



Animal Crackers

Dewclaws

The canine dewclaw is the dog's fifth toenail (first metacarpal bone) located on the inside of the pastern. It has no known function, except in the Lundehead (Norwegian Puffin Dog), which has at least two functional dewclaws on each foot. These 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 a week old. At this age, anesthesia and suturing 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 Briard must have double dewclaws on the back legs, called "bastard 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 — check between the toes for matted hair or foreign material (tar, pebbles, etc.). A blunt-tipped scissors is a useful grooming tool.

Identification

When a pet is lost, positive identification must be available. Collars and tags may be lost or removed. While many animals are the same color, a photograph may be helpful to identify the pet.

Tattooing is a method frequently used. There are several organizations which will register the number. However, the numbers may be difficult to read, and owners may find it hard to locate someone who can do the tattooing. Some dog clubs hold tattoo clinics and often tattooing is available at eye clinics.

A new method, implanting microchips, is being developed and is available in some areas. The chip, containing a 10-digit code, is implanted by a veterinarian under the skin at the base of the neck, between the shoulder blades. A scanner will locate the chip and a toll-free number can be called to find out the name of the owner. The American Kennel Club is investigating the use of this method for permanent identification of dogs.

Parvovirus

Contrary to many reports in lay publications, there is not scientific evidence that there is a new strain of parvovirus. There also is no evidence that parvovirus vaccines in use since 1978 will not protect against parvovirus disease.

Much inaccurate information recently has misled many individual dog owners, kennel owners and even some veterinarians. There is no "new" vaccine necessary for protection against a "new" strain.

A common cause of vaccination failure is the presence of maternal antibodies in the colostrum. This can interfere with successful vaccination against Parvovirus up to 18 weeks of age. Vaccination schedules vary in different situations, but your veterinarian may recommend additional Parvovirus vaccine at twentyweeks of age.

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 three separate occasions 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 model. Both males and females can carry the gene and pass it to their 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, passing the gene to all or some of her offspring. The inheritance of cryptorchidism may be more complicated, but a decrease in the incidence will occur if affected males are not used for breeding.

The usual recommendation is castration. Medical treatment is of little value in inducing testicular descent. The retained testicle may develop a functioning tumor which may cause feminization.

In dogs, testes normally are descended at ten days of age. Both 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 guideline. Be sure 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 weighed to determine the correct dose. The same 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. Overdosage 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 be preferable.

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

Carelessly 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 reports of wild birds strangled by "necklaces" from six-packs, raccoons with heads wedged in empty peanut butter jars and other potentially fatal situations.

Dispose of litter properly — help protect the environment and prevent ecological disasters.

Keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date in dogs and cats. This disease is being reported frequently. There are reports that of the 50 million cats estimated to be in the United States, less than 5% have been immunized. More rabies cases are reported in cats than in other domestic animals. Vaccinating animals protects humans.

When empty non-stick pans are allowed to burn on the stove — or non-stick drip pans under electric stove coils overheat — 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 or noisy breathing and drowsiness. 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 Siegal. Villard Books, New York, NY. \$24.95, Hardcover.

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 breeds. 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 "stumpies" with a tail stump of one to five inches and "longies" with a complete tail. The sphinx is a hairless cat. The Birman has white "gloves" (fur) on all four paws. Forty-one registrable cat breeds are included.

There are chapters on behavior and misbehavior 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 adequacy. 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 vitamin 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 reference and owner's manual with up-to-date information. It is a must for any cat library.