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Animal Crackers

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Ears and Tails

The breed standards for a number of breeds call for docked tails and/or cropped ears. This has been a controversial procedure and is now banned in most European countries. The American Kennel Club has adopted a position statement which “recognizes that ear cropping, tail docking and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices, integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or preserving good health. Appropriate veterinary care should be provided.”

For many years, the American Veterinary Medical Association’s position on ear cropping was “The AVMA has recommended to the American Kennel Club and appropriate breed associations that action be taken to delete mention of cropped or trimmed ears from breed standards for dogs and to prohibit the showing of dogs with cropped or trimmed ears if such animals were born after some reasonable date.” The AVMA at that time had no position on tail docking.

Last July, the AVMA passed the following resolution. “Ear cropping and tail docking in dogs for cosmetic reasons are not medically indicated nor of benefit to

the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss and infection. Therefore veterinarians should counsel dog owners about these matters before agreeing to perform these surgeries.”

In this country, we are seeing more uncropped ears in the show ring, and some of these dogs are winning over those with cropped ears. Laws in many states require that this must be done by licensed veterinarians. Probably arguments against the procedure will continue, but for now it is not against the law.

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Association meeting in Aarhus, Denmark in November. **Dr. Karen Overall** also presented talks there. In December Dr. Holt gave a presentation at the New Mexico Veterinary Medical Association.

Barry Stupine, associate dean for administration and finance and director of VHUP, was named an honorary member of the PVMA. He was elected president of the Abington School Board and appointed co-chair of the University of Pennsylvania’s Business Advisory Board.

Dr. Colin Harvey, professor of surgery and dentistry, presented papers at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Dental Association in Birmingham, UK, World Veterinary Dental Congress, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, World Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress and European Veterinary Dental Meeting in Lyons, France, and Veterinary Dental Forum in Baltimore.

Dr. Margherita Gracis, lecturer in dental medicine, presented a lecture at the European Veterinary Dental Society meeting in Lyons. **Dr. Alex Reiter**, resident in dental medicine, also presented a paper there and one at the Veterinary Dental Forum in Baltimore. Dr. Gracis and **Dr. Paul Orsini**, assistant professor of dental medicine, presented laboratory sessions at the Veterinary Dental Forum.


Dr. Rebecka Hess, staff veterinarian and **Dr. Paula Henthorn**, associate professor of medical genetics, received a research grant from Ralston Purina for looking at genetic alterations in Samoyed dogs with Diabetes Mellitus. Owners and veterinarians can help by referring both diabetic and non-diabetic dogs of that breed to Dr. Hess for blood tests.

Dr. Hamish Rodger, lecturer in aquatic animal medicine, was appointed to the editorial board of the *Journal of Fish Diseases*, the leading journal in it

field. He served on the panel of experts for the European Community in Brussels in December assessing research applications for the Key Action Area “Quality of Life—Control of Infectious Diseases.”

Dr. Sydney M. Evans, V’77, associate professor of radiology, was appointed as an ad hoc member of the Radiation Study Section, National Institutes of Health. Dr. Evans received a secondary appointment to the department of radiation oncology at the University’s School of Medicine.

Dr. Loy C. Awkerman, V’52, has written a book of short stories, *Thoughts While Holding A Thermometer*. It was published by Masthof Press.

Robert Richardson, V01, was elected president of the Student chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association at the SCAVMA National Meeting, held in March. 

Vaccination Protocols

For many years, annual “booster shots” for dogs and cats has been a standard practice. Recently, this practice has been questioned and many veterinarians are reconsidering the need for annual re-vaccination. There is no question that vaccination is essential to protect animals from infectious disease. At this time, there is no general agreement on how often to vaccinate. Part of the problem is due to the fact that vaccine manufacturers have not been required to determine the duration of immunity produced by their vaccines. The question is under review and studies currently being conducted may result in a change in recommended vaccination protocols.

Generally, puppies are vaccinated at six to eight weeks of age, then every two or three weeks until 14 or 16 weeks. This is followed by a “booster” one year later. The usual vaccine for these “puppy shots” is against distemper, adenovirus (infectious hepatitis) and parvovirus. Rabies vaccination is a must—first at three months with a booster one year later and then depending on the type of vaccine, annually or triannually.

A number of other vaccines are available. Consult with your veterinarian about which ones are indicated. Research findings may result in changing protocols.

Core vaccines for cats protect against feline panleukopenia virus, feline herpes virus, feline calicivirus and rabies. Kittens usually are vaccinated at eight and 12 weeks, then one year later. Depending on risk of exposure to infectious agents, boosters may be given every three years or more frequently.

Discuss the benefits and risks of vaccination with your veterinarian and work out a protocol that fits your animal’s needs.

The Japanese Bobtail

Although a comparatively new breed in North America, the Japanese bobtail, known as Mi-Ke, has been seen in Japan for centuries, and portrayed by artists many times. These bobtailed cats were considered spiritual creatures and were kept in temples and imperial palaces. They helped protect sacred documents from rodents. In Japan today,

small figurines showing the tri-colored pattern, bobbed tail and raised, beckoning paw can be found as a charm to bring luck, prosperity and happiness.

In 1969, the Cat Fanciers Association accepted Japanese bobtails for registration. They are quite rare—only a few hundred are registered each year. Most are shorthaired but some are longhaired. The official standard describes the coat as medium length, soft and silky but without a noticeable undercoat and relatively non-shedding. The traditional Mi-Ke cats are tri-colored (black, red and white), but most colors are accepted. Males usually are bi-colored (black and white or red and white).

The tail is the defining characteristic of the breed. It is governed by a recessive gene. Bobtail breeding produces only bobtailed offspring, and the short tail is not known to be associated with any health defect. The hair on the tail grows outward in all directions, creating a pom-pom or bunny-tail effect. The tail bone is rigid and may be straight or curved. The short tail does not seem to affect the cat’s balance in jumping or playing.

JBTs are active, intelligent cats with large “window-to-the-soul” eyes. They can be hard to find and expensive. In demand are odd-eyed (one blue eye and one gold eye), blue eyes and the calico Mi-Ke color pattern.

The Manx is a tailless breed but the responsible gene is considered dominant and associated with skeletal defects and abnormalities which are not found in the Japanese Bobtail.

Book Review

When Pets Come Between Partners—How to Keep Love—and Romance—in the Human/Animal Kingdom of Your Home, by Joel Gavriele-Gold, Ph.D. (Howell Book House—a Division of IDG Books Worldwide, Inc. Paper, \$14.95)

The author has been a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City for the past 25 years. His book discusses how the pets in our lives affect our personal and family relationships — how we integrate them into our families and the way they mirror our own personalities. The book is not about

behavioral problems, but mostly shows what happens when one of the parties in a human relationship regards the pet as a problem instead of finding where the problem really lies.

What’s the answer when a man adores a woman—but resents the affection she lavishes on her feline? Through case histories, Dr. Gavriele-Gold uncovers the real causes behind pet-people clashes and offers hope for humans and animals living in harmony.

The true-life cases reveal the role of projection—how people vent anger, jealousy and guilt over people on animals. Also, we see how pets can open old wounds and trigger destructive pattern. Another subject is how pets can stand in for a parent, an in-law, or an ex-lover.

Hyperthyroidism in Cats

Hyperthyroidism is a common hormonal problem in middle to older aged cats. It usually results from benign enlargement of one or both thyroid glands that overproduce thyroid hormone. Excess thyroid hormone in the bloodstream causes clinical signs that commonly include weight loss, increased appetite, hyperactivity, excess water consumption, and excess urination. Some cats, however, become very lethargic with this disease and have a decreased appetite.

Treatment options for this disease include daily medication, surgical removal of the enlarged thyroids, or radioactive iodine. Radioactive iodine treatment has proven to be very successful, noninvasive, and safe. It is considered the treatment of choice for some hyperthyroid cats. One injection under the skin is sufficient to cure most hyperthyroid cats and side effects are few and minimal. However, cats must remain hospitalized for approximately one week while the radioactivity dissipates.

The Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania is planning to introduce radioactive iodine treatment for feline hyperthyroid patients within the year. Radioactive iodine therapy is limited to larger and institutional facilities because a license is required to handle radioactive materials, and the treated animals must be carefully monitored. 