

MARCH, 2006

Welcome to the Westbridge Veterinary Hospital Pet E-Mail Newsletter. We hope that you will find the information useful and informative. Our goal is to keep your pet healthy and prevent small problems from becoming large ones.

KENNEL COUGH

Do you board your dog or go regularly to a groomer or other area where dogs congregate? Then you will want to know about... **Kennel Cough?** Kennel cough (canine tracheobronchitis) is a contagious disease that has an airborne spread from dog to dog. Cats and people can not catch kennel cough. It is characterized by a dry, deep, hacking cough that is often worse at night and early morning. Other diseases including heart problems and chest infections can have similar signs, but often your veterinarian can make a tentative diagnosis after performing a careful physical examination.

There are two primary causes. The most common is a viral form which often lasts for about ten days. Antibiotics do not treat the primary viral infection, but may be used in some cases to prevent secondary lung infections. The other type is caused by a bacterial organism (*B. bronchiseptica*). When dogs contract this form of the infection we often see secondary pneumonias develop and the patient may be ill for much longer than 10 days. Puppies and older dogs are more vulnerable to pneumonia with the bacterial type. We often diagnose kennel cough in dogs purchased from pet shops.

Antibiotics in the tetracycline family are often effective treatment of the bacterial infection, but are not always used in puppies less than four months old due to a side effect of the medication (developing teeth may be permanently discolored). Other antibiotics are usually chosen to treat the bacterial form in young puppies. The viral form may be treated with cough suppressants and other supportive care, but as noted above the signs usually abate in about 10 days. In households with more than one dog it is not unusual for a second dog to catch the infection from the first one. When a dog is diagnosed with kennel cough it is not always certain initially whether the bacterial or viral form of the disease is the culprit.

Can you prevent Kennel cough? Yes. There are two vaccine types available. One is a nose drop and the other is an injection. Recent studies have indicated that alternating the types of vaccinations may give the best immunity. Your veterinarian will determine which type is best for your pet when all factors are considered. Unfortunately recent studies have also shown that neither type of vaccine lasts a whole year. Many kennels require a vaccination for kennel cough within the past six months before they will accept a dog for boarding. Please check with your kennel well before boarding to find out their requirements. If you board or groom your dog regularly we do suggest a six month booster. If you do not board your dog or go regularly to a groomer or other area where dogs gather in groups, then we do not recommend that kennel cough vaccine be administered.

DIGITAL X-RAYS (RADIOGRAPHS)

In March of 2006 the hospital is going digital! We will no longer be taking conventional “film” x-rays, but rather will be converting to a digital system that makes an image in a similar manner to a digital camera. Why are we investing in this technology? The answer is that it will enable our staff to provide you and your pets with superior diagnostic imaging.

Here are just some of the advantages.

- Digital x-ray can be enhanced to provide optimum diagnostic detail
- Since different areas of the digital image can be isolated and enhanced we don't need to take one film for “chest” technique and another for “abdominal” films. Fewer films mean a lower cost for you for some types of studies.
- We don't need to have an x-ray processor. This will save many thousands of cubic feet of water a year and everyone should try and conserve water.
- We can send x-rays via the internet to a boarded veterinary radiologist for review.
- Digital x-rays can be stored and retrieved instantaneously. X-rays from prior visits are always available and can be compared with current x-rays.
- We can “burn” a CD (compact disk) easily to send digital x-rays to any veterinarian with a computer.
- With a “laptop” computer we will be able to show you your pet's x-rays and explain any surgical or medical procedures necessary.

We appreciate your trust in allowing us to provide health care for your pet. We make a sincere effort to have the most advanced veterinary care available for your pet's medical needs.

CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE)

Did you know that we have a conference room in our hospital for the specific purpose of accommodating our continuing education program? We have separate programs for technicians and veterinarians and are accredited to provide CE credits for attending professionals. We invite our veterinary colleagues from surrounding veterinary hospitals to join with us and share the latest knowledge. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires veterinarians to participate in at least 15 hours of continuing education annually. Veterinarians at this hospital average over twice that amount!

In February Steve Fox, DVM, MS, PhD presented a seminar on osteoarthritis in the dog and cat. The latest studies on this common and often disabling condition were presented. We'll share some of this information with you in an upcoming newsletter. There are now much more effective treatments available than there were even just a few years ago.

Next month...urinary obstructions in cats and why there are always so many
Massachusetts State Police cars in our parking lot? Hint: the patrol cars all have “K-9” on
the side.