Newsletter of the
COMMUNITY PRACTICE SERVICE
College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University
www.vetmed.wsu.edu/ClientED/community_practice.asp
Fall 2005

Terri A. Schneider, DVM
Raelynn Farnsworth, DVM
Matthew Mickas, DVM
GayLynn Clyde, DVM
elective surgeon
Danielle Wallace, RVT

To make an appointment call:
509-335-0711

Canine Salmon Poisoning: A Matter of Life and Death

Bears and cats are notorious for their love of a fresh catch of salmon or other fish. For dogs, however, eating raw salmon, trout, or Pacific giant salamanders can bring about a deadly disease.

"Salmon poisoning disease is very serious and usually fatal if not treated," said Dr. Terri Schneider, head of the Community Practice Service at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Only dogs are susceptible to this disease, which is in fact not a poisoning at all. The majority of dogs that consume or even lick raw fish or objects in contact with contaminated fish can become infected. Of those, about 90 percent that contract salmon poisoning disease will die within 14 days if they are not treated.


Sugar Baby

Exposure to the disease agent occurs when dogs ingest salmon that contain a parasite called Nanophyetus salmincola, that is itself infected with another organism called Neorickettsia helminthoeca. It is this second organism that actually causes the disease in dogs. Infection occurs almost immediately upon ingestion. Signs of the disease usually appear within five to seven days, but some cases have taken as long as 33 days to appear.

Clinical signs include anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, swollen lymph nodes, bleeding from the nose, and eventually, dehydration, shock, and death.

Most cases of the disease occur west of the Cascade Mountains, but there are also cases found in the inland Northwest along rivers where fish migrate. Salmon poisoning is caused by ingesting primarily anadromous fish. These are species of fish that mature in saltwater and swim upstream to spawn and die. This can include sea-run cutthroat trout and steelhead, which are a form of rainbow trout.

It is important to realize that various agencies routinely capture anadromous fish for hatcheries, spawn them out, and then return the carcasses to local waterways to increase stream fertility. The bottom line is, dogs should not be allowed to consume raw fish or any of their waste products in the Pacific Northwest.

Dogs need only consume a minimal amount of the infected fish to contract the disease. Exposure can occur by licking an infected fish or tools in contact with the fish, such as a knife or cutting board. Such was the case with Sugar Baby, a young English springer spaniel that was brought to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital in critical condition.

When she arrived with her owner, Tracy Greer of Deary, Idaho, Sugar Baby had a temperature of 104° F with vomiting and bloody diarrhea. "When our emergency service staff examined Sugar Baby, her gums were pale and jaundiced, she had enlarged lymph nodes, and was breathing heavily," Dr. Schneider said. "Though Tracy was certain that Sugar Baby had no direct contact with fish, her husband had been fishing

Continued on page 2

In this issue:


Cezar

Community Practice Service is published three times a year by Washington State University, PO Box 645910, Pullman, Washington 99164-5910. Issue No. 6. Phone: 509-335-0738. To subscribe, contact Emmy Widman at sunleaf@vetmed.wsu.edu or 509-335-0738. 110006.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
World Class. Face to Face.

Fatty Acids Are Important for Pets!

Like humans, dietary fats such as omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are important nutrients for dogs and cats.

Dietary fats are required for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins like vitamins A, D, K, and E. They are also used as an energy source and are a major component of cell membranes and nervous tissues. Fatty acids have anti-inflammatory effects, and play an important role in skin health, cancer, arthritis, kidney disease, and gastro-intestinal disorders.

Unfortunately, fatty acids are difficult to preserve in prepared diets. Preservatives are necessary to prevent them from turning rancid. Quality dog and cat foods are more likely to have adequate, tested-safe preservation and the necessary amounts of dietary fatty acids. Some dogs and cats also require supplements to their diets because of inadequate amounts in their diet, or a particular deficiency in an individual prompting a need for additional fatty acids. Fish oil in particular is an excellent source of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

Prescription diets are available for dogs and cats. Different ratios and amounts of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids benefit different organ systems. For this reason, prescription diets are formulated to consider which system is targeted, the fatty acid content necessary, and the ratio of fatty acids that will maximize the benefits. Below are some ways fatty acids affect and benefit animals.

Skin: Fatty acid deficiencies cause dry, scaly skin and hair coat in dogs and cats. Deficiencies may impair healing of the skin and predispose animals to skin infections. The use of fatty acid supplements can reduce pruritis (itchiness) in allergic dogs and cats. Even animals fed a balanced diet sufficient in fatty acids have been demonstrated to show improvement when given supplemental omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

Arthritis: Fatty acids have been shown to be helpful in reducing inflammation in certain types of arthritis in dogs and humans. Reducing the inflammation helps to reduce the pain associated with arthritis.

Cancer: Dogs with cancer may experience weight loss in the face of seemingly adequate nutrition. This is because carbohydrate metabolism is altered in cancer patients. Cancer cells use carbohydrates well as energy, but do not use dietary lipids as well. This different metabolism by cancer cells is one reason patients are more fatigued. It has also been shown that omega-3 fatty acids may inhibit tumor growth and the spread of cancer in dogs. There are specially formulated diets available to optimize the balance of fatty acids, carbohydrates, and proteins for canine cancer patients. Owners with dogs that have cancer should discuss the special nutritional needs of their pet with their veterinarian.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Patients with this problem often lose the ability to absorb fat-soluble vitamins with chronic diarrhea, and may benefit from supplemental fatty acids. Fatty acid supplementation may help decrease inflammation in the bowel as well.

To find out if your pet would benefit from fatty acid supplements or a specially formulated diet, contact your veterinarian at the WSU Community Practice Service.

Community Practice Updates

GayLynn Clyde

The WSU Community Practice recently welcomed another member its service, **Dr. GayLynn Clyde**, the team's new community practice surgeon.

Dr. Clyde returns to Pullman after earning her DVM from the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine in 2003, as well as her B.A. in wildlife biology and microbiology. She practiced small animal medicine for two years at the Lewiston Veterinary Clinic before returning to WSU in July. "I'm a Cougar all around," she said. "I really enjoyed being at WSU as a student, so it is fun to be back. I feel very fortunate."

As a clinical instructor, Dr. Clyde helps students gain experience with minor injuries and surgeries, such as lacerations, spays, and neuters. She currently assists with two to five surgeries each day. "I try to make the students' experience as realistic as it can be to a private veterinary practice, but with the benefit of having faculty veterinarians available. We also have the ability to go to our board certified specialists here in the hospital for referrals, which makes WSU a special place to treat animals."

In addition to her veterinary work, Dr. Clyde and her husband farm near Moscow, Idaho, and have a one-year-old son with another on the way. Welcome this busy veterinarian if you see her in the lobby!

Salmon Poisoning *continued from front page*

near Lewiston and the dog may have been in contact with fish 'drippings.' With this information and her condition, Sugar Baby was diagnosed with salmon poisoning and an aggressive treatment regime was started."

Thankfully, most salmon poisoning cases are treatable if caught in time. Diagnostic testing is available to detect the disease. Severely affected dogs may require intravenous fluids; however, if these measures are taken early enough, most dogs recover within a couple of days.

Dr. Adam Mordecai, a WSU internal medicine resident, treated Sugar Baby. In her critical condition, she received intravenous fluids, antibiotics, and blood and plasma transfusions. Sugar Baby soon recovered and was able to return home with her owner.

"It is important that dog owners realize this is not just a coastal problem," Dr. Schneider said. "Salmon poisoning disease is not uncommon in the Lewiston area, and we have also seen patients in our hospital recently infected that live in other areas."

Although the disease is serious, successful treatment is possible and key to saving a dog's life. Concerned owners can came in or call the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital, which offers 24-hour emergency care service, at 509-335-0711.

Seasonal Tips for Pets

When it starts to get cold, will your pet be ready for the fall and winter seasons?

- All pets need shelter from the wind, rain, and snow. It is a good idea to place a door on your dog's shelter or house, and to be sure to provide some warm bedding for them to help combat the cold.
- Pets also need to have access to fresh, unfrozen water. A pet that spends a lot of time outdoors in the cold may also need extra calories because it will use more energy to keep warm. Indoor dogs may benefit from a sweater and booties to keep comfortable in the cold when outdoors.
- With the arrival of hunting season, make sure pets are in safe areas and cannot be mistaken for game. If your dog hunts, make sure to apply tick control and that it is vaccinated for leptospirosis, a serious bacterial disease in dogs that can potentially spread to people. Sources of infection include pond water or puddles contaminated with the bacteria from wildlife urine, so hunting dogs are in greater need of vaccination. Owners should also check their dogs over daily for sporting injuries and foreign objects such as grass awns that may become lodged in the feet, ears, eyes, and nose.
- Halloween is a time when costumed strangers ring on doorbells, and bowls are filled with tempting candy. Keep your pet in a safe place during this time. For anxious pets, make a quiet room available where pets will not get scared or loose. Remember that chocolate can be toxic to pets and ingestion of candy can result in an upset stomach and diarrhea.
- Thanksgiving with a delectable turkey, dressing, gravy, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie can make just about anyone salivate. This can include the family dog and cat, too! Unfortunately, these foods can be a prime source for gastrointestinal illness in our furry friends. Keep your pet's normal diet the mainstay during the holidays.

Buster enjoying a chew toy.

- Christmas will soon be around the corner as well. Don't forget your pets in all the hustle and bustle. Be aware they may be exposed to unwanted stress, such as traveling, houses full of visitors, and other environmental changes in the home like decorations and lights. Holiday decorations can also present hazards to your pets, including holiday trees, ornaments, string lights, tinsel, and plants such as mistletoe. Keep potentially hazardous items away from your pets and out of their mouths.

Grateful Client Program

The Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine is proud to offer its Grateful Client Program. Pet owners now have an opportunity to give back to the veterinary profession in appreciation for the work and service that veterinarians have provided to their animal companions.

The concept is simple: when clients are grateful for the service and care they received from their veterinarian, they can express their appreciation through a gift to the Grateful Client Program.

Washington State University is home to the College of Veterinary Medicine, the fifth oldest veterinary program in the country. State-of-the-art facilities coupled with the excellent knowledge and international expertise of WSU's veterinary faculty is unsurpassed among world-class institutions. Its mission is to share knowledge and provide service to the people of Washington and the Pacific Northwest.

Veterinary clients range from young children with their first hamster to elderly people who rely on service dogs to maintain their independence. The gratitude of K9 police units and working dogs, professional horse handlers, college students who find a purring cat to be the ideal stress reliever, and countless others, is lavished on their veterinarians every day. Veterinarians work in private practice, industry, education, and food safety, and provide expertise to the United States Department of Agriculture and other arms of government. Their existence, though greatly appreciated, is often taken for granted. Rarely do their clients consider what makes it all possible: a professional veterinary education.

The cost of a veterinary education is high, but the value to society is priceless. Currently, the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine is only partially funded by the State of Washington. About two thirds of the college's budget comes from competitive grants, contracts, and private gifts. Through the Grateful Client Program, clients become a principal partner with the college. Caring clients can openly demonstrate their support for a profession that has served them well and will continue to play an essential role in their daily lives.

Donations to the program are tax-deductible and help provide scholarships and student support for outstanding individuals in the DVM program. Funds allow veterinarians at WSU to investigate many aspects of veterinary medicine in order to provide better diagnostic methods and care for animals. Finally, contributions support a variety of educational projects that have been designated by the faculty and college leadership as important priorities within the curriculum, including recruiting and retaining outstanding instructional faculty.

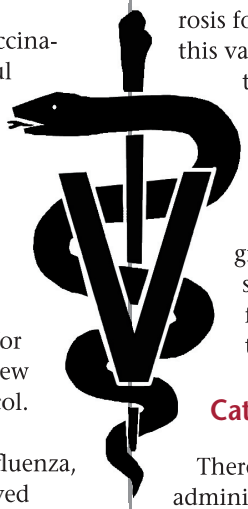
When clients give, they have the opportunity to give in honor of their veterinarian, thus showing appreciation and admiration to both the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine and to a veterinarian who has personally impacted their lives.

If you would like to participate in the Grateful Client Program or for more information, please contact Dr. Richard DeBowes, Chair of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, at 509-334-0779 or debowes@vetmed.wsu.edu, or the development office at the College of Veterinary Medicine: Lynne Haley at 509-335-5021 and lhaley@vetmed.wsu.edu, or Norma Fuentes at 206-219-2430 and fuentes@vetmed.wsu.edu.

Vaccine Updates for Autumn 2005

To keep pets guarded against disease, it is important to keep their vaccinations current. Recent advances in vaccine development for dogs and cats include challenge studies that have been done to establish how long a vaccine remains effective after administration.

The WSU Community Practice individualizes vaccination selections for each patient after taking a careful history from the owner. Our goal is to minimize vaccinations administered to each patient, while maintaining optimal protection against serious infectious diseases.



Dogs

Availability of a **licensed, three-year** vaccine for distemper, adenovirus, and parvovirus (DA2P) for dogs gives us the opportunity to incorporate this new product into our recommended vaccination protocol. (See below)

The older DA2PP (distemper, adenovirus, parainfluenza, and parvovirus) vaccinations canine patients received prior to now are not labeled for three-year-use. We will discuss the best vaccination protocol for each dog when clients come in for their dog's annual exam.

We have also had a number of calls about a new **rattlesnake vaccine.** Like all vaccines, this new product is not without risk. There has been a potential for adverse reactions to this vaccine reported. We do not recommend using it unless your dog is at very high risk of being bitten. Recall too, that about 50 percent of all rattlesnake bites, according to herpetologists that study them, are dry bites, meaning no venom is injected. All these factors and more help us make the best recommendations for each client and their animals.

Rabies: Rabies vaccination should be given to all dogs. We recommend puppies be given their first vaccination when they are 14 weeks old. Follow-up vaccinations should be given at one year, and then every three years after.

DA2PP: Puppies should receive this vaccination at 8, 11, and 14 weeks of age. The DA2P can be given one year later and every three years thereafter. A dog's health status and exposure risk may change this protocol for booster shots. In the past, we have recommended annual vaccination for most dogs in our practice because they tend to be highly social and many travel. We continue to see parvovirus cases and outbreaks of canine distemper, especially in shelter dogs and unvaccinated pets. We currently recommend that each dog considered to be at increased risk of exposure receive booster shots every two years.

Leptospirosis: There have been several cases of canine leptospirosis in Washington in the past year. This is a very serious disease in both dogs and people. All dogs with any risk of exposure should be vaccinated annually. The leptospirosis organism is found in standing water. Domestic animals, wildlife, and rodents are reservoirs for the microorganism in the environment. While the vaccine does not protect against all forms of the organism, it does protect against several types that cause serious disease in humans and dogs. We are currently recommending a four-way vaccine for leptospirosis for dogs at risk of exposure. Puppies should receive this vaccine at 11 and 14 weeks of age, and then annually thereafter. We highly recommend that hunting dogs receive their annual vaccination for this disease one month prior to hunting season.

Bordetella (Kennel Cough): This vaccine is recommended only for dogs that are kenneled in groups or shown. It should be administered three to seven days before potential exposure. It is protective for about four to six months. This is not considered to be an annual vaccine.

Cats

There have been no changes is the frequency of vaccine administration for cats.

Rabies: All cats should receive the rabies vaccine. The hazard to human health is too great to risk having an unvaccinated cat as a pet. At the WSU Community Practice, we use a recombinant vaccine. Kittens should receive the vaccine at 14 weeks of age, and annually thereafter.

FVRCP: An intranasal spray or drop vaccine to protect against feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia should be given to all kittens and adult cats. Kittens should receive the vaccine at 8, 11, and 14 weeks of age, and annually thereafter.

Feline Leukemia (FeLV): This vaccine should be administered annually to cats at risk for exposure to other infected cats. Kittens should receive the vaccine at 11 and 14 weeks of age, and then annually. FeLV can only be transmitted by direct contact with an infected cat shedding the virus. Indoor cats that do not come into contact with outdoor cats do not need to be vaccinated for FeLV. It is also important to remember that this vaccine is not 100 percent protective. Cats that are vaccinated but exposed to diseased cats may still run the risk of contracting FeLV. The reason for giving a less than perfect vaccine is that it does provide a good measure of protection, just not complete protection.

If your cat is due to be revaccinated against feline leukemia virus, we can discuss the use of a transdermal vaccine, which does not require a needle to be administered. To avoid giving kittens three vaccines at one time, the feline leukemia virus vaccine can also be administered at 14 and 17 weeks. The rabies vaccine can also be delayed until 17 weeks of age.

If you have any questions about which vaccines are appropriate for your pet, please call the WSU Community Practice at 509-335-0711.

Orphaned Animals

By Nickol Finch, DVM

So you've stumbled upon an abandoned baby animal. Now what?

Although many people want to help, are you sure that it needs you? Every year, the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is inundated with young wildlife, such as chicks, bunnies, squirrel pups, raccoon cubs, and other wildlife that would be much better off if they were left where they were. Animals do not spend every waking moment with their young. Doing so would soon attract predators. Depending on the animal, parents employ many different strategies for raising their young.

Chicks are helpless when first hatched and hens, as all female birds are known, will spend every daytime minute getting food and bringing it back to their young. After dark they stay with the hatchlings until dawn when they start foraging again. Hatchlings without feathers will not survive very long outside the nest without help. Most of the time, chicks are found relatively near the nest and intruders may get attacked by the parents if they get too close, including well-meaning people.

Look around to locate the nest. If you can, the absolute best thing to do is put the chick back in the nest. Contrary to popular belief, most birds have a poorly developed sense of smell, so they won't abandon their young just because of human scent.

If the nest can't be found, look to see if the parents are around. If so, get a plastic, bowl-sized container, and punch drainage holes in the bottom. Put tissues in the bottom and attach this makeshift nest to a tree or something near where the parents are. Make sure it is in the shade. If the hen can hear the hatchlings, she will care for them, even in two different nests.

If the nest or the parents can't be found, or the chick was caught by a cat or dog, it is best to bring the juvenile animal to a veterinary medical facility like WSU so it can get medical attention as soon as possible. Nestling birds can become dehydrated very quickly and may need prompt treatment.

Fledgling birds are very different than nestlings. These are birds almost ready to be on their own, but not quite. They are in the process of learning how to fly. They are typically seen in the lawn being noisy and waiting for their mother to come feed them. These birds are best left alone, unless injured. Again, if injured it would be appropriate to bring the bird to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. If fledgling birds are on the lawn, keep dogs and cats in the house for a few hours. By then, most birds will disperse to another location as they learn to fly.

Juvenile rabbits or kits are also very rarely orphaned. Doe rabbits do not spend much time with their young during the day. Rather, most of their time is spent with kits after dark. Kits nurse for only 15 minutes or so in a 24-hour period, with five minutes per feeding. Does also make several nests to decrease the chance that predators will find all of their kits. Nests commonly look like a slight depression in the ground and may have some grass, leaves, and fur lining it. Kits are very easily stressed and do not tolerate captivity or handling well.

It is best to leave young animals alone, even if they seem to need help. This young cottontail rabbit survived only 18 days after being removed from its nest by a well-meaning person.

Most people cannot raise a kit by themselves. It will be frustrating and heart breaking. If you find a kit, it is best to leave it where it is. Unless you confirm the doe is dead, or the kit was caught by a cat or dog, there is no need for human intervention. Like many animals, rabbits have evolved to have a much better chance of survival if left alone.

Newborn squirrels are called pups. They are more likely than kits to be truly abandoned, but it is still uncommon. Female squirrels, also known as does, typically use old bird nests or hollow trees as nests, or construct one that appears as a tight bunch of leaves nestled in the fork of a tree. A pup on the ground may have been blown out of the nest or attacked by a male squirrel. In this case, look around to see if there are any more pups down. Then make sure the pup is not obviously injured.

If the squirrel is cold, warm it up in your hands and gently blow warm air on it. Try to find the nest and put the squirrel back into it. If you can't locate the nest, line a box with towels and put the pup in it. Lock up dogs and cats and put the box at the base of the tree. Observe from a distance and make sure that the doe comes to get her pup within a couple of hours. If she doesn't return or if you find a deceased doe, the pup is truly an orphan and it should be taken to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital as soon as possible. This is especially true if there are any wounds or injuries to the pup.

Raising a pup squirrel is a difficult task and should not be attempted for several reasons. Pups may nurse up to every hour and need to be fed throughout the night, an undertaking that most people do not want to attempt. Additionally, even though they are very cute and docile at this age, most squirrels retain that "wildness" and will become aggressive at three months of age. Keeping it may mean an angry squirrel loose in your house.

If you find a young animal and are not sure if it was abandoned, please call the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital at 509-335-0711. Our specially trained staff will help you determine if the animal is truly an orphan and if it needs to be brought to the hospital.

The Exotic and Wildlife Service and the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital specializes in taking care of and rehabilitating wild birds, raptors such as eagles and owls, reptiles, and mammals such as rabbits, mice, raccoons, and squirrels. This service also treats pet birds, ferrets, rabbits, snakes, fish, and other nontraditional pet species.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Community Practice
Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences
Veterinary Teaching Hospital
PO Box 647060
Pullman, WA 99164-7060

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pullman, WA
Permit No. 1

Creating the Perfect Litter Box For Your Cat

If your cat has trouble using its litter box properly, you are not alone.

"Elimination problems with cats are the most frequent behavioral concerns that we are consulted about," said **Dr. Mary Widman**, WSU Veterinary alumna ('83), of Prairie Animal Hospital in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. "There isn't one pat answer we give people. There are always multiple issues that can contribute to the problem. It is a very common situation, and sadly, some frustrated clients consider euthanasia as their final option."

With the right approach, however, many cats can and will change their behavior and learn to use their litter box properly, says **Dr. Julia Brannan**, a veterinarian at the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Pullman who has worked with animals that have behavior problems. "If a cat suddenly develops a litter box problem, whether it is young or old, early intervention is key to changing the behavior. Elimination problems rarely resolve on their own and frequently become more challenging to correct as time passes."

There are many reasons why cats display this behavior, and several methods owners can employ to correct it. "Elimination problems can unintentionally be client-motivated, such as if the litter box was not cleaned enough, or if it was placed in an area difficult for a cat to get to," Dr. Brannan said. "It can also occur if the cat develops a medical condition, like arthritis, that might make it difficult for the cat to reach a litter box that is down stairs or in a place it must jump to reach. Additional stress placed on the cat can also cause elimination problems, such as if a new baby or cat joins the family."

Cats caught littering outside of their box should not be punished by scolding, rubbing their nose in the mess, or other physical methods, says **Erica Gillum**, WSU veterinary technician who has worked with animals with behavior problems. "Cats don't soil out of the litter box because they are mad or spiteful. It's a communication that there is something unsatisfactory with an aspect of the litter box or about a stressor in the environment," she said. "Punishment will not help resolve the problem, can cause the cat anxiety, and may make the situation worse. It also breaks down the pet-owner bond."

Correcting the Problem

The first thing to consider is the **number of litter boxes** available for each cat that lives inside. "The general rule is that owners should have at least one more litter box than there are cats in the house," Dr. Brannan said. "So if an owner has two cats, there should be at least three litter boxes."

Location is another important issue to think about. First, litter boxes should be placed close to where a cat spends most of its time, but not all in the same area. A good place is somewhere easily accessible, quiet, out of the main traffic areas of the house, and where dogs or children cannot get into them.

Litter type can also be an important factor for a cat, but that does not mean owners should rush out to buy the most expensive brand. "Most cats prefer sandy, clumping, non-scented cat litter that is spread in a box one and a half to two inches deep," Dr. Brannan recommended. "Most cats develop a preference in litter by the time they are four weeks old, so the brand you use should be what the cat is used to," she said.

"If you get an older cat as a pet and are not sure what it prefers, a good idea is to place a pair of litter boxes together with different brands to see which the cat prefers more," Gillum said. Occasionally, some companies may change the formula of their cat litter, so owners who always use the same brand may still experience an elimination problem with their cat.

Another cause for elimination problems may be the **litter box size and type**. "Litter boxes should be quite large," Dr. Brannan said. "Even 'jumbo' commercial litter boxes may be too small for some cats. A (Rubbermaid ™) sweater storage box is generally the right size, and can be used as a litter box if an entrance hole is cut into one side."

Hooded litter boxes may also work, but problems can arise with this type of box if there is more than one cat in the home. "There is only one entrance and exit to a hooded box, so a cat experiencing stress with another feline housemate can be 'ambushed' at the entry," Dr. Brannan said.

A **cleaning schedule** is also important. Litter boxes ideally should be scooped of solids twice a day, and the litter should be completely dumped out and the box cleaned every two or three weeks. "Use a fragrant-free soap instead of bleach or other strong smelling cleaners," Dr. Brannan said. "If the box still smells after it has been washed, then it is time for a new litter box."

Depending on the type of litter and the contact of urine with the box, owners may need to replace some litter boxes more frequently in their home than others. A self-cleaning litter box may also work well if it operates properly and the cat is not afraid of the sound. This type of litter box should also have its reservoir dumped daily.

For more information about preventative measures for feline elimination problems, contact the WSU Community Practice at 509-335-0711.

9/05 110006