of Cat Care Enthusiasts: partners in helping you care for your companions.

**Dr. Paula Bedford**

**Dr. Janet MacLean**

**Dr. Wayne Hollingshead**

And, introducing, **Dr. Koharik Arman**. Ko has joined us from Ontario and absolutely loves cats. We believe that you will enjoy her as much as we do! She is very enthusiastic and is a great team player.



Dr. Arman graduated with a BSc in Biology from the University of New Brunswick in 2003, and then moved to Prince Edward Island where she attended the Atlantic Veterinary College, and obtained her Veterinary Medicine degree in May 2007.

Her goal (and dream) was to practice feline-specific medicine. She worked in an Ontario cat hospital for the past year and a half. After a visit to beautiful British Columbia in the summer of 2008, she decided to relocate to Vancouver and live ocean-side once again. Ko and her two very high-maintenance kitties are excited to be joining the Cats Only team!

**Colleen, Michelle, Tamara, Kris and Amanda** are the heart and soul of the clinic. They are the people who take care of the kitties, their people (you!) and the doctors. They are patient advocates as well as being the first people you meet. They are g-o-l-d-e-n.

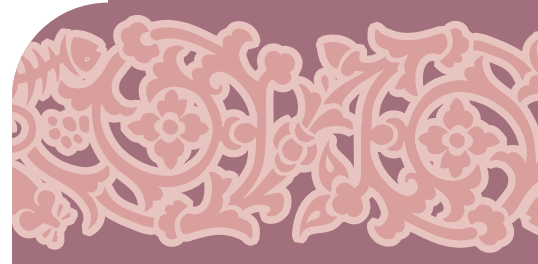
## Picking a Kitty Friend for Your Dog

Contrary to popular belief, dogs and cats can live in harmony. When selecting a feline housemate for your dog, remember three little rules:

1. Select a cat previously socialized to dogs. Most cats can adapt to dogs even when they have never encountered one. However, a cat who has, as a kitten, lived with a friendly dog is more likely to be completely comfortable around new dogs as an adult.
2. Select a cat with a temperament most likely to enjoy your dog's behaviour. Cats have different temperaments.

Bold extroverted cats are likely to enjoy the frolics of a curious and playful dog, while very timid cats will be more comfortable with calm laid-back dogs. Never adopt a very active and playful cat with a dog that is very excitable. These dogs have a strong chase reflex with anything that moves fast, be it a ball, skateboard or cat. This interaction can cause the cat to become defensive and aggressive.

3. Introduce the cat to the dog in a way that gives *kitty* full control. *Animal Sense, Spring/Summer, 2008* 🐾



## MOUSELLANY



### Cats Only Hours

Monday, Friday: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday:  
9:00 am to 8:00 pm  
Saturday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

### Contact Information



2578 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, BC V6J 3J7  
Phone: 604-734-CATS (2287)  
Fax: 604-734-8011  
Email: info@catsonlyvet.ca  
www.catsonlyvet.ca

### Please Call Ahead

Call ahead for medication refills or to have us set aside your kitty's special diet. This ensures that we will have it ready and that you don't make an unnecessary trip if we don't have it in that day!

### Our Policy Regarding Emergencies



We will always make room for the kitties of our existing friends (i.e., YOU!) first. For emergencies and urgencies call us and we will ask you to drop him off to stay with us for observation. That way we will be able to examine him sooner than if you book an appointment.

If the emergency is after hours, or sounds imminently life-threatening, with your kitty's best interests in mind, we'll refer you to the Vancouver Animal Emergency Clinic at the SE corner of 4th Avenue and Fir Street. 604-734-5104.

### Are You Moving?



Please let us know if you and your kitty are moving. It's especially important that we have your correct address and phone number if your friend has a tattoo for identification purposes. Give us a call and we'll update your file so we can continue providing care for your kitty.