

## CLIENT EDUCATION TOPICS-KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Education of individual caretakers can have a significant effect on the standards of animal care and welfare throughout a community. Each community may have slightly different needs, but the most common concerns are addressed here. Some of the material outlined here may seem very basic. As animal care professionals, this information may seem like common sense or general knowledge, but for many of the individuals you will work with, access to animal care resources may be extremely limited and the information we present may be entirely new.

Think about how you will explain these concepts to someone who has no previous exposure to them. It is important to use clear, simple language and to provide reasonable solutions that the client can successfully follow through with.

The protocols and recommendations outlined in these training materials have been developed to provide a standard of care for all HSVMA-RAVS clinic patients. If you have questions or concerns about any of the information here, please discuss them with a HSVMA-RAVS staff member before or after your trip. During the clinic, all volunteers are expected to provide clients information based on these standards.

### ➤ **Physical Exam**

- Many potentially serious conditions can be easily treated if discovered early. A yearly examination by your regular veterinarian is highly recommended.
- It is generally much less expensive to prevent disease than to treat it.
- Animals treated at this field clinic will receive a basic pre-surgery exam. This exam is not intended to identify all possible illnesses or injuries.

### ➤ **Vaccinations**

- Regular vaccinations are can help protect animals from serious/fatal diseases.
- No vaccine is 100% effective.
- Boosters should be administered every 1-3 yrs as recommended by your veterinarian.

### ➤ **FVRCP - Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia**

- Also known as a 'three-in-one' or 'distemper shot'
- Kittens are not fully protected until they have completed a series of FVRCP injections every 3-4 weeks until they are at least four month old (at least two vaccines).
- Rhinotracheitis ('herpesvirus') and Calicivirus -('Cat Cold or Flu')
  - Highly contagious to other cats
  - Responsible for most infectious upper respiratory disease in cats.
  - Symptoms include sneezing, discharge from the eyes or nose, loss of appetite, and ulcers in the mouth or nose.
- Panleukopenia ('feline distemper')
  - Highly contagious
  - Most commonly seen in young kittens and can result in high death rates
  - Symptoms include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, fever and dehydration.

### ➤ **DHPP (or DA<sub>2</sub>PP) Distemper, Hepatitis (Adenovirus), Parainfluenza, Parvovirus**

- Also known as a 'four-in-one' or 'distemper shot'.
- Puppies should receive a series of DHPP injections, generally every 3-4 weeks until they are at least four months old.
- Canine distemper
  - Highly contagious, often fatal, viral disease.
  - Early symptoms include fever, discharge from the eyes and nose, sensitivity to light, depression and anorexia, and can eventually develop into severe respiratory problems. May also show neurological signs, leading to seizures and death.
- Infectious Canine Hepatitis
  - Signs can include depression, loss of appetite, vomiting and abdominal pain.

- Parainfluenza virus
  - Causes "kennel cough". Often in conjunctionw/ Bordatella bronchiseptica
  - Symptoms can include a mild to severe cough and/or nasal discharge.
- Canine Parvovirus
  - Causes a severe and often deadly disease in dogs. Particularly deadly in puppies.
  - Symptoms include vomiting, bloody diarrhea, lethargy, loss of appetite and fever.
  - Shed in the feces of infected dogs, the virus is highly contagious and extremely hardy, remaining infectious for long periods of time in the environment.
  - Household bleach is the only effective environmental disinfectant for parvo. Dilute bleach 1:32 with hot water.
  - Until fully vaccinated (usually at 16 weeks), puppies should not be walked in areas frequented by other dogs and should avoid contact with unvaccinated dogs.

#### ➤ Rabies

- Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can affect the central nervous system of all mammals, including humans.
- In the interest of public health, vaccination against rabies is required for all dogs and cats.
- An unvaccinated cat or dog is not only in danger of coming into contact with a rabid animal, but is a liability if she should bite either a person or another animal.
- Minimum age for rabies vaccination in most states HSVMA-RAVS works in is 12 weeks. (Exceptions: California and Minnesota which require animals to be 16 weeks of age)
- Vaccines administered before the minimum age are not considered valid.
- The rabies vaccine must be given by a veterinarian or approved public health official.
- All cats and dogs should wear a rabies tag on a collar at all times.
- Animals who have been vaccinated for only rabies are not protected from other diseases.

#### ➤ Intestinal Worms

- Most puppies and kittens have some type of worms.
- These parasites live in the intestines feeding off the animal's blood or protein. Worms can affect the ability to absorb nutrients and can damage the lining of the intestinal tract.
- Some of these parasites can be transmitted to humans, especially children, and can cause serious human health problems.
- Over the counter worming medications are effective against some of the common types of worms. Others must be diagnosed and treated by a veterinarian.
- Animals are frequently exposed to parasites, especially if they have contact with other animals. All cats and dogs should be tested and de-wormed regularly (1-2 x /yr)
- Confining your pet to your house or property and not allowing her to roam will help prevent worms and other parasites.

#### ➤ Fleas and Ticks

- Fleas, ticks and mites are tiny insects that can live on your pet and feed on their blood or skin, causing irritation and itching.
- Fleas and ticks can cause anemia, skin damage, irritation, and hypersensitivity.
- They can also compromise the immune system and can carry a number of other diseases.
- If available, veterinarian dispensed products (Advantage<sup>®</sup>, Frontline<sup>®</sup>) have proven to be much more effective, more economical (as they are used less frequently and work better) and less toxic than many of the over-the-counter products sold at grocery and pet stores.
- The safest over-the-counter products for cats generally contain pyrethrins. Be sure to read the label carefully and use the product exactly as directed.
- Never use a product labeled for use on dogs on your cat-they could be poisoned and die.
- Sprays and dips tend to be the most effective OTC products. Flea collars do not generally work well and can be toxic to some cats.
- If you find a tick on your animal, remove it immediately with tweezers. Putting gasoline on the tick or burning it will NOT make it come loose, and may injure your animal. Carefully grasp the tick's body near the animal's skin. Gently pull until the tick releases. Dispose of the tick by flushing in the toilet or putting into a bottle of rubbing alcohol.

### ➤ **Sarcoptic Mange**

- Also known as scabies.
- Caused by a tiny mite that can not be seen without a microscope.
- The mites cause intense itching as they burrow under the skin to lay their eggs.
- Signs of sarcoptic mange are crusty ear tips, fierce itching, and hair loss, particularly on the ears, elbows, legs, and face in the early stages. Later on, the hair loss spreads throughout the body.
- Dogs with scabies dig and bite at themselves with great ferocity. Their skin reacts with oozing sores, and secondary infection may set in, requiring treatment with an antibiotic in addition to treatment for the mites
- Sarcoptic mange is contagious to canines and humans. Scabies in humans is self-limiting, that is the mite can burrow under the skin and cause itching, but cannot complete its life cycle on humans and dies within a few weeks.
- We generally use ivermectin in two doses, two weeks apart, to kill the mites.
- If mange is a problem in your community, contact local health officials to discuss options for addressing the issue. The HSVMA-RAVS veterinarians can work with your community to manage this serious health problem.

### ➤ **Heartworm**

- Heartworm is serious, life-threatening condition caused by a parasite that is transmitted by mosquitoes. It is different than other types of worms dogs carry.
- The adult heartworm is a thread-like, white worm found in the heart and lungs.
- Symptoms of heartworm disease develop very slowly and may not be noticeable for several years after the initial infection when severe damage to the heart and lungs has already occurred.
- Most of the symptoms are due to problems associated with damage to the heart: Lack of energy and exercise intolerance are early symptoms. Chronic coughing and difficulty breathing are also both common symptoms. As the disease progresses, most dogs develop congestive heart failure leading to death.
- The test for heartworm identifies the presence of heartworm antigen in the blood. These tests can be performed in any veterinary clinic. A veterinarian should test all dogs before they are started on a regular preventative medication. Dogs should be re-tested every year to be sure that there has not been a break in protection.
- Treatment for dogs infected with heartworm disease involves a series of injections of medications to kill the worms. Throughout the treatment, which can last up to three months, the animal's activity must be strictly monitored to avoid complications. The treatment is costly and can have risks for the animal.
- A number of excellent products are available to prevent heartworm infection. The most common types are oral products, such as Heartgard (ivermectin) and Interceptor (milbemycin) that are administered monthly.

### ➤ **Spay/Neuter - Procedure**

- Spay-removal of female reproductive organs.
- Neuter (castration)-removal of testes.
- Spaying or neutering will render the animal permanently unable to reproduce.
- Spay/Neuter surgery is performed under general anesthesia. The animal is 'asleep' and does not feel anything.
- Pain medication is given to ensure that the animal is comfortable after surgery.
- As with any surgery, there is some risk to anesthesia/procedure. Careful monitoring and care is provided to prevent complications.
- Kittens and puppies as young as 8 weeks old can be safely sterilized.
- Pregnant and nursing females can be spayed.

### ➤ Spay/Neuter - Benefits

- **Spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.**
- Spaying and neutering can eliminate or reduce the incidence of a number of health problems that can be very difficult or expensive to treat.
- Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when the animal is spayed before her first heat.
- Neutering eliminates testicular cancer and decreases the incidence of prostate disease.
- Neutered animals may be likely to roam the neighborhood, run away, or get into fights. as these actions are often brought on by the drive to find a mate.
- Neutering cats may make them less likely to spray and mark territory.
- Spaying a dog or cat eliminates her heat cycle. Estrus lasts an average of six to 12 days, often twice a year, in dogs and an average of six to seven days, three or more times a year, in cats.
- Animals who are spayed/neutered may be less likely to bite.
- While sterilization may decrease behaviors associated with sex hormones, it will not drastically alter the personality of the animal.

### ➤ Diet

- It is important to provide adequate nutritious food, formulated for the appropriate species.
- A brand name dry dog or cat food with meat as a primary ingredient will provide the best nutrition for the best price.
- Dogs and cats should eat a food designed specifically for the species. Dog food does not contain the appropriate nutrients to meet the needs of a cat or kitten.
- Puppies and kittens should be fed a diet designed for growth.
- Pregnant and nursing animals will need to eat more (2-3 x the calories) to stay healthy and to provide adequate nutrition for the puppies/kittens.
- Each animal has individual needs and feeding should be adjusted accordingly. An animal in good body condition should be lean but not overly thin. In general, ribs should be easily felt but not seen.
- Fresh water should be available at all times
  - If the pet is kept outdoors, check frequently to be sure water is not frozen/spilled.
  - A heavy crock or bucket buried in the ground can prevent tipping and help keep water cool/warm.

### ➤ Housing

- The safest place for a dog or cat to live is indoors with his/her family with outdoor excursions supervised by a responsible person.
- Animals who live outdoors are at a greater risk of injury or death than those who live indoors with their family.
- Risks to outdoor pets and those who roam include: exposure to disease and parasites, fights with other animals, being hit by a car, cruel humans, becoming lost, exposure to harsh weather, run ins with wildlife, etc.
- Behavior problems such as barking, chewing, and digging are often the result of a lack of stimulation. By providing dogs with proper toys, exercise, "people time," and positive reinforcement, you can undesirable behaviors and teach acceptable house manners.
- A dog who is inside the house is much more likely to deter an intruder than a dog chained in the yard
- Animals who are allowed to roam outdoors unattended are at the greatest risk.
- If an animal must live entirely outdoors it is important to provide:
  - Safe, secure containment (fence, trolley system, etc)
  - Adequate shelter and protection from the weather
  - Adequate food and water that can't be tipped over (prevent freezing in winter)
  - A collar and ID tag to prevent them from being lost or stolen
  - Plenty of exercise and attention from human family members
  - Safe toys

- Some breeds with very long or short coats cannot tolerate extreme outside temperatures even when provided with proper shelter.
- When the temperature is below 20° F or above 90° F all dogs should be kept indoors, even if a doghouse is provided. Shorthaired dogs, cats and puppies should be kept indoors at 40° F or below.
- Avoid keeping dogs on chains or stationary tethers.
  - As pack animals, dogs have been bred for thousands of years to form a strong attachment to a human family. An otherwise friendly and happy dog, when kept continually chained and isolated, often becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious, and aggressive. Studies show that chained dogs are much more likely to bite than unchained dogs.
  - In addition, chained dogs may unintentionally hang themselves if they are tethered too close to a fence and attempt to jump it. Chained dogs are also subject to attacks by other animals and cruel humans
- If a fence or other containment is impossible, a trolley system is best.
  - To construct: Slide a ring on to heavy rope or wire and fasten the ends between two posts or trees. Then connect the dog's lead to the ring.
  - The lead should be long enough for the dog to lie down, but not too long to avoid tangling.
  - Don't secure the trolley near stairs, fences, porches, etc to avoid the dog jumping over and injuring himself.
  - Do not use a choke chain with the trolley-use a harness.
  - Be sure the dog can reach a safe shelter to get out of the elements.
- To provide your dog with a comfortable doghouse, consider these suggestions:
  - The house should be large enough to allow the dog to stand up and turn around comfortably, but small enough to retain body heat.
  - The house should have a slanted, waterproof roof to allow rainwater to run off.
  - If the doghouse is made of wood, it should be raised off the ground at least two inches to prevent the floor from rotting.
  - The door should be just large enough for your dog to enter easily.
  - During the winter months, to protect your dog from cold wind, the door should be covered by a flexible plastic flap—such as a floor runner that doesn't have spikes on one side. A piece of carpet can work in a pinch, but it can get wet and freeze.
  - Clean, dry bedding such as hay, straw, or cedar shavings should be provided. The bedding should be changed weekly to prevent mold and to keep the doghouse sanitary.
  - In warmer months, the dog should also be provided with shade such as a tree or tarp. A doghouse in direct sun can be like an oven and will not keep a dog cool.
  - Anytime your dog is kept outside, be sure to provide fresh water in a tip-proof bowl or large bucket. Make sure the water doesn't freeze during colder months.
  - Also remember that if you have more than one dog, you need to provide a doghouse for each one.

➤ **Collar/rabies tag/ID**

- A collar with current identification is important for all animals.
- Identification can protect an animal from being lost, stolen or picked up by animal control and can help an animal get home if he/she is ever lost or injured.
- A current rabies tag tells authorities that the animal is vaccinated, but will not help someone in the community to get the animal home if found.
- If an ID tag is not available, the name and phone number or address can be written on the collar with permanent marker.
- Cats should wear a safety collar-with a piece of elastic sewn in- to prevent injury if the cat should get caught on anything.

## ➤ Dog Bite Prevention

- Dog bites are a serious public health problem. Each year, more than 4 million people are bitten by dogs, and 800,000 dog-bite related injuries are severe enough to require medical attention. More than half of those bitten are under the age of 13, and children are at least three times more likely than adults to sustain a serious injury.
- Whether through formal presentations or informal interactions, we often have the opportunity to interact with children of various ages and can use these opportunities to help children understand canine behavior and teach them ways to behave safely around animals-whether their own family companion or the neighborhood stray.

## ➤ Dog Bite Prevention-Why Dog's Bite and How Children Can Avoid Injury

- Excitement
  - When dogs play they often use their mouths and teeth. Just by being too excited a dog may hurt a child. Teach children and dogs to play gently and calmly.
  - If a dog gets too excited, freeze and walk slowly away. Take some time out to give both dog and child a chance to calm down.
- Pain or Sickness
  - When a dog is in pain, he doesn't understand where the pain is coming from. If you touch her, she may think you are causing the pain and bite you to stop it.
  - If you see a dog acting sick or hurt, leave him alone. Tell an adult who can help.
- Anger or Territory
  - A dog will protect anything that is important to her: toys, her bed, food and water bowls, her people, her yard, her house, her car or her puppies.
  - If you come near something the dog feels is hers, she may bite to make you leave her property alone. Don't go near a dog who has something (food, toys, puppies)
  - Don't go into a yard where there is a dog you do not know.
  - Don't reach through a car window or fence to pet a dog or pet a dog who is tied up.
- Fear or Surprise
  - Quick movements and sudden or loud noises are scary for dogs, and they may bite to protect themselves. When around any dog, move quietly and slowly.
  - A dog who thinks you might hurt him may bite to try to protect himself.
  - Always ask a dog's caregiver for permission before petting him.
  - If there isn't an adult with the dog, leave the dog alone!
- Warning signs - signs that you are doing something the dog does not like
  - Ears back, legs stiff, hair on back standing up
  - Showing teeth or growling and barking
- What to do if threatened by a dog
  - Stand like a tree: Freeze. Stand still with your hands at your sides. Count to five slowly and silently. Move away very slowly sideways or backwards
- If the dog jumps on you/knocks you down
  - Lie like a log: Curl up in ball and cover your face and head with your arms until the dog goes away.
- What NOT to do if confronted by a dog
  - Don't stare at the dog-they may think that it is a threat!
  - Don't run, jump, or wave your arms around.
  - Don't scream.
  - Don't throw anything at the dog or try to hit him.
- How to greet a dog who is with an adult:
  - First, ASK PERMISSION: "Can I pet your dog?"
  - Stand still and slowly offer the dog the back of your closed hand to smell.
  - If the dog seems friendly, you may gently pet him on the neck or back.
  - If you meet a dog without an adult, walk away-do not try to pet him.

➤ **Dog Bite Prevention-Adults Role**

- Parents and other adults can help keep children safe from dog bites and attacks by teaching their children how to be safe around dogs and by providing responsible care for their own animals. Teach children how to avoid being bitten by respecting all dogs and by asking permission before petting or playing with any dog.
- Confinement- Dogs who are allowed to roam free will join packs of other dogs and may be more likely to attack or injure a child.
- Don't chain- Chaining a dog results in frustration and boredom. A chained dog can not get away and may feel trapped, defensive or protective. Aggression is a common result.
- Spay/Neuter- Neutered dogs are less likely to bite. By having companion dogs spayed or neutered and keeping them indoors with the family you will keep your dogs and children safer.