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## Animal Crackers

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## Free-Roaming Cats

It has been estimated that nearly half of the cat population consists of unowned, free-roaming and not neutered animals. A lot of the cats live in feral colonies and are provided with food by caregivers. Trap-neuter-return programs are one of the methods being used to control the problem. Traps can be borrowed from animal welfare organizations who will perform the neutering. The cats are then returned to the area where they were trapped and where there is a caregiver. Removing the tip on an ear has become internationally accepted as the sign of a neutered free-roaming cat.

The American Veterinary Medical Association's position statement on abandoned and feral cats supports action aimed toward reducing overpopulation. Among the recommended requirements are education and training of caregivers, restricting colonies to an area away from wildlife and screening for infectious diseases.

Further information may be obtained from a local SPCA. They may have traps available. There are many different opinions about what to do about overpopulation. The spay-neuter program is a step in the right direction.

## West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) was first identified in Africa (Uganda) in 1937 and appeared in New York City in 1999. At first, only humans, horses and birds were considered susceptible. Most human infections are mild with flu-like symptoms. In horses, the most common sign is weakness in the hind legs. Infected birds are most often found dead. Studies in dogs suggest they are susceptible to infection, but do not develop clinical signs of disease. Antibodies to WNV have been reported in cattle but to clinical signs were described. WNV has been isolated from a cat with neurological signs.

Mosquitoes transmit the virus through bites. The disease is not transmitted directly from person to person, person to animal, animal to animal or animal to person. It has been estimated that less than 1% of people bitten by an infected mosquito become ill. New information is published almost daily. It appears that horses are more severely affected.

There is a vaccine for horses. Prevention

requires limiting exposure to mosquitoes and elimination of mosquito breeding sites (areas of standing water).

Testing for WNV in pets is available at Cornell Diagnostic Lab.

Updates available at AVMA Web site at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).

## Book Reviews

*The American Kennel Club Dog Care and Training, Second Edition.* Mary R. Burch and Dennis B. Sprung. Paperback. Howell Book House. \$16.99

This is an excellent all-purpose basic book beginning with what to consider when adding a dog to the household and continuing with advice about selection, care, training, health as well about AKC events if you become interested in competing in conformation, obedience, agility and other events. Any fancier can find something of interest. There are excellent drawings covering anatomy and faulty conformation. Ten different tails are shown. Abbreviations for AKC titles are given—25 are prefixes and 42 are suffixes. A glossary defines commonly used terms. There are excellent photographs throughout, some in color.

From the text—"When you select a breed, be sure that the adult is what you really want... A part of being a responsible dog owner is making sure your dog has proper identification... AKC Companion Animal Recovery (CAR) is dedicated to providing lifetime recovery service for microchipped and tattooed pets, regardless of species, age or size... AKC Website ([www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)) will teach you what you need to know about specific breeds... The American Kennel Club has been the dog breed expert since 1884."

*New Secrets of Successful Dog Show Handling* by Peter Green and Mario Migliorini. Alpine Publications. \$19.95

This book covers what is involved in showing dogs, from assessing show potential through conditioning, training, trimming and ring techniques. Numerous photographs show proper presentation.

The authors have many words of advice for the novice handler, particularly the importance of observing other dogs and handlers as well as knowing all about your breed. It takes time

and hard work but the amateur can do as well as the professional if he or she masters the art of making a good dog look its best.

Webster defines a secret as "something kept from public knowledge." In this book, two successful handlers share their expertise with those who want to know as much as possible about handling at dog shows, particularly the amateur. Even spectators might find something of interest.

## Bellwether

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