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# HOME is where your PET is



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comfortable

Find pictures of local pets on the  
cover and page 3!

Thank you to all the local pet parents who contributed  
photos for this special publication!

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Phone: 865-675-6397 News Fax: 675-1675

Advertising Fax: 675-6776

Editor email: editor@farragutpress.com

Website: www.farragutpress.com

farragutpress is published weekly at  
11863 Kingston Pike Farragut, TN 37934



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# Positive reinforcement

Addressing pets' behavioral issues



What can pet owners do when their pets exhibit unwanted behaviors, such as damaging furniture or jumping up on people?

The first instinct may be to yell or punish the pet by being cross with him or her. However, many animal behaviorists believe that positive reinforcement training is the most effective way to address pets' behavioral issues.

Positive reinforcement training, according to The Humane Society of the United States, utilizes rewards for desired behaviors. The reward, whether it is a treat, praise, toys, or anything the pet finds rewarding, will eventually get the pet to repeat the behavior that earned him or her that reward. Rather than punishing a bad behavior, pet owners who utilize positive reinforcement reward good behaviors.

Positive reinforcement also is known as operant conditioning. It is a similar concept studied by famed Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov. When the dinner bell rang, Pavlov's dogs salivated. The American Kennel Club says that was classical conditioning because the dogs salivated involuntarily. However, operant training conditioning is when dogs learn to associate their behavior with certain results, all the while learning there are good and bad outcomes. The goal is to increase behaviors with pleasant consequences, such as receiving a reward. Experts say that by focusing on the positive, pet owners will

see fewer side effects than negative punishment training, such as aggression, fear, anxiety, and avoidance.

Timing is the key to positive reinforcement training. The reward must occur immediately after the desired behavior or the pet may not associate it with the proper action. So if the dog sits, then the reward has to come as soon as it gets on the floor. If the reward comes when he has stood back up, then the pooch may think the reward is for standing.

When practicing positive reinforcement, keep commands short and training sessions brief so that dogs can understand before they get restless. Dogs don't understand sentences, says HSUS, and they will lose interest if sessions are too long. Consistency also is essential. Each person interacting with the pet should use the same commands and cues to achieve the desired result, which is a well-behaved pet.

It may take time for a pet to acclimate to commands and training. But with patience, positive reinforcement can be effective.

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# Common behavioral issues that affect cats and dogs

**P**et ownership can be both joyous and challenging. Every pet misbehaves from time to time, but when behavior issues become part of daily life, pet owners may be wringing their hands wondering how to get to the root of the problem.

Pet owners may not realize they can contribute to common behavior issues. Here's how to recognize and address pets who may need some behavior redirection.

- **Scratching:** Pet experts note that cats need to scratch as a way to remove the outer sheath of the nail. Scratching also is a way for cats to mark their territory in the wild. Provide plenty of safe and appropriate scratching posts so cats leave the furniture alone. Cordon off areas that are off limits

or try sour sprays or other repellents.

- **Resource guarding:** Many pets will show aggression when they guard their possessions from others, whether it is necessary or not. Pets have evolved from wild animals that had to compete for food, mates and territories, so it's understandable that genetics hasn't been so quick to catch up with the modern life of pampered pets. Pet owners can opt for adopting young pets that can be hand fed early on or touched or manipulated while eating or enjoying food treats to try to prevent guarding. Older pets who exhibit signs of resource guarding may need the expertise of a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist.

- **Inappropriate urination:** Just when you think your dog is house trained or a cat has embraced its litter box, you may find he or she is urinating elsewhere. Physical illnesses,

See **BEHAVIOR** on Page 9



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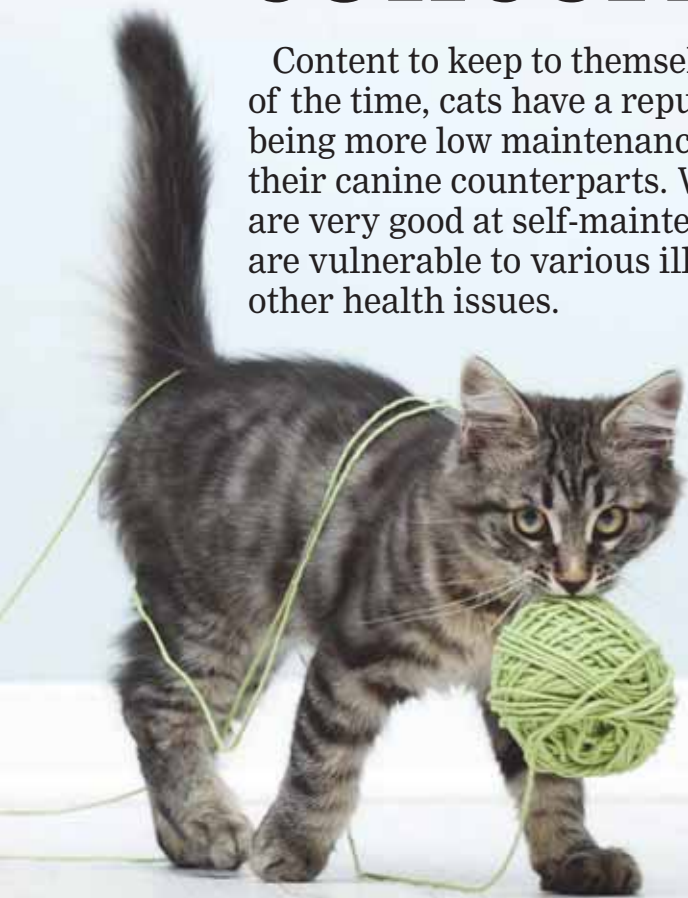
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# Common cat health concerns

Content to keep to themselves most of the time, cats have a reputation of being more low maintenance pets than their canine counterparts. While they are very good at self-maintenance, cats are vulnerable to various illnesses and other health issues.



It is imperative for cat owners to recognize symptoms of common conditions and seek veterinary help to keep cats as healthy as they can be.

- **Panleukopenia:**

Commonly called Panleuk or feline distemper, this is a virulent virus in the parovirus group. It is common among feral cats or other areas where large congregations of cats gather. PetMD says almost every cat will come in contact with this virus early in its life. Treatment for feline distemper occurs on a case by case basis, though fluid therapy to prevent dehydration and maintain blood pressure is a common course of treatment.

- **Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD):**

Estimates suggest as many as 3 percent of cats who visit the vet have FLUTD, which is a group of diseases with multiple causes. Symptoms include drinking more, straining to urinate, urinating in unusual places, crying while urinating, licking around the urethra, lack of appetite, and vomiting.

- **Fleas:**

Cats are subjected to various parasites, including fleas. Cats that spend time both outside and indoors may be especially vulnerable to flea infestation. Hair loss, skin infections, flea dirt on the skin, and constant scratching and licking are signs of flea infestation. If left untreated, fleas can cause anemia.

- **Feline leukemia virus (FeLV):**

Feline leukemia was discovered in the 1960s and is one of the most commonly diagnosed causes of

disease in domestic cats. FeLV can severely inhibit a cat's immune system, advises the ASPCA.

- **Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV):**

Another virus that can affect cats' immune systems, FIV is slow-acting and may not show symptoms until years after initial infection. Cats may experience secondary infections as the virus takes hold. FIV is transmitted by deep bite wounds, during gestation or during birth.

- **Deafness:**

Many kittens are born without the ability to hear. It is more common in white cats with two blue eyes.

- **Tapeworms:**

This internal parasite can rob a cat of nutrients as it resides in the small intestines. Tapeworms can sometimes grow to two feet in length. Weight loss and vomiting are potential symptoms. Owners may see a tapeworm coming out of their cat's anus while the cat is sleeping or relaxed.

- **High-rise syndrome:**

Unscreened windows pose a danger for curious cats. Falling from an elevated area can cause severe injuries. Contrary to popular belief, cats don't always land on their feet. The danger is so prevalent that veterinary professionals have dubbed this "high-rise syndrome."

*Cats are vulnerable to various medical conditions and illnesses. Pet owners can do their research to ensure their companion animals get the care they need.*



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# What to expect at a veterinary dental cleaning



Oral health is as important for companion animals as it is for their owners. Left unchecked in pets, periodontal disease can lead to pain, trouble eating and other issues.

Pet owners are urged to brush their pets' teeth to help remove bacteria that can lead to tartar buildup. If oral hygiene is ignored, pets can develop tooth decay and other issues.

People know from experience what to expect when they go to a dentist for a cleaning, but a pet's oral cleaning may be an unknown — and that can induce anxiety. Most cleanings follow a similar pattern and recognition of that pattern can give pet owners an idea of what to expect at a veterinary dental cleaning.

## Anesthesia

One of the main differences between a dental cleaning for a person and one for a pet is the use of anesthesia. According to Kulshan Veterinary Hospital, pets do not willingly open their mouths to give veterinary dentists access to perform cleanings. Anesthesia ensures that the animal will

remain still and the vet can remove any plaque and tartar that has built up. If a tooth needs to be extracted, sedation ensures that will go smoothly.

## Pre-testing

Since anesthesia will be used, vets often will run lab work and an EKG to determine if a pet is healthy enough to receive anesthesia. Testing ahead of time also helps the vet make the best decisions regarding which types of anesthetics to administer and in what quantities.

## Examination and cleaning

The vet will conduct a thorough examination of the pet's mouth, noting any abnormalities. A dental probe is often used to evaluate bleeding gums and detect pockets in the gums where food can accumulate and potentially lead to decay.

After the examination, VCA Hospitals says tooth scaling will be performed, using both ultrasonic and hand scalers to remove plaque and tartar above and below the gum line. Teeth will then be

See DENTAL on Page 10



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# How to make aging pets more comfortable

**P**ets are valued members of many families, and their owners typically do everything they can to ensure their furry friends live as comfortably as possible.

Care becomes even more important as pets get older. Just like people, aging pets may eat less and sleep more. They may have reduced stamina and even experience stiffness when getting up from sleep. Certain pets may experience failing eyesight, hearing loss and/or incontinence.

According to an American Pet Products Association survey, 67 percent of U.S. households have a pet and will have to cope with that pet becoming a senior at some point. Senior animals might need a little extra help as they age, particularly with regard to comfort. These tips can help.

- **Visit the vet more often.** Senior pets may need to see the vet more frequently than they used to. Pets typically visit the vet every year. Senior pets may require two visits per year. Speak with a veterinarian about how often your aging pet should come in for checkups. Checkups can help identify illnesses earlier and ensure any aches and pains are addressed immediately.

- **Invest in comfort devices.** Pets may need items that can accommodate aches and pains or other conditions. For example, aging pets may benefit from a high quality orthopedic pet bed. Pet strollers and raised food bowls also can make aging pets' lives a little more comfortable.

- **Address mobility issues.** Aging pets may need help getting around. Non-skid carpet runners in high-traffic areas can help pets walk around securely. Steps or ramps can make it easier to get on or off beds or in and out of vehicles.

- **Install doggie doors.** Senior pets may need to relieve themselves more frequently. A doggy door can allow for faster access to the outdoors. Similarly, a litter box with a lower opening makes it easier for aging cats to use the litter box.

- **Ensure ample protection against the elements.** Aging pets may feel the weather more than younger pets. They may need sweaters and coats or booties to protect their paws from the snow and ice. Cooling or heating mats may improve comfort indoors.

- **Purchase animal diapers.** Some senior pets may not be able to

See AGING on Page 9



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## Behavior

From page 5

such as kidney issues or diabetes, could be the root of the problem. Some animals that are not neutered or spayed may be engaging in “marking” behavior, which is spreading scent around a territory. Getting the pet fixed can alleviate the problem. Speak with a vet first to rule out certain issues.

- **Barking:** Barking to alert someone is at the home may be a trait people look for in a dog. But when a dog’s barking becomes excessive, it could be indicative of a behavioral issue. Dogs may learn to use barking to their benefit. Some dogs may bark to get walks, food or attention — even if it’s negative attention from a person saying “shush.” Some breeds

naturally bark more than others. In such instances, barking may be reduced but not entirely eliminated. Again, a behaviorist may be able to help.

- **Jumping up or overzealous greetings:** Similar to barking, some pets greet all visitors to the home (or outside) by jumping up on people. This can be annoying and even dangerous if a big animal jumps on a small person. Reward calm behavior by only giving attention to the pet after he or she calms down. Lavishing attention on an animal as soon as you come home while it is jumping up sets a bad precedent and can lead to a jumping problem.

*These are a few common pet behaviors pet owners may need to address to cohabitate peacefully with their animals.*

## Aging

From page 8

control themselves. Diapers and absorbent pads can keep them dry and prevent soiling around the house.

- **Help the animal lose weight.** Pets should maintain a healthy body

weight, which can relieve pressure on joints and reduce risk for certain illnesses, including difficulty breathing and skin irritations. Speak with a veterinarian about the right foods and types of exercise for your pet to keep its weight in check.



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# Is your precious pooch joining you at the bathroom sink each day when you brush your teeth?

If so, you may want to think about having him or her learn the proper technique to keeping teeth clean — with your help, of course. Cleaning a dog's teeth is just as essential to the pet's health as a nutritious diet, grooming and regular exercise. According to the American Kennel Club, keeping a dog's teeth clean comes down to a few basic steps.

• **Brush teeth.** Teeth brushing is the foundation of good oral health. Brush a dog's teeth at least once a week or more frequently. Use toothpaste specifically designed for dogs. Never use toothpaste made for humans.

• **Offer dental chews.** Rely on a dog's natural inclination to chew with treats that also clean the teeth. Chews are designed to minimize the buildup of plaque.

• **Use special oral sprays:** Investigate dog dental sprays that kill bacteria that can make a dog's breath smell bad and contribute to tartar and plaque.

• **Provide plenty of chew toys.** In addition to dental chews, regular chew toys also scour the teeth and improve oral health. Rotate several toys to prevent boredom.

• **Schedule professional cleanings.** Dogs need dental cleanings and examinations at least every year. Some dogs are more susceptible to periodontal disease and will require more frequent cleanings. Consult a vet.

It may take some time for dogs to get acclimated to having their mouths handled and their teeth brushed, but over time they can grow accustomed to the process. Some dogs may even enjoy it.

## Dental

From page 7

polished to remove any microscopic scratches that can snag bacteria and lead to subsequent build-up.

### Monitoring

Throughout the procedure, a pet's vital signs are monitored and IV fluids are administered to keep the animal comfortable and safe. Before the pet is brought out of anesthesia, dental x-rays also may be taken to check for problems not visible to the naked eye. The pet also will be monitored after anesthesia in the recovery room.

### At home

When the pet is released to go home, it is important for pet owners to keep up with dental cleanings. Do not use toothpaste designed for humans, as there are special animal-safe products for this purpose. Depending on what was done during the cleaning, the vet may prescribe antibiotics and/or pain medications.

Dental cleanings are an important component of overall pet care. Consult with a vet to learn more about pet dental cleanings.

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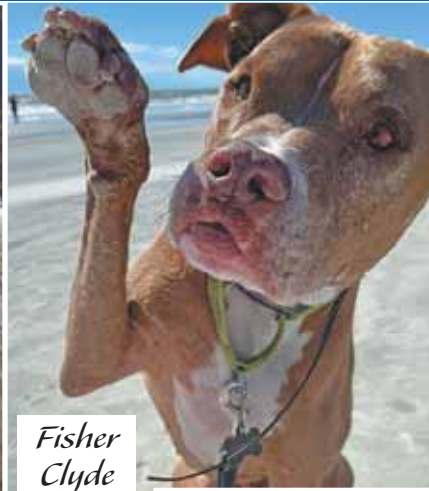
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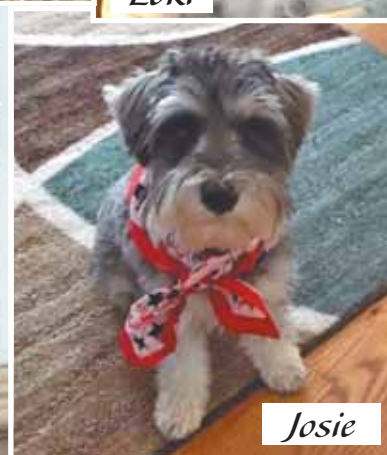
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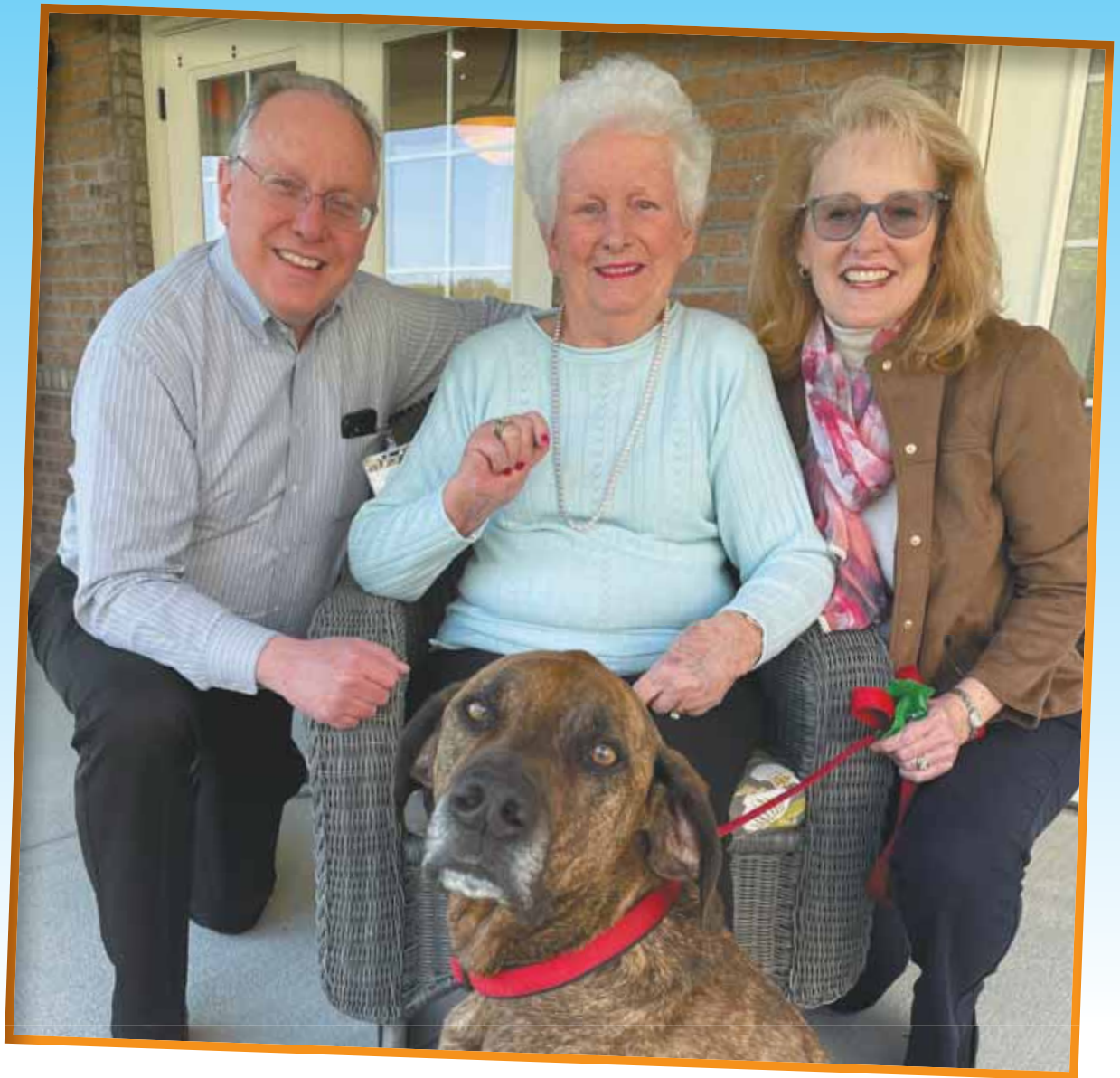
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