Animal Community Talks:
Managing Patient Fear and Stress

Stress is a serious obstacle to veterinary medical care. Patients who do not tolerate handling or examination are less likely to receive quality care.

Join Dr. Gilbert on Sunday, February 21st, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. at DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital for a special presentation on managing patient fear and stress.

animalcommunity.org

2015 P.V.M.A. DRIVE

What a collection! We are so grateful to everyone who donated to the Portland Veterinary Medical Association Holiday Pet Supplies Drive! Thanks to your generous donations, the Coffee Creek Puppy Program and Portland Animal Welfare Team will be able to assist more animals in need over the next year.
Top 5 Resolutions Your Pets Would Approve

By Rosie Gilbert, DVM

Resolution #1-Store your pet’s food correctly.

Ever wonder why your pet is very excited when the new food bag is opened? Once a bag of food is opened, the fat starts to oxidize. Over time, this begins to smell and taste bad to their sensitive sniffers (which is why you shouldn’t keep open bags of food too long). When we repeatedly dump a bag of food into a plastic container, the oxidized fat begins to coat it, tainting future food. So before you change diets because the fur kids seem uninterested, try the following:

- Clean out the air tight container with warm soapy water. Rinse and dry well.
- Keep food in its original bag within the airtight container.

Resolution #2-Examine your feeding stations.

It’s so important for our pets’ health to drink enough water, especially cats. Take a good look at how appetizing the water and food bowls look. Would you eat/drink off of it? Yes, many pets will drink out of a puddle and put who-knows-what into their mouths outside... but not in their home. The oxidized fat described above also coats food bowls, making the kibble less appetizing.

- Wash food and water bowls several times a week in the dishwasher or warm soapy water.
- Pets on raw diets particularly need their dishes cleaned daily to prevent bacterial growth.
- Consider changing to glass or stainless steel dishes, as they are less porous and easier to keep clean.

Resolution #3-Increase your pet’s environmental stimulation.

In the wild, canines and felines roam a much larger territory than the confines of our homes. Many veterinary behaviorists believe the majority of behavioral issues are related to pets not having enough environmental stimulation, which creates anxiety that requires an outlet (tearing up the couch, marking their territory, etc). Look around and see what you can do to keep your fur kid busy when you aren’t there:

- Set up a “playground” of cardboard boxes, paper bags, and newspapers for cats and dogs to play with, tear up, etc.
- Hide treats around the house for them to “hunt”.

Resolution #4-Set aside 10-15 minutes of active play-time daily.

Active playtime is a way for pets to bond with their owners, lose weight, and increase environmental stimulation. If it happens at a certain time each day, pets start to look forward to it, even if they don’t seem interested at first.

- Try setting a timer for 10-15 minutes before the television comes on at night to play with a toy on a stick, a laser pointer, or playing “keep away”.
- Give a treat at the end of playtime to simulate a “kill”, or let the pet drag the toy away.
- Try catnip for kitties that need a little encouragement, on toys and as a treat.
- Most pets have a “play preference”. If they don’t show interest in one type of toy, try something else. Most pet stores will take back a toy that your pet isn’t interested in.

Resolution #5-Take care of the “Outs” as well as the “Ins”.

Providing an appropriate place for your pet to potty is a must! Anytime a pet soils outside their designated area, it creates stress for them and you. Try to make the potty place as attractive as possible.

- Have something for dogs to urinate on outside—there’s a reason they place fake fire hydrants in designated potty zones at the airports!
- Keep feces picked up from outside and from litter boxes—No one likes a dirty outhouse!
- Rule of thumb for litter boxes: Number of cats +1 = number of litter boxes!
  *Have boxes in a few areas around the house so a dominant cat can’t prevent others from accessing them.
  *Older cats may not be able to climb the stairs as fast, so have one on each level.
  *Let your cat “vote” on the kind of boxes and litter they prefer. Offer several different kinds—covered vs. uncovered, clumping vs. non-clumping, 1” depth vs. 3” depth...

Most resolutions are common sense that we just need to remind ourselves at the beginning of the year. Your pets approve this message!