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Animal Crackers

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**Dewclaws**

The canine dewclaw is the dog's fifth toenail (first metacarpal or metatarsal bone) located on the inside of the leg. It has no known function, except in the Neandertal (Norwegian Puffin Dog), which has at least two functional dewclaws on each foot. These feet aid when the dog is climbing rocky cliffs inaccessible to man to flush puffins. Puffins now are protected by law and the dogs no longer hunt, but they still have the most interesting feet in dogdom.

In other breeds, the dewclaws usually are removed. If not trimmed regularly, they may grow back into the flesh, or may snag and tear away. Most dog breeders remove dewclaws when puppies are less than 1 week old. At this age, anesthesia and surgery are not necessary.

An important exception are the breeds in which dewclaws are required by the breed standards. The Great Pyrenees must have single dewclaws in front, double in back. The Finnish have double dewclaws on the back legs, called "baldar fingers," in France.

If your dog has dewclaws, they should be trimmed about every two weeks. An ingrown dewclaw is very painful but may not be noticed, particularly in long-haired dogs. Surgery in an older dog is elective — extra care while grooming can prevent problems. Feet should be examined regularly and removed between the toes for matted hair or foreign material (leaf, pebbles, etc.). A blunt-pointed scissors is a useful grooming tool.

**Cryptorchidism**

Cryptorchidism is a condition in which one or both testicles do not descend into the scrotum (unilateral or bilateral cryptorchidism). It often is incorrectly referred to as monorchidism, an extremely rare condition in which only one testicle is present.

Dog show rules state that a male which does not have two normal testicles normally located in the scrotum may not compete at any dog show and will be disqualified. If a dog is disqualified for this condition on any separate occasion by three different judges, it may not be shown again.

It has been reported that the condition occurs in more than 10% of male dogs. It is seen in many breeds and frequency increases with inbreeding. It is considered inherited but we do not know the exact mode. Affected animals are fertile and the incidence is increased if these animals are used for breeding. Inheritance of the trait is best predicted by an autosomal recessive mode. Both males and females can carry the gene and pass it on to offspring. The homozygous male (carrying two genes for the trait, one from each parent) will be cryptorchid. The female may be a homozygous or heterozygous carrier. There is no certain sign of an affected puppy, so the testicles should be in the scrotum by three months of age. As a rule of thumb, an undescended testicle can be considered permanently retained at six months of age. An "entire" male has both testicles descended.

**CAUTION!!!**

The dosage of certain drugs may not be the same in different species and the dose for humans should not be used as a guide. Beware that directions are followed carefully.

Ivermectin is widely used in dogs as a heartworm preventative. In dogs, IVERMECTIN SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS A HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE AND IN THE RECOMMENDED DOSAGE. The dogs must be weight to determine the correct dose. The product is used in horses, cattle and other animals in various forms including injectable. The cost is often less for drugs used in farm animals, so some kennel owners use these products on dogs. Numerous adverse reactions have been reported — usually the result of incorrect dosage. The correct dosage for dogs is much smaller than for large animals. Overdosing may result in vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, lethargy, convulsions, etc.

Aspirin and Tylenol® should never be used in cats. In dogs, the dosage for aspirin is less than in humans. It should be used as directed by a veterinarian. "Baby" aspirin may cause serious complications.

Tetracycline can cause malformation and discolored teeth. It should not be given to pregnant bitches or puppies. There are other antibiotics which are not harmful to the developing fetus, such as penicillin and ampicillin are considered safe. Drug administration to a pregnant animal should be avoided.

Carally discarded trash may become a deadly hazard for animals and birds. Plastic six-pack holders, plastic bags and other debris can be lethal. There are many "new vision" items which can be dangerous if eaten, and may cause respiratory or intestinal problems.

In the United States, less than 5% of dogs are immunized. More rashes cases are reported in cats than in other domestic animals. Vaccinating animals protects humans.

When empty non-stick cans are allowed to burn on the stove — or non-stick drip pans under electric stove coals overhead — birds in the household may be affected. Usually the onset is rapid and there is sudden death due to respiratory failure. Other signs may be difficult to notice and respiratory distress. Treatment is immediate removal of the birds to an area where there is fresh air.

**Book Review**

*The Cornell Book of Cats: A Comprehensive Medical Reference For Every Cat and Kitten* by the faculty, staff and associates of the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell University and edited by Mordecai Siegel.

This book provides information on feline health problems so owners can better understand the medical problems of their cats. It is designed to help the owner work in partnership with a veterinarian, not to replace proper veterinary help. There is an extensive medical glossary.

There are pictures with brief descriptions of behaviors. The Maine coon cat is considered a native American breed and some believe it is the largest of the pure breeds. The Cymric is a long-haired Manx—both usually have no tail, but there are "stumpy" cats with a tail stump of various lengths and "longies" with a complete tail. The Sphynx is a hairless cat. The Birman has white "gloves" (fur) on all four paws. Forty-one registrable cat breeds are included.

Chapter five is on behavior and nutrition with advice on how to modify such problems as house soiling, clawing and scratching and aggression toward people as well as other cats.

The nutritional requirements of the cat are well-covered. Cats are strict carnivores. Cats should have access to fresh, clean water at all times. Cat food labels should have a statement of nutritional acceptability. Commercial, nutritionally balanced products are usually preferable to a homemade diet which can be difficult, inconvenient and time consuming. Feeding dog food to a cat is a common error — cats require a higher percentage of protein. Overdosing with vitamins and mineral supplements as well as a diet of all meat or all fish can result in medical problems.

The chapter on medical emergencies covers what-to-do, principles of restraint as well as a suggested cat first-aid kit.

Acquiring a cat is easy. Kittens are everywhere and many of them are free. The first chapter gives good advice on where to go and how to choose. Animal shelters are an important source. There is a wide range of choice and adopting will save a life. This is a book for cat fanciers and veterinarians — a valuable resource and owner's manual with up-to-date information. It is a must for any cat library.