



Southtown Veterinary Clinic, Inc.

WE TREAT THEM LIKE OUR OWN.
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What's New?

I know that it has been a long time since the last newsletter. When the last newsletter was to come out, we were in the process of trying to find a website host that gave us the number of pages we needed without breaking the bank (those of you who have or manage web sites know what I am talking about). We found one through our online pharmacy provider. Visit the site and send us pictures of your furry friends as well. They need to be in jpeg, tif or gif format. E-mail them to us and we will post them on the Photo Gallery page of our site.

Gates Passing

Some of you who have been in the clinic since the Christmas holiday know that we lost our beloved Gates. In November he was not eating very well. We thought that his teeth were bothering him, so we did a dental, pulled some teeth that had cavities and put him on antibiotics. He seemed to improve for a few weeks and then had another decrease in appetite

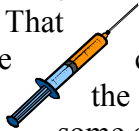


around Thanksgiving. We also noticed at this time his stomach seemed to be more distended. We did blood work to rule out any organ problem (since we got him as an adult, we felt anything could be possible). The only abnormality that we found was that his total protein, globulin and monocyte counts were all slightly elevated. I was suspicious of a disease called FIP at that time, but he did not have enough fluid in his abdomen to do an effective tap to confirm it. Two weeks later we were able to anesthetize him and confirm our suspicions. We

kept him as comfortable as possible for as long as we could, but the week between Christmas and New Years was not a good week for him. He started hiding and had a hard time keeping his body temperature regulated. So on December 30th, we humanly euthanized him and we will inter his ashes on the property.

FIP is a unique disease in that it is not directly caused by a virus or bacteria and there is no way to treat or prevent the disease. It happens when the cat's immune system mounts an immune response to a corona virus. All mammals have a corona virus that causes disease in them, but we can also mount an immune response to other species viruses as well. When the cat is re-exposed to the virus, the antibodies that are formed start attaching themselves to the cat's tissues as well as the virus. This is because the corona virus has an antigen (what we make an immune response against) that mimics the protein surfaces of some of the cat's internal organs. Not all cats will get FIP. I have had some families of British Shorthair cats develop FIP when given their routine vaccinations (corona virus is not in the routine vaccinations for cats).

There is a vaccine that is suppose to help the immune system attack only the virus and not the cat's proteins when re-exposed to the virus, but it is only 65%-75% effective. That means that 25%-35% of the cats who are susceptible to the disease will still get it and some cats may get FIP from the vaccine itself. For this reason, I do not recommend the vaccine.



Since Gates was a very important part of our lives here at the clinic, the staff has started a memorial fund in his honor. The fund will be managed and administered by the staff and is to be used at their discretion to offset costs of treating severely injured or ill strays that are turned over to the clinic for care. We will then find a loving home for the pet once it has recovered. We have a donation jar at the front desk or you can add a donation to your bill at the time of check out. Let the front desk staff know if you want to help out.

So What Food Companies Can We Trust?

Since March, I have answered this question many, many, many times. My answer is always the same. First, buy the most expensive food you can afford. Second, read the label. The rest of this newsletter will be devoted to what to look for and how to know if what you are buying is a good choice.



While it is true that most pet food manufacturers make food for a large number of companies, it is not true that it is all the same and all you are paying for is the name on the label. Sometime, go to the grocery store and buy a can of Freshlike or Green Giant green beans, then buy a can of the store brand. These are usually manufactured in the same plant, but if you open the cans and examine the contents carefully, you will see that the name brands are a brighter green, don't have any stem ends and have no bug bite blemishes on them. On the other hand, the store brand won't be as green and may have one or more of the stem ends or bug bites. While they may have come from the same plant,

they do not contain the same quality of bean. The name brand contains only the best beans run that day, therefore, because there are fewer of these and the laws of supply and demand apply, these cans are more expensive than the store brands. Is there anything wrong with the beans in the store brand can? No, because food meant for human consumption has to adhere to strict standards and cannot fall below certain limits, there is nothing really wrong with the store brand beans, they are just of a lower quality than the name brand beans. To a good degree, this same scenario also applies to the animal food industry, but the regulations are not as strict and some food manufacturers will cut corners to cut the cost of manufacturing food to make a better profit.

In general, if you can buy a 20 or 40 pound bag of food for less than a fast food meal at McDonald's, you are buying a very low quality pet food. Remember, that a McDonald's meal only feeds you for one meal. The bag of pet food will feed your pet for 4-6 weeks depending on the size of the animal and their activity level. That food is probably made from low quality ingredients and this is why it is so cheap. Reading the bag and comparing the guaranteed analysis (the percentages of what is in the food) is no true test of the quality of ingredients in the bag. Chicken



by-product meal made from whole chicken meat has the same protein content as chicken by-product meal made from feathers and chicken feet. The first by-product meal the dog or cat is able to digest and get a good source of protein out of, the second

is not digestible and passes right through. You will pay less for the food made with the second by-product meal, but most of it ends up in your yard or in the litter pan and not in the animal. This means that the animal has to eat more to get the same amount of protein out of the food and there is more waste for you to clean up.

Just like with the ingredient list on the food we buy, the pet food industry must list the ingredients that are in the food with the highest quantity first and so on. For pet food, you want to see that an animal based protein is listed first. Dogs and cats are carnivores and for their metabolism to work the best it needs the majority of their calories to come from animal based proteins. There are other sources of protein that are not as easy for the animals to digest and so should be lower on the ingredient list. One of the main ones is corn gluten meal. Corn gluten, like wheat gluten, is the protein containing component of the corn kernel. It is not an easy protein to digest and while it helps boost the protein level of the food, the animal gets less benefit from it than from animal based proteins. In many of the premium brand foods (Iams, Eukanuba, Hills, Purina and Nutro to name a few) you will see whole corn meal listed as an ingredient. This is a better product, because it contains the germ and endosperm of the kernel as well as the gluten and is a good source for folic acid and other beneficial vitamins. Even if you see the corn meal listed, it should not be the first or, in most cases, the second ingredient listed.

Another tactic that manufactures try to use is visual appeal to the owner. Dogs and cats can see color, but they do not see it in the same spectrum as we do.

Most dog and cat foods should look like the protein they are made from when it is cooked. Buying foods with color added to appeal to us is not always a good thing for your pet. If you see that the color listed is from natural dyes, it is probably extracts from vegetables and fruits. If it just says color added, it is artificial and can cause problems for the animal. I have seen animals that eat foods containing artificial dyes have problems ranging from digestive upset to urinary tract irritation.

There are a few differences that we need to address about wet foods and semi-moist food. The first ingredient in these products may be water. This is perfectly normal and expectable. Canned diets can provide a good source of water for



cats who do not like to drink and have bladder or kidney issues. For the dog, it can provide a larger number of calories per serving than dry food. Semi-moist food, while animals like it, is not always good for them. Again, reading the ingredient list is important. Most of the semi-moist diets that you find in the grocery and pet stores contain propylene glycol. This product is used to keep the food moist and adds sweetness to the diet. The propylene glycol is metabolized in the liver like large sugar molecules are, but we do not know what the by products do to the liver or the rest of the body. There has been some evidence to suggest that it can be a factor in liver disease. Not enough research has been done to substantiate these claims, but I advise owners to avoid these diets. Also, these

foods often have artificial dyes to give it the appealing look of meat and cheese.

I have seen some semi-moist-like diets that do not contain propylene glycol, but have wheat flour as the agent to keep the diet moist. Do not panic if you see wheat flour as an ingredient, it did not cause the food related problems. It was only wheat gluten.

There have always been recipes floating around for making your own dog food and cat food. These diets are not nutritionally complete. They cannot contain all of the vitamins and minerals that dogs and cats need and they end up costing more to make than purchasing the premium diets. Another trend is raw diets. These are diets based on raw meat products but have the vitamins and minerals added. These diets must be used with caution. All of them have been sterilized by radiation per FDA guidelines, but once the food is open, they are prone to growing salmonella and E. coli. For people and animals with normal immune systems, this should not be a problem. For children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with immune systems that are not functioning well due to immunosuppression therapy, chemotherapy or HIV/AIDS, these diets can provide a potential source of exposure to these dangerous bacteria.

So what do I feed my pets and recommend to all of my clients? I feed my upstairs cats Iams Multi-Cat Formula and occasionally give them a canned treat. The dogs eat Eukanuba Veterinary Diets that address their medical needs. The clinic cats eat Iams Multi-Cat and whatever canned food they can “steal” from the patients. I like The Iams Company (maker of Iams, Eukanuba and

Eukanuba Veterinary Diets) because of their science behind the food products they offer and their goal to provide the best pet nutrition available. I tell most clients the story told to me by a former client of mine. This gentleman was a grain broker for Central Soya grain mill here in the Fort Wayne area. He sold loads of grain to pet food companies and human food companies. He sent a load of field corn to the Iams main plant in Ohio. After several initial quality control tests, they deemed that the load of corn, while there was nothing majorly wrong with it, did not meet their test standards and they refused the load. In hopes that he would not have to pay the freight to bring the load back, he called the Keebler Cracker plant in the same area and asked if they would be interested in the corn. The Keebler people said they would have to look at the corn and test it to make sure it was ok. They tested it and said the corn was fine and used it to make Keebler crackers for human consumption. He went out the next day and bought Iams for all of his pets and still feeds that diet to this day. Now, I know that not all of you can afford Iams for your pets. In that case, I then recommend the Purina dog and cat chow line, Beneful, the Purina ONE line or Pedigree.

Some of you may be questioning my loyalty to Iams as the right thing to do since they were the first company implicated when the food scare came out. Iams was only mentioned first because they were the first company to alert the media that there may be a problem with pet foods manufactured by Menu Foods. I received an e-mail at the clinic that Saturday morning from my Iams representative and all the information that I got that first week

came from Iams. I did not get any information from the other companies that they had any food affected until the second week. I was feeding cuts and gravy canned food to my personal cats which ended up being recalled. None of them got ill and I have run blood work on them all recently that showed their kidneys were not affected. From the information I have gotten from my veterinary literature resources and Iams, Hills, Royal Canin and Purina, none of their recalled diets were ever implicated as having caused death or illness from kidney failure. The only diets that have been suggested as causing the problems are those made from lower quality ingredients.

Do not get me wrong, any loss of a pet's life due to negligence is tragic. But not all of the pets that ate the recalled diets became ill with kidney failure and not all of the kidney failure found can be implicated as being caused by the food. As I have told my cat owners, kidney failure is still the number one cause of death in cats and is in the top four of dogs. Some of the cases of animals with elevated kidney enzymes, but who did not show the symptoms of acute kidney failure, cannot be said to be caused by the recalled food. I find young dogs and cats with elevated kidney enzymes because of birth defects; either born with one kidney or only one properly functioning kidney.

The best way to give your beloved pet the best life you can is to feed it the best food you can afford. Have your veterinarian do a full physical exam at least once a year. It



would be best to have twice a year wellness exams so issues can be addressed before they become more serious. Also, have routine blood work performed that checks both kidney and liver function, yearly. These recommendations may vary to monitor ongoing health problems. Remember, your pet's veterinarian is the best source for recommendations to extend you pet's life. If you have any questions, please give our office a call and talk to the staff, they can help you.

Have a great summer,
Dr. Fretz

