



PAWPRINTS



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

A NEWSLETTER PROVIDED AS A SERVICE FOR OUR VALUED CLIENTS

WINTER 2005

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF PAWPRINTS

Diane Keaton's Wish is Every Pet is Home 4 the Holidays
— Steve Dale **1**

Happy Ending for Baby Earl
— Merial **1**

Holiday Health Hazards for Your Pet Might Include Love
— AVMA **2**

Emergency Preparedness for Pets
— Steve Dale **2**

Research Advances for Feline Heart Disease
— AVMA **3**

Selecting a Pet from the Shelter
— Margaret H. Bonham **4**

Features Websites **4**

Welcome to the second year of PAWPRINTS. I am grateful to our sponsor, Merial, and also to the American Veterinary Medical Association for the ongoing determined commitment to reach people who have pets. I hope you find PAWPRINTS interesting and informative.

Our PAWPRINTS guarantee: Love your pets, and they will love you back

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Steve Dale – Editor-in-Chief. The 2002 AVMA Humane Award winner. Steve is a contributing editor for USA Weekend, and the author of My Pet World, syndicated in over 100 newspapers by Tribune Media Services. He is heard on Pet Central Saturday nights, 7:30 p.m. heard on WGN radio (or www.wgnradio.com). His syndicated radio shows are Steve Dale's Pet World and The Pet Minute with Steve Dale. Steve's also a TV regular appearing on The Oprah Winfrey Show, National Geographic Explorer and various Animal Planet shows. He lives with his Devon Rex cat Roxy; Lucy, a miniature Australian Shepherd; Chaser, a Brittany, and Cosette, a Northern blue-tongue skink. Steve's website is www.petworldradio.net.

Margaret H. Bonham – Editor. An award winning pet book author; her current titles include The Complete Guide to Mutts, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Labrador Retrievers and Introduction to Dog Agility. She lives in Colorado, where she is owned by several Alaskan Malamutes, Alaskan Huskies, a German Shepherd dog and a cat. Margaret's website: www.shadowhelm.net

continued on page 4

Diane Keaton's Wish is Every Pet is Home 4 the Holidays

By Steve Dale



Thousands of perfectly wonderful animals are desperate to find good homes; their lives may depend on it. "Every person who loves animals can make a difference," cheers actress Diane Keaton, a supporter of Iams' *Home 4 the Holidays*, an initiative of over 1,750 shelters to promote adoptions though the holiday season. "The animal you adopt will return the favor and make a huge difference in your life."

Can she guarantee that? Keaton laughs during our telephone conversation. "Well, sure. I can honestly tell you every dog I've ever had has taught me something." Keaton, who will always be remembered for *Annie Hall*, sounds just a little bit like the character she portrayed when she credits a dog for her decision to adopt children later in life. "Look, what I gained from my old dog, Josie. I was given

Josie as a gift. No, she was not the dog I had in mind. But I fell in love with Josie. I learned a lot about my capacity for love from Josie."



© 2005 Twentieth Century Fox

continued on page 3

MERIAL MUSINGS

Happy Ending for Baby Earl

Vickey Martindale, of New Orleans, LA, was having second thoughts about her decision to ride out the storm. There was no turning back now as Hurricane Katrina was blowing in, no question, her failing health and dependence on oxygen gave her few options. Her most urgent reason for staying put was Baby Earl, her precious cat.

Residents weren't offered alternative places to evacuate with pets. Baby Earl was her last direct link to her late partner, Earl King, the legendary King of New Orleans blues. As Baby Earl's golden eyes looked at her

reassuringly across the room, Vickey knew there was no way she was going to even consider leaving Baby Earl to fend for herself.

Two days later, Vickey was not so sure of her decision. The waters from Lake Pontchartrain had broken through the levy and water was rising in her home. She and Baby Earl climbed up on anything they could find - Vickey ended up on one chair and Baby Earl perched precariously on another.

continued on page 4



Holiday Health Hazards for Your Pet Might Include Love

Tinsel, glass ornaments and turkey bones are all familiar holiday health hazards. However, one of this holiday's most ominous hazards may be sitting next to you, or even reading this article. Yes, that's right. Your spouse may be the hazard, your kids, or even you. Your pet might be in danger because of too much holiday love. That's because all too often we equate love with table snacks. If you're hosting the holiday dinner, take charge of your pet.

Well-meaning family and friends in the festive holiday spirit often can't resist that pleading adorable look on Fido or Fluffy's face. After all, how much harm does a slice of turkey do or a piece of holiday chocolate cause?

Well, a lot of harm if the slice of turkey is a huge hunk given to a little Pekingese.

Dr. Henry E. Childers, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association explains. "Holiday treats, such as rich, fatty food scraps; bones from fish, pork, and poultry and chocolate can be harmful to pets. Chocolate is dangerous for pets. Those bones can get lodged in pets' throats or their intestines. And offering a pet the fatty part

of the meat might cause a life-threatening liver problem."



Photo taken by Jake Ray

A few tips for happy holidays:

- Don't allow dogs to sit under the table during a meal. Young children in particular, can pass "treats" unnoticed by adults.
- Tell your guests that your pets have been fed, and ask them to resist the urge to give them people food. However, you might reserve a special treat manufac

tured for pets for special occasions; just remember even too much of these may cause stomach upset.

- Don't leave clean up until the next day. Unfinished food can easily be scarfed down by cats who jump into the sink or onto a counter.

Other holiday hazards to your pet:

- Unanchored Christmas trees.
- Christmas tree preservatives.
- Poisonous houseplants plants - fresh mistletoe can be lethal. While poinsettia isn't quite as toxic as some have reported, it's not a healthy snack. Holly berries are another problem.
- Holiday decorations such as angel hair, fireplace colors/salts and snow scenes.
- Candles. The aroma of scented candles may be very hazardous to birds; cats and dogs might knock candles over creating a fire hazard.

Keep your pet's health and safety in mind as you make your holiday plans. Visit www.avma.org for additional information.

Emergency Preparedness for Pets

Never evacuate without your pets is the recommendation of both the ASPCA and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). If it's not safe for you, what makes you think it would be safe for the pets?



Illustration by Paul Biniasz

Sometimes evacuations allow at least a few hours or more to plan, for example, if a hurricane is coming. But then you may have

only a few minutes, as Julie Morris, ASPCA vice president national shelter outreach learned first hand. When she lived in Ann Arbor, MI she was awoken at 3 a.m. to the sound of the police ordering an evacuation. There was a threat that a nearby refinery was going to blow up. Morris was able to get her two cats in a carrier, and find the dog leash. "After driving around, I realized I had nowhere to drive to," she says. "Be prepared with a list of pet friendly hotels or motels, or out of town friends who welcome pets."

Also have a disaster kit prepared, suggests Martha Armstrong, HSUS vice president companion animals. "It should include pictures of the pets, vaccine records and a portable litter box with litter. Know where you keep medications. Cats and small animals should be in carriers. If you have a large dog, take the crate if you can because it may be required at the shelter. All pets should wear ID tags and be microchipped." A reserve of pet food and bottled water is also a good plan.

Research Advances for Feline Heart Disease

By Steve Dale

You can't help but wonder if Dr. Kathryn Meurs hollered "Bingo!" when she found a gene mutation in Maine Coon cats that is clearly associated with feline hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, the most common form of heart disease in cats. After years of scratching for research dollars and laboriously sequencing genes, she finally discovered the genes that were linked to sarcomeric proteins in the heart and was recently able to publish the findings.

Dr. Mark Kittleson, a cardiac veterinary specialist at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California - Davis, partnered with Meurs. "First we'll confirm this finding is really true of Maine Coon cats in the general population (outside a lab setting), and then we look for other mutations in other breeds. Meanwhile, we're able to identify individual Main Coon cats with the mutation. So, yes, this discovery is potentially important for saving lives."

Feline hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is by far the most common heart disease in cats. According to several studies, it is also the number one cause of spontaneous death in all indoor adult cats. Just as the rare football star who drops suddenly and dies on the field – the same thing occurs in cats. Except in cats, sudden death due to HCM is surprisingly common, and often the first – and only – symptom. In cats, when diagnosed, one symptom may be a clot, causing debilitating stroke-like symptoms.

"This is very difficult to deal with emotionally and also financially," says Dr. Susan Little, executive director of the Winn Feline Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that helped to fund the groundbreaking research. "Sudden death is especially traumatic to witness."

Kittleson explains that HCM is a thickening of the left chamber of the heart, causing the heart to overwork. Sometimes vets can diagnose HCM by hearing a murmur or another irregularity. Cardiac vets can confirm suspicion of HCM using an ultrasound.

While any cat, including mixed breeds, can have HCM, it was Kittleson who learned years ago that the disease also occurs within several breeds, including the American Shorthair, Devon Rex, Ragdoll, Persian and the Maine Coon.

Since HCM often isn't found until cats are young adults or older, breeding out genetic carriers has been challenging if not downright impossible. A male cat, for example, can sire several litters before he reaches, say five years, and then is unexpectedly diagnosed with HCM – even if there is no immediate family history.

Meurs, who was at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine—Columbus, has been sniffing for the HCM gene abnormality since 1995. Several years of research focused on sarcomeric proteins associated with the thickening of the heart that occurs in HCM in people. The "Bingo" winner and breakthrough came when Meurs



discovered the cardiac myosin binding protein C doesn't get properly incorporated into the muscle of the Maine Coon cats with HCM. Meurs then traced the gene responsible for this abnormality.

Little, who is in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, says, "By identifying the gene and the protein the gene produces, it's more likely a drug may be created to intervene."

While there are drugs currently used with the intent to control HCM (in the cats who are lucky enough to be diagnosed), reviews on their effectiveness are mixed at best.

Kittleson is now researching the potential efficacy of two medications to treat HCM. To determine the impact of these meds, Kittleson is looking at the hearts of the cats using MRI imaging, a first for revealing changes in cats' hearts.

Meurs, who just re-located her lab to Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine—Pullman, as the Dr. Richard L. Ott Endowed Chair in Small Animal Medicine and Research, points out there are many mutations in human HCM, so it's likely the mutations will vary as she investigates other breeds. "The prospects are exciting, but we have a long ways to go," she says.

(The Winn Feline Foundation's Ricky Fund supports research for HCM, you can learn more or contribute at www.felinehealth.org or call 732-528-9797).

Diane Keaton *cont'd from pg. 1*

Home 4 the Holidays began as a local campaign in 1999 by Mike Arms, president of the Helen Woodward Animal Center in Rancho Santa Fe, CA. Today, it's a national effort which last year connected 313,000 pets with new families over eight weeks. Since the campaign began, 878,000 pets have been given a new lease on life; and they'll soon surpass one million total adoptions.

While pets of all ages have found homes, it's the older ones who are most in need. "They're least likely to find a home and frankly I love them," adds Keaton. "They've done nothing wrong - their owners have maybe passed on or moved and not taken the dog. It breaks my heart to think they've been passed over. Look, I'm always for adopting an adult cat or dog. I will always. I fear this idea of ageism is too rampant in every aspect of life. Give an older dog a chance; give an older cat a chance, please. Or an older actress - they also have a lot of love to give."

Now in *The Family Stone*, you'd think with an Oscar and several nominations under her belt, finding good parts in the movies would be no problem. She laughs and simply says, "Yeah, right." About to celebrate her 60th birthday, critics thought she was too old to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress in 2004 for *Something's Gotta Give*.

Is the way we view age in our society detrimental to older people as well as senior pets?

"Yes," she says, without missing a beat. "In life, there are young people and there are older people. I don't have to be the star, but I'm moving onto playing older people. Well, I mean I feel I do not go gently into the dark night. I mean you have to fight all the way in your life for things that matter. Stay active and never concede. An older dog has as much to give - no, I think an older dog has more to give than a younger one. Certainly, that older dog or cat might more appreciate that you're giving them a second chance, and a home. It's a wonderful thing to do."

Learn more about Iams' *Home 4 the Holidays* and find a participating shelter near where you live, www.home4theholidays.com, or call 800-566-5038.

Cont'd from pg. 1

Contributors—

American Veterinary Medical Association

Scott Vande Griend DVM,
Merial District Manager

Email— merialpawprints@aol.com

Copyright ©2005 by Merial and Steve Dale except where noted. All rights reserved. All rights to articles belong to their respective authors except where noted.

CRM.PPHF5.8

FEATURED WEBSITES:

American Veterinary Medical Association:
www.avma.org

American Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals: www.asPCA.org

On the national emergency animal rescue
coalition:
[www.asPCA.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle
&id=23377&security=2620&news_iv_ctrl=1400](http://www.asPCA.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=23377&security=2620&news_iv_ctrl=1400)

Feline Heath, Dr. Susan Little:
www.catvet.homestead.com/

Feline Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy
(also see *Ricky Fund* below)

www.winnfelinehealth.org/health.html

[www.manhattancats.com/Articles/Hypertroph-
ic_Cardiomyopathy.html](http://www.manhattancats.com/Articles/Hypertrophic_Cardiomyopathy.html)

Steve Dale's story on HCM:
[www.wgnradio.com/shows/pet/cat%20dis-
ease.htm](http://www.wgnradio.com/shows/pet/cat%20dis-ease.htm)

Good News for Pets:
www.goodnewsforpets.com

Home 4 the Holidays:
www.home4theholidays.com

Humane Society of the United States:
www.hsus.org

On disaster preparedness with animals:
[hsus.org/search.jsp?query=disaster+pre-
paredness](http://hsus.org/search.jsp?query=disaster+pre-
paredness)

Ricky Fund:
www.winnfelinehealth.org/ricky-fund.html

Steve Dale: www.petworldradio.net and
www.stevedalepetworld.com

Winn Feline Foundation Announces Award:
[http://winnfelinehealth.org/press-releas-
es/1105_stevedale.pdf](http://winnfelinehealth.org/press-releas-
es/1105_stevedale.pdf)

Winn Feline Foundation's New FIP Fund:
[http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/press-
releases/1105_briefund.pdf](http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/press-
releases/1105_briefund.pdf)

Baby Earl *Cont'd from pg. 1*

As the water got higher, the chairs and floating furniture became less and less stable - both Vickey and Baby Earl literally clung to life. Suddenly, Baby Earl lost his balance and began to slide into the water. Vickey reached across to try to grab Baby Earl before he fell into the rising waters. Vickey's sudden movement caused her chair to capsize and she slid into the neck-deep water. She struggled to keep her head above water and gasped for air. The murky water made it impossible to see anything, much less ensure Earl's safety. Just as Vickey was about to give up, she felt a strong hand on her and she was pulled into a boat by rescue workers. Vickey was rushed to the hospital, where she would remain in intensive care for three days.

As Vickey recovered and had friends and relatives visited, she could think of only one thing: Baby Earl. When she felt strong enough, she convinced her niece Toni to help her search for Baby Earl. Their efforts remained fruitless. After two months, Vickey resigned herself to the thought that she might never again see her best friend and her link to big Earl.

Still, she wouldn't give up. Two months after their ordeal, Vickey was paging through photos of refugee

pets at the animal shelter in Slidell, LA. One cat with large golden eyes and snowy white fur looked back at her. Could it be? With excitement, she approached a volunteer and asked to see the cat on the page. They hurried to the holding cage where Baby Earl was kept - sure enough - it was him! He was a little confused by the commotion. Who knows what kind of "incredible journey" he had been on to make it to that point? But there he was - safe and sound. Vickey clutched him, and it was some time before she could let go. Baby Earl reciprocated with a contented purr.

The story you have just read is true. Thanks to donations to support Hurricane relief, stories like this happened often.



The Hurricane Relief Funds ensured that shelters and veterinarians in hurricane-affected areas across Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Florida received critical support to reunite displaced pets with their families, or find new homes when necessary. Merial, the makers of FRONTLINE® and HEARTGARD® (ivermectin) brand products, is donating a dollar from each purchase to Petfinder.com and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation. Also, consumers can give their free dose (value \$15) and/or their HEARTGARD® rebate (\$5 value) as an additional contribution.

-- Scott Vande Griend, DVM