By the look of the thermometer, summer is in full swing here in San Antonio! In this edition of the *Critter Chronicle*, *Town & Country Veterinary Hospital*’s newsletter we introduce you to our new doctor, talk about saving money on pet care, discuss pet insurance and want to spread the word on our new procedure for fecal testing. On behalf of all of us at *Town & Country*, we hope you and your families are having a fun and safe summer!

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Visit our website for more great articles from our previous newsletters: www.tcvethosp.com

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**ProHeart® 6 Discount During August!!**

During the month of August we are offering a 20% discount on ProHeart 6 injections!

*ProHeart 6* is a sustained-release injectable heartworm preventative for dogs that provides six months of protection in a single dose. The great thing about *ProHeart 6* is that it eliminates the risk and worry of having to remember to give your canine companion a monthly preventative. Just one injection every six months ensures that your pet will be protected without interruption.

Pets eligible to take advantage of *ProHeart 6* include dogs in good health between 6 months and 7 years of age. A heartworm test and blood work will verify your pet’s health status.

Heartworm disease is deadly, and preventable. The cost of treating heartworm disease, and the cost to your pet’s health, far exceeds the cost of prevention.

Schedule your pet’s *ProHeart 6* appointment today and enjoy the peace of mind that comes with knowing your canine companion is safe from the threat of heartworm disease.

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**New Procedure – A little messier, but better results**

If you haven’t heard yet, you may be a little surprised when you make your next appointment with us. We will ask that you bring in a sample of your pet’s fecal matter. Although the thought may be unpleasant at first, there are many added benefits if you are able to comply.

**This new method of testing for intestinal parasites is less invasive and thus more comfortable for your pet(s).** In the past, we would “retrieve” a sample using a fecal loop, which, you can imagine is not often received well by the pet.

**Our new method of testing utilizes a centrifuge and requires a sample larger than can usually be obtained using a fecal loop. This method, along with a larger sample provides more thorough results.**

**What we need, specifically:**

- The sample needs to be at least the size of a quarter.
- It needs to be “fresh” - meaning, less than 3 hours old, or refrigerated upon collection and presented to us within 24 hours. *(In the heat of summer, the sample must be collected immediately and kept in an air conditioned environment or refrigerated. Also, samples will not be viable if left in a hot car.)* If needed, we will gladly provide collection supplies for you.

Although it is never the highlight of anyone’s day, the results are well worth the effort. So, please remember when coming to see us, avoid the loop - scoop the poop!
Save $$ on Pet Care

This past year left many of us with tight budgets and a need to evaluate our spending habits more carefully. Here are some tips to help you reduce some of your pet care costs, without having to give up on your pet’s health care:

**Take Advantage of Money-Saving Programs Offered by Your Vet**

At TCVH we offer a $50 credit towards your pet’s dental cleaning if done within 60 days of their annual exam with vaccinations.

**Free Products.** Some brands of heartworm & flea preventatives offer 1 free dose when you purchase a box of 6 or 12 at a time. This not only saves you $$, it also reduces the number of trips to your vet. Many also offer money-back guarantees if you are not completely satisfied with the product.

**“Piggy-back” Planned Procedures.** If your pet is healthy, have multiple procedures performed at the same time. For instance, combine: microchip with an anesthetic procedure, declaw with alter, bloodwork for ProHeart6 with an anesthetic procedure. By doing so, you can save the cost of multiple exams and co-align necessary testing. (double-duty)

**Military Appreciation Program** If you are active duty, retired, or in the reserves, please let us know. We now offer special rates on our boarding and veterinary services for military personnel as a thank you for your service.

**Financial Options that Can Work in Your Favor**

**Pet Insurance** – Not just for emergencies anymore. Many programs offer coverage for annual exams, monthly preventatives, vaccines, spays & neuters, dental cleanings, as well as for unplanned emergency medical procedures.

**Care Credit** – Although the last thing most of us want is another credit card, Care Credit is a unique option to be aware of, especially in a pinch! Care Credit is a credit card for veterinary care as well as your own medical care. They offer interest-free payment plans that can be a sweet relief for those unexpected emergencies.

**Daily Choices**

**Premium Pet Food** – Premium and prescription pet foods are perceived to be more costly than other brands. In actuality, premium brands can last longer (when fed in correct portions), can help treat medical conditions, and generally provide better nutrition overall (a major component of good health).

**Think quality over quantity when it comes to your pets’ toys & accessories.** Some manufacturers offer lifetime guarantees on their products, such as Lupine’s collars and leashes. There are also toys, such as Kongs, which are made specifically to be more rugged and therefore longer lasting.

**Training** – Investing a little time and money to train your pets has a big pay off! Destructive tendencies can be managed, and well mannered pets make much more enjoyable family members. Even the most independent cat can be encouraged to have the preferred behaviors.

**Learn how to provide some basic care yourself.** We can teach you how to trim your pet’s nails, clean their ears, bathe and brush them. An added benefit is that this makes you more in tune with your pet(s)’s health, allowing you to notice small changes before they become big problems.

**Keep your pet(s) active.** Outdoor activities are a great option for your pocketbook, as well as for your pet’s health. Visit a dog park, take part in local pet parades and other pet centered events, or just go for a walk! Visit our website for map of local, pet-friendly activities and locations.

**An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound… Last but not least, the best way to avoid the high cost of sick pet care, is with preventative care.**

**The cost to prevent common diseases**, such as heartworm infestation and Parvovirus infection, is minimal compared to the cost of treatment and the heartache of a sick pet.

**Injuries & Infections** – Waiting until a bad situation is worse only increases the severity of the condition and cost of treatment. Many serious cases we see could have been easier and less costly to treat if the pet had been brought in during the early stages. Minor injuries and infections left untended can worsen rapidly and become more costly to treat, not to mention the threat to your pet’s health.
“Ginny Speaks”

Advice for Furry & Feathered Friends

Dear Ginny,

Every time I go to the vet’s office I am violated! Someone sticks a thermometer or probe where they shouldn’t. It is so embarrassing! Is this necessary? Can it be avoided?

Sincerely,
Mao Ze Dung
(A Shih Tzu from South San Antonio)

Dear Ze Dung:

I have felt your pain. Temperature taking via the unmentionable route is unavoidable. Your doctor must know your temperature to do a proper examination. Rectal temperature is the most accurate way to check temperature in the world of furry patients. Fortunately, at Town & Country Veterinary Hospital they use modern, narrow, electronic thermometers to minimize that unpleasant time. Yeah for modern technology!

Concerning the other embarrassing probing they do to collect a fecal sample, Town & Country Veterinary Hospital is now asking owners to bring a sample of your stool when fecal testing is needed. No more of you-know-what in front of strangers. So, before your next annual exam/vaccines, poop and avoid the loop!

-Ginny

PET INSURANCE - They’ve come a long way, baby!

These are not the pet insurance plans of ten years ago. Many pet insurance providers have “stepped up their game.” There are even plans available for birds & exotics! Here’s some of what you should know about today’s pet insurance programs.

Why?

Because, as curious and active as our pets can be – something’s bound to go wrong! And with improved medical care available for your pets, knowing you will get reimbursement for your expenses can give you the freedom to choose the best vet around, instead of going with the first one you can afford. Even one major procedure for your pet can justify the expense of many plans.

What does it cover?

Today’s pet insurance is not just for accidents (although that’s helpful, too!). Many pet insurance companies offer plans for routine care as well. There are plans that can help with the cost of parasite preventatives, spay/neuters, dental cleanings and vaccines. There are also plans available for just emergency care. Most plans do not cover pre-existing conditions, so if you wait for something to happen before you have insurance, it’ll be too late.

How does it work?

Pet insurance is different than human health insurance. Pet insurance works on a “reimbursement” schedule. You pay your veterinarian, submit claim form(s) along with copies of your invoices, and your insurance provider will reimburse you for costs, according to your subscribed coverage. Some companies require a veterinarian to fill out and sign the claim form, so be sure to take one with you to your appointment!

Where can I get it?

There are number of companies that offer pet insurance. Here are a few:

VPI
www.petinsurance.com

ASPCA
www.aspcapetinsurance.com

Shelter Care
www.sheltercare.com

Purina
www.purinacare.ca

How much does it cost?

Policy costs vary widely, depending on the animal and the coverage package that the owner chooses. Some packages are comprehensive, including such things as annual checkups and vaccinations, spaying/neutering, death benefits and even reimbursement for offering a reward for lost pets. Other plans cover only accidents and illness. Pet health policies are similar to human insurance policies; annual premiums, deductibles, and various coverage based upon what the owner chooses. Most plans also have co-pays and caps that limit how much will be paid out annually. With the large variety of providers and plans available, there is no blanket quote for pricing. Monthly premiums may range from $5 - $50 a month. Most pet insurance providers offer a multi-pet discount and many offer free quotes on their websites.

There’s a New Vet in Town!

Town & Country Veterinary Hospital is pleased to introduce a wonderful veterinarian who has recently joined our staff. Dr. Ximena Vierra began seeing patients here in January and has met many of our clients and patients. She earned her BA in Zoology from the University of Hawaii, and her DVM at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition to dogs and cats, Dr. Vierra has a special interest in exotic pets including rabbits, and small rodents. She is especially fond of ferrets, having two of her own: Chipa and Ito. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Vierra to San Antonio!

Visit our website to learn more about all of the doctors at Town & Country.

Keep your pet(s) safe this summer...

Visit our website to learn more about dogs and heat stroke.

www.tcvethosp.com/heatstroke
Travel Tips for Pet Owners

Be sure your pet is properly identified with a collar, current rabies tag, name tag and microchip, if possible.

Grooming your pet before a trip may make it more pleasant for both you and your pet.

Be sure to carry proof of current rabies and other required vaccinations (e.g., distemper, parvovirus) and a current health certificate with you when crossing state or international borders.

If your pet is in good health, you may want to consult with your veterinarian about sedatives to make travel easier on you, and less stressful for your pet.

Do not allow pets to ride with their heads outside car windows, nor in the back of pickup trucks. Sudden stops or vehicle accidents can cause fatal injuries. There are harnesses available that secure to seat belt fasteners for added safety.

Be sure to “test” your pet in the car before a long trip to see if they get motion sickness. It is a common condition that can make a trip miserable.

Federal regulations require that pets be at least eight weeks old and weaned at least five days before flying.

Health certificate requirements vary depending on whether you and your pet(s) are simply crossing state lines or traveling internationally. It is very important to contact the USDA Export Division to obtain the exact requirements of the country to which you will be traveling.

Many airlines have specific regulations, such as breed restrictions and crate sizes.

During the summer, try to book a flight early in the morning or late in the evening, as your pet’s crate may be sitting out in the sun.