

The Bark & Mew

Updates & Information from Falconbridge Animal Hospital & Village Veterinary Hospital
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Why Wellness Exams?



Leeds & Piper

Routine wellness exams are the single most important tool you and your veterinarian have to check your pet for problems before they become serious. We recommend these valuable exams throughout your pet's lifetime, beginning as a puppy or kitten.

Puppies and kittens grow and mature at an extremely rapid rate. By

one year of age, most puppies and kittens are equivalent to a 15 to 20 year old human. By performing a wellness exam at each vaccination visit, our veterinarians are able to monitor these youngsters for proper growth. If a pet is not developing as expected, we can recommend nutritional changes if needed or appropriate testing to determine the cause.

Healthy adult pets should receive a routine physical exam on an annual basis. Many pets are good at hiding pain or other health issues. This exam provides an opportunity for our veterinarians to discover a problem your pet may be hiding from you. As with humans, problems detected early are typically much less expensive and easier to treat than those detected later. You and your veterinarian can also review and assess the vaccinations your pet should be receiving. This is also a good time to discuss monthly flea and heartworm prevention and any nutritional or behavioral concerns that may exist.

For our senior pets, we recommend physical exams every 6 months.

Similar to humans, many pets develop arthritis or other degenerative problems. And, once a person reaches age 50, they are seeing their doctors more frequently. Since pets age at a much faster rate than people, the twice yearly exams allow us to detect problems that may be developing as early as possible. With the more frequent visits, we can adjust any treatments that the pet may be receiving to keep them comfortable and maintain the highest quality of life possible. If the pet is on a maintenance medication for a chronic illness, these visits are also an ideal time to perform any required monitoring tests to detect potentially damaging side effects.

At any age, your pet will be weighed when he/she comes in for any reason. Proper weight and nutritional management go hand-in-hand with these visits to keep your pet healthy and pain free for as long as possible. If your pet is past due for a wellness exam, please call today for an appointment. Pets who receive regular physical exams are more likely to live longer with a higher quality of life.

Look, Listen, and Feel: What is the Doctor Doing?

Look in the Eyes	Check for cloudiness, scratches, irritation	These can indicate cataracts, ulcers, infection, injury, etc.
Look in the Ears	Check for debris, redness, swelling, masses	These can indicate bacterial or yeast infection, mite infestation, etc.
Listen to Heart	Check for murmurs, abnormal rhythm or rate	These can indicate primary heart disease or other metabolic disease
Listen to Lungs	Check for crackling, wheezing, etc.	These can indicate infection, pneumonia, etc.
Feel the Abdomen	Check for lumps & bumps, any tenderness, etc.	These can indicate organ dysfunction, GI upset, cancer, etc.
Feel the Joints	Check mobility & proper positioning	These can indicate arthritis, injury, growth deformity, etc.

Early Detection, Early Intervention. . . Peace of Mind

Up to ten percent of pets that appear healthy to their owners and veterinarians during their annual exams could still have underlying diseases. Wellness blood screening establishes a baseline for a pet's individual health and can be helpful for future reference if the pet becomes ill. Bloodwork performed when your pet is apparently healthy can help us to evaluate whether your pet's vital organs are functioning properly. Many times, subtle changes in the blood values can lead us to finding a problem long before it makes your pet sick and often simple changes, such as diet modification, can help prolong the time until the pet exhibits symptoms of illness.

The screening tests can also be helpful to determine whether or not a patient is a good anesthetic candidate in the event that surgery is needed. The tests most commonly recommended include a chemistry panel and a complete blood count. A chemistry panel evaluates the kidneys, liver, pancreas, and protein levels. The complete blood count (CBC) can indicate if a pet has anemia, inflammation, infection, leukemia, bleeding problems, and check its hydration status.

Preventative labwork not only helps to detect disease in its early stages, when is most likely to respond to treatment, but also can help you avoid significant medical expense and minimize risk to your pet's long-term health.



Recommended Schedule for Wellness Labwork :

Mini Panel – basic blood chemistry to check functioning of liver, kidneys, & pancreas – at time of spay/neuter and yearly after 1 year of age.

Golden Pals – comprehensive screen for senior pets that includes CBC, chemistry, electrolytes, thyroid, urinalysis, & blood pressure – once yearly after 8 years of age

Preventative care including routine exams, labwork, and monthly parasite prevention is your best arsenal to keeping your furry family member happy and healthy as long as possible. Please contact us to schedule your appointment today and discuss a plan for your pet.

Holidays & Your Pet

As we approach the holiday season it is important to remember that people treats aren't good for pets, and that pets sometimes think decorations look like yummy treats and toys. To have a safe, fun and happy holiday season remember to:

- ◆ Keep people food & treats out of pets' reach & do not let guests feed your pets. There are many holiday foods, including fatty meats, gravies, poultry skin, bones, chocolate and alcohol, that can cause illnesses from vomiting & diarrhea to pancreatitis and other toxic reactions.
- ◆ Keep pets away from the garbage. Use pet-proof containers.
- ◆ Keep decorations out of reach of pets. Ingestion can result in life-threatening emergencies. Even ornaments made from dried food can lead to ailments. And remember, shards from broken decorations can injure paws, mouths and other parts of the body.
- ◆ Extra cords & plugs of holiday lights can look like chew toys to pets – Tape down or cover cords to help avoid shocks, burns, or other serious injuries. Unplug lights when you are not home.
- ◆ Avoid toxic decorations. Bubbling lights contain fluid that can be inhaled or ingested.
- ◆ Keep candles on high shelves. Use fireplace screens to avoid burns. Never leave unattended.
- ◆ Holiday guests & activity can be very stressful or frightening to pets, which could also trigger illness and intestinal upset. Make sure pets have a safe place to retreat in your house. And make sure they are wearing current ID in case they escape out a door when guests come & go.
- ◆ Reduce stress by keeping feeding and exercise on a regular schedule. Always make time to care for your pets.
- ◆ If you suspect that your pet has eaten something toxic, call your veterinarian and/or the Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour emergency hotline at 1-800-548-2423.
- ◆ Now is a good time to double-check smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and other safety devices and replace batteries. Safety, of course, is the key reason -- but here's another good reason. When batteries run low, the devices often emit alert or alarm sounds at frequencies that can be painful and frightening to many pets. If you're not home when the alert/alarm sounds, your pets will have to endure that sound until you return, which can be traumatic. So always keep fresh batteries in those devices.