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Animal Crackers

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Deafness in Dogs

In puppies, the ear canals are sealed until 12 to 14 days of age, so all new-borns are deaf. After two weeks of age, deaf animals usually are difficult to arouse from sleep. The animal may be over a year before the owner recognizes the problem. Care of deaf pets requires a highly dedicated owner and special training methods. A deaf animal may reflexly bite when startled and may have other behavior problems, but many deaf animals grow normally.

Inherited deafness often is associated with white color (piebald gene) and with the merle gene. It is generally uncommon in the canine population. In breeds with a high incidence, conclusive evidence of deafness may be obtained by having the animal tested at special referral centers. Affected animals should not be used for breeding.

This is one of the many conditions that should be considered by breed clubs when they are working on a program to recognize and eliminate inherited problems.



Veterinary Education

In 1807, Dr. Benjamin Rush proposed veterinary education in a lecture at the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania. The title was "On the Duty and Advantages of Studying the Diseases of Domestic Animals, and the Remedies Proper to Remove them."

The reasons given were: (1) the "absurd, painful and destructive" treatment to which they were subjected when diseased, by uninformed or misinformed well-meaning individuals; (2) the gratitude we owe them for the services and materials they furnish; (3) to guard against the spread of disease from them to man through the food products and other materials they supply; (4) to prevent the extensive losses of animals and their products by "epidemics of destructive diseases"; (5) to "add greatly to the certainty and usefulness of the profession of medicine as far as it relates to the human species ... the matter in which the remote and proximate causes of disease produce their morbid effects" being "the same as in the human body, and most of the medicine" producing "in them and in us nearly a similar operation"; and finally, (6) "the precepts in the Old and New Testaments, which recommend kindness to them and protection from outrage and oppression."

The first class entered the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine in October 1884. There were 12 faculty members and 29 students, ten of whom graduated in 1887.

The 105th class graduated in 1990. The total number of graduates is 4599, of whom 942 are women. At the present time, there are 100 standing faculty members.

"One Medicine" is often used in describing courses taught. There is great similarity between veterinary and human medicine. Each contributes to the other. A vast amount of knowledge that has been developed has resulted in specialization and fewer general practitioners. We have improved treatments and methods, but a look back into veterinary history shows that the reasons for studying veterinary medicine remain the same now as over a hundred years ago.



"Mad-Cow Disease"

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is a fatal degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of cattle. It was first diagnosed in Great Britain in 1986 and is not known to exist in the United States. There has been no scientific evidence to date that indicates BSE is a human health hazard.

Cattle with the disease may appear quite normal for years. Then affected animals show changes in temperament such as nervousness and aggression, incoordination, decreased milk production and, eventually, death. The cause is not known and there is no treatment. The diagnosis is confirmed post-mortem by microscopic examination of brain tissue; there is no test to detect the disease in a live animal.

The importation of live cattle and zoo ruminants from the United Kingdom has been prohibited since July 1989 by the United States Department of Agriculture. Also, there has been no importation of British meat or bone meal. The sale of "high-risk tissues" - chiefly brains and sweetbreads - for human consumption has been banned in Britain.

BSE belongs to a group of brain disorders which include scrapie, a disease of sheep in which affected animals tend to scrape themselves against fences, rocks and walls. There have been prohibitions against sheep and goat importation from Great Britain to the United States for many years. In this country, research continues on scrapie and there is increased surveillance to detect BSE should it be introduced.

There has been a great deal of publicity in the lay press, because this is something new. There is much speculation, particularly since the cause is as yet unknown. The risk of transmission to humans is remote.

Canine Good Citizens

The pet overpopulation problem is leading to greater anti-dog sentiment. In San Mateo County, CA, legislation is proposed to ban all dog and cat breeding. Over 10,000 unwanted dogs and cats were euthanized in that county last year. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that one-quarter of dogs in shelters are purebred. Responsible dog breeders are organizing to protect purebred dogs, and are participating in breed rescue programs.

A significant part of the problem are those dog owners who do not take the time and effort to properly train their dogs and turn them over to SPCAs when they remain unruly. According to the American Animal Hospital Association, more cats and dogs are euthanized each year as a result of behavior problems than any medical reason, including old age. Obedience training can help correct minor problems, but it is not the solution to others, especially aggression. Responsible breeders should work to prevent abandonment, abuse or neglect of any animal and make an effort to place puppies in homes where they will receive proper care and training. Pets should be spayed or neutered.

There are too many dogs being produced - by accident and by breeding indiscriminately for profit. Some kind of control is needed. There are not enough good homes for all the dogs. We need to work for responsible dog owner legislation that

safeguards the right to own and breed "man's best friend."

A Canine Good Citizen program has been developed by the American Kennel Club. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the dog, as a companion to man, can be a respected member of the community, and can be trained and conditioned always to behave in the home, in public places and in the presence of other dogs in a manner that will reflect credit on the dog. The program seeks to identify and recognize officially those dogs that possess the attributes that enable them to serve effectively as personal companions and as members in good standing with the community. The tests are designed to show that a dog welcomes being groomed and can be approached by a stranger in a natural everyday situation. The dog must walk on a loose lead, walk through a crowd without straining at the leash, "sit" and "down" on command and "stay" in position as commanded by the handler. The dog should show no more than a casual interest in other dogs and should not bark, show aggressiveness or try to run away if there is a distraction such as sudden noise, a jogger or person on a bicycle. If left alone, the dog should not bark, whine or register anything other than mild agitation. The dog must not growl, bite or attempt to attack any person or other dog.

There is a behavior clinic at VHUP (Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania). For more information, you may telephone the clinic at 215-898-3347.

Book Review

Dog Showing — An Owner's Guide by Connie Vanacore (Howell Book House, 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, \$19.95)

The first recorded dog show took place in Newcastle-on-Tyne, England in 1859 with 60 entries for pointers and setters only. The first dog show in the United States was held by Westminster Kennel Club, in 1877, with more than 35 breeds represented. This book explains the present-day world of dog showing.

American Kennel Club shows and classes offered are described. There is advice on selecting the right breed, including observing at dog shows, and where to purchase a show dog. "Beware of the breeder who guarantees that the puppy will finish its championship. The most that can be guaranteed is that the puppy is healthy, appears to be mentally sound, and for its age, is structurally correct." There are chapters on health and maintenance of a show dog, grooming and training. "Grooming is a lifelong process, whether or not you intend to ever show your dog."

Preparing for the show ring may start with attending handling classes. Then match shows provide an opportunity to practice. Everything you need to know about point shows is covered - how to enter, what to take, what to wear, ring procedure and how judging progresses. Junior Showmanship is discussed as well as are Professional Handlers.

The appendix gives sample contracts and sample entry forms as well as a glossary defining commonly-used terms and diseases. A "Special" is a term used to describe a dog or a bitch which has completed its championship and is in competition for Best of Breed.

The book covers conformation judging only. It does not include Obedience. It is an excellent guide for those interested in breed competition.