

# Newsletter of the COMMUNITY PRACTICE SERVICE

College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University  
www.vetmed.wsu.edu/ClientED/community\_practice.asp

Summer 2008

## Addicted to Chocolate

### WSU flooded with wishes of goodwill and speedy recovery

At first glance, Chocolate appears to be an 18-month-old Chesapeake Bay retriever at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital trying to recover from serious injuries. But a closer look reveals a happy-go-lucky dog that has captured hearts worldwide.

For at least six months, the injured canine was seen wandering through farm fields north of Pasco, Washington. He'd suffered multiple fractures to both front legs, and shied away from anyone who tried to befriend him. Chocolate had taught himself to walk primarily by using his back legs. When a good-hearted neighbor finally coaxed the big dog in, Chocolate soon found himself at the Meadow Hills Veterinary Clinic in Kennewick, Washington, in the hands of veterinarian Dr. Janine Swailes. X-rays revealed old, abnormally healed fractures in both forelegs. Within 48 hours, a volunteer brought Chocolate to WSU for advanced care.

"The injuries were extreme," said WSU veterinary surgeon Dr. Steve Martinez, who has overseen Chocolate's care. "He reminded me of a T-Rex in the way he has taught himself to walk, most likely because of the severe pain from his broken bones."

Chocolate's story so captured the hearts of southeastern Washington residents that donations began to pour in. Part of his endearing story includes his incredibly good-natured attitude and his nubby yellow chew toy, an object

Chocolate carried throughout his ordeal. Nearly \$30,000 was collected in just a few days for the dog's care, with over 70 families volunteering to adopt him when he's healed.

At WSU, three separate surgeries were needed to realign and strengthen his bones, and to help return range of motion to joints that were partially fused. Extensive physical therapy was



Chocolate enjoying some outdoor time while rehabilitating at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

also required. Fortunately, WSU has recently upgraded its post-operative rehabilitation facilities with a state-of-the-art tool. A new underwater treadmill for physical therapy was purchased and installed with funds from two grateful donors to the college.

"All things considered, Chocolate is doing very, very well," said Dr. Martinez. "The key obstacle has been in rebuilding the lost muscle

Matthew Mickas, DVM  
Raelynn Farnsworth, DVM  
Nickol Finch, DVM  
Helen Chapman, DVM  
Tami Montgomery, RVT  
Melody Gerber, RVT  
Teresa Crawford Carson, LVT

To make an appointment call:  
**509-335-0711**



### In this issue:

Addicted to Chocolate .....	1
Grapes and raisins linked to kidney failure in dogs .....	2
Vacation planning for pets .....	3
Lucas House offers lodging for out-of-town pets, owners .....	4
Grieving? You don't have to be alone .....	4
Help! My pet was sprayed by a skunk! .....	5
Why is my pet itching? .....	6

Community Practice Service is published four times a year by Washington State University, PO Box 645910, Pullman, Washington 99164-5910. Issue No. 13. Phone: 509-335-0738. To subscribe, contact Emmy Widman at esunleaf@vetmed.wsu.edu or 509-335-5389.

6/08 123448

see **CHOCOLATE**, page 2

WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY

World Class. Face to Face.

## CHOCOLATE | *continued from page 1*

strength in his front legs and shoulders. We're having some real success."

Despite his painful injuries, the team at WSU says Chocolate has always continued to maintain a happy and even playful attitude. The WSU team hopes to have him strong enough to be released by early summer.

To read more about Chocolate, go to the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine's Web site at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/features/chocolate](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/features/chocolate).

### The whole world is watching Chocolate!

During his stay at WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine, a number of people have sent in messages of good will.

Thank you for all the updates on Chocolate. I check on his progress every day and I'm so happy he is in such good hands.

—Linda, Knoxville, Tennessee

Thank you for all you are doing to help Chocolate. The care and support the WSU Vet School is providing is just another reason I am proud to be a Cougar.

—Andrea, Seattle, Washington

Keep up the good work and send Chocolate some love from the East Coast :)

—Stefenie, New York

Thank you so much for looking after him so royally!

—Vicki, Perth, Australia

## Grapes and raisins linked to kidney failure in dogs

Recently grapes and raisins have been found to cause acute kidney failure in dogs that eat them, much in the same way that certain types of lilies cause the same effect in cats. Dogs are the main animals that suffer renal or kidney failure following exposure to grapes or raisins, although there are anecdotal reports of cases in cats and ferrets. But just what makes grapes or raisins toxic to dogs is not known, nor at what amount. As little as five grapes have been known to cause kidney failure in some dogs, while other dogs can eat grapes for years and not seem to be affected at all.

"Grapes are worse than chocolate in that the toxic amount has not been established and the fatality rate of affected animals appears to be a lot higher," said Dr. Patricia Talcott, a WSU associate professor and board-certified veterinary toxicologist for the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Pullman. "With chocolate exposure, it is a lot easier to assess risk. It is hard to predict when a grape or raisin poisoning will occur because some dogs don't seem to have a problem with them, while others will develop renal disease following ingestion. But it can strike at any time, even a dog that has been exposed and eaten grapes or raisins many times previously."

Any type or variety of grape or raisin can induce acute renal failure in dogs, be it seeded or seedless, off the vine, homegrown or store bought, fresh, cooked, or sun dried. Even grape crushings or skins can apparently cause a problem.

"Grapes and raisins are not a food that dogs necessarily have an affinity for and there is not any particular taste to my knowl-

edge that attracts them to these food items," Dr. Talcott said. "It is just dog behavior if they decide to nibble on them."

If a dog eats grapes or raisins, vomiting and diarrhea are

often the first signs of toxicity. This usually occurs within the first few hours of ingestion, and owners may see pieces of the grapes or raisins in the vomit or stool. Additional signs include weakness, a loss of appetite, increased drinking, and abdominal pain and discomfort. Acute renal failure can occur within 24 to 48 hours, often leaving a dog with a poor long-term prognosis.

If grape or raisin ingestion is suspected, it is extremely important to seek medical attention for the dog as soon as possible. If the dog is seen within the first few hours after eating grapes or raisins, a veterinarian may induce vomiting or perform a stomach lavage to pump any undigested grapes or raisins out. Activated charcoal may also be used to absorb any remaining toxins, followed by intravenous fluid therapy for several days to help prevent acute kidney damage.

"Some people innocently give their dogs grapes because they think it is good for them," Dr. Talcott said. "But until we know the toxic principle and toxic dose, don't allow dogs to have access to grapes or

raisins and don't ever feed them any. I wouldn't even give them to cats."

If you suspect grape or raisin poisoning in your dog, contact the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital immediately at 509-335-0711. Emergency services are available 24 hours a day.



## Vacation planning for pets

Vacations take planning and time to prepare. For pet owners, part of the planning includes what to do with their animals while away, whether they come along or stay behind.

People who want to vacation without their pets must decide where to leave them. Some people are able to hire house sitters who look after them, or have friends that will take them in. But many look to pet boarding facilities to take care of their cherished animals. If you are a pet owner and unfamiliar with a boarding facility, there are several things to do and questions to ask that can help when choosing one.

First, contact the facility you are interested in early and make sure they have room for your pet when you know you will be away. "Early" in some cases may mean six to twelve months in advance. Next, plan an unannounced visit to check things out for yourself.

"Interview the staff, take a tour, and make sure you feel comfortable with the people that work there, the facility, and their schedule," said Dr. Raelynn Farnsworth, a WSU Community Practice veterinarian. "Find out how many times a day they walk dogs, or if they have a fenced-in run or area for pets to exercise. Also note how often they feed and water pets, and the vaccine protocol they require before boarding an animal.

"At a minimum, they should require that dogs be vaccinated for rabies, distemper, and parvovirus, and cats should be protected with the rabies and FVRCP vaccinations," she said. "Some facilities may also require dogs be vaccinated for kennel cough, and may require preventative treatments against fleas and ticks."

It is also important to note how sanitary the facility is and how frequently the kennels and cages are cleaned. Take note how friendly, caring, and cooperative the staff is, whether round-the-clock supervision is provided, and what their protocol is if a pet becomes sick or if there is an emergency. Also be sure they can provide any specialty care your pet may require, and let them know if your pet is aggressive in any circumstances. Additionally, check to see if you can bring your own pet food and water for your animal, as well as familiar toys and bedding.

"It's always a good idea to bring your pet's food to prevent gastrointestinal upset," Dr. Farnsworth said. "Some people also bring their own water, especially for pets used to well water; some pets have a problem drinking city water due to the chlorine smell. It may also make pets feel better and more at home if they can come with their own toys or bedding. Some facilities discourage that, but bringing familiar objects might be a good idea."

Once the big day arrives, make sure that you provide the staff with any medications, instructions, and contact information for you and your veterinarian, and that you have labeled any items you brought for your pet.

"Boarding facilities usually cost \$15 to \$30 a day, depending on the services they provide," she said. "There are a few options in the Moscow-Pullman area. Professional pet sitters may also be available in a particular area to come to your house and check on pets."

This may be something to look into if a pet owner needs supervision for a puppy. "I would advise against boarding puppies that are going through potty training because it is hard to keep them on their schedule," Dr. Farnsworth said. "If their routine gets bro-



Fourth-year veterinary student Alaina Hoffman with Uma.

ken, they will likely revert to being untrained again. It is better if a friend or pet sitter can take the puppy into their house and maintain a schedule close to what you have established."

### Vacationing with a pet

There is also plenty of planning necessary if a pet owner is taking a pet along for a vacation. First, make sure the pet's vaccinations are up to date before leaving. Remember to carry a copy of your pet's current rabies certificate when traveling together, as well as a health certificate if it is required, especially if traveling by air or to another country. It is also important to research any restrictions that would prevent your pet from returning home with you or result in it being quarantined when you reenter the country. If there is any doubt, a current health certificate is always cheaper than a costly delay at a border. Contact your veterinarian for current recommendations. If in doubt, consider boarding a pet or making arrangement for your pet to stay home.

Additionally, it is important to apply preventative treatments against fleas, ticks, and, if traveling to warmer areas, heartworm. Any medication or special food that your pet needs should be taken in the original vials or containers.

If traveling by car, attach the leash while the dog is still in the car and keep cats in their carriers before opening doors or windows to prevent them from running away. If your pets are prone to carsickness, call the Community Practice Service for suggestions that may help. Also, never leave a pet or a child in the car on a warm day, even for a few minutes.

When traveling, it is also critical to have more than one form of identification on your pet in case it gets lost. Consider a microchip for permanent identification. If possible, attach a phone number where you will be staying to your pet's collar. And for traveling ease, call ahead or check the internet for pet-friendly hotels.

Bon Voyage!

## Lucas House offers lodging for out-of-town pets, owners

Often, animals and their owners travel great distances for extensive care and a lengthy stay at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Staying in local hotels can get very expensive quickly. Thankfully, clients have an extraordinary alternative.

The Lucas House was founded by Carmel Travis in 1999. The name honors her Shetland sheepdog, Lucas, who had extensive treatment at WSU's teaching hospital for acute renal failure. Travis is a dedicated animal rescue volunteer and, besides having her own animals treated at WSU, she is a frequent visitor to many of the staff and students. During her many hours in the teaching hospital, Travis realized that out-of-town people with pets had nowhere to stay for prolonged treatment except commercial lodging.

The Lucas House operates in much the same way as the Ronald McDonald Houses for ill children and their parents. Travis says

the Lucas House "is the best value on the Palouse," with nightly rates far below par locally. Travis generously donates a portion of the proceeds from the Lucas House to the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Lucas House requires a two night minimum stay but there is no maximum time limit for guests and their pets. The longest stays are usually about three weeks for radiation therapy for cancer.

Nestled in the rolling hills of the Palouse, the Lucas House is an attractive four-room apartment in Travis's

### Shadow enjoying the grounds of Lucas House.

home. Essentially, it occupies the entire bottom floor of the rural Whitman County house.

Lucas House has all the amenities a traveler could want, including a fully equipped kitchen and a bedroom with a queen-sized bed, pillow top mattress, and luxurious, high thread count bedding. There is even a hide-a-bed for additional guests. Other features include a living room with a flat screen satellite televi-



Cody with owner Jan Hawks at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

sion, video library, exercise bicycle, and wireless internet. Colorful artwork of pets adorns the walls. There is a small library of veterinary medical books so guests can research their pet's health issues.

"The setting is picture perfect, with evergreen trees and the rolling hills of the Palouse surrounding Lucas House," said Travis of her home, which she shares with her partner, Jeff Priebe. "Guests enjoy seeing deer on our property and listening to the birds sing. It is a peaceful, restful, healing environment for both people and pets."

Travis says guests write many nice comments in the guest book and often interact with Travis throughout their stay, sometimes joining her for dinner. Guests share their concerns about their pets and ask questions. "We really do care about them and try to help them in any way possible," said Travis.

Travis estimates that there have been about 100 people and pets who have stayed at Lucas House since its opening. One of these was Jan Hawks and her golden retriever, Cody, from Casper, Wyoming. Hawks knew she was going to have to leave her motel when the Veterinary Teaching Hospital staff broke the news to her that Cody would have to stay for three weeks of treatment with radiation therapy. Faced with the prospect of having to leave Cody for all that time because she had no place to stay, "I was quietly weeping in the hospital lobby when Carmel asked me what was wrong." When Travis learned of her situation, she told Hawks about the Lucas House, which Hawks was grateful to take advantage of. "I can't say enough about it," said Hawks. "It is such a gentle place."

Reservations for the Lucas House may be made by calling Carmel Travis at the Lucas House at 509-332-5204 or at her Summit Realty office in Pullman at 509-332-2255.

## Grieving? You don't have to be alone

Have you lost a beloved animal companion? Perhaps you know someone who has. The WSU College of Veterinary Medicine has a Pet Loss Hotline for those who would like to reach out for a caring listener. In addition, WSU's Pet Memorial Program offers families a wonderful way to memorialize and celebrate the life of their pet while supporting the education of future veterinary care providers.

To contact the Pet Loss Hotline, call 509-335-5704 or e-mail at [plhl@vetmed.wsu.edu](mailto:plhl@vetmed.wsu.edu).

For more information about the WSU Pet Memorial Program or to make a donation, contact Tim Osborn at 509-335-9516 or [tosborn@vetmed.wsu.edu](mailto:tosborn@vetmed.wsu.edu). Information can also be found online at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-prd/memorial.aspx](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-prd/memorial.aspx).

# Help! My pet was sprayed by a skunk!

## Getting rid of the smell, and other tips for keeping your pet well-groomed during the summer

Dogs love to romp around outdoors, but sometimes they come back a bit smelly. A bath will usually fix the problem, but it is best to use a shampoo formulated for veterinary use. Human products can cause skin irritation. It helps to bathe dogs on a regular schedule to keep their coats fresh, in addition to “emergency” baths if they found something unpleasant to roll in. But if your dog has been sprayed by a skunk, bathing the animal with shampoo or tomato juice probably won’t work well to remove the odor.

Skunk spray is comprised of natural oils, which is why it is hard to remove, but hydrogen peroxide or white vinegar may help to dissolve it. One home-made recipe that may work includes a mixture of one quart 3 % hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda, and one teaspoon of liquid soap. Mix the solution in an open container and don’t store any that is left over. For large dogs, it might help to double the recipe.

Another recipe includes a mixture of one-third part white vinegar with two-thirds part water. These solutions are not harmful to pets, but it should only be used on their fur and not in their eyes. Do keep in mind that skunk spray can burn and sting a pet’s eyes. If your pet was sprayed in the face, the first step to take is to wash its eyes with water or a sterile saline solution.

When washing, use rubber gloves to keep the skunk oil off your skin while rubbing in or shampooing the sprayed areas, and then rinse your pet with warm water. Avoid wetting the dog all over because it may spread the skunk oil. Skunk odor is very powerful, so sprayed pets will still likely smell a little, even after their bath, and it may be a few days before you stop noticing it.

### Other grooming issues

Grass awns and burrs frequently get matted in dog and cat hair during the spring, summer, and fall. It is a good idea to brush pets down every day to remove matted hair and check their paws, ears, and nose for plant materials after they come in from their outdoor adventures. Outdoor pets also need protection

from ticks, fleas, and possibly flies. There are a number of preventative treatments available, and they often need to be administered every month or so during the warm months.

When the days get warmer, many pets shed their winter coat. Some animals have fur that act as insulation against heat, but other animals may benefit from having their coat clipped shorter. Call your groomer or the WSU Community Practice Service for suggestions.

Toenails are another grooming consideration. A pet’s toenails grow continuously, just like human nails. Dogs and cats are less likely to injure their nails and toes if they are kept short. Also, short nails cause less damage to furnishings and other pets. Weekly to monthly practice will reduce your pet’s anxiety about having its nails trimmed and make the job easier on both of you. We would be glad to show you how to trim your pet’s nails and offer additional advice on the care and cleanliness of any animal.

Oral care is another important part of keeping pets healthy and well-groomed. Poor dental health in pets can lead to bad breath, tooth loss, infections, malnutrition, and a host of other medical problems. The WSU Community Practice Service provides annual physical examinations and regular dental cleanings to identify and prevent dental diseases. We can also show you how to examine your pet’s mouth for signs of dental problems.

To keep your pet’s teeth healthy at home, you can brush their teeth, feed a dental-formulated diet, and give your pet dental chews to prevent plaque from building above the gum line. Owners can also apply OraVet Plaque Prevention Gel or other commercial products to help prevent plaque and tartar buildup. Contact us for brushing tips and additional dental care information for pets or look at the American Animal Hospital Association’s dental care guidelines for dogs and cats at [www.healthypet.com](http://www.healthypet.com).

For more summertime pet tips, including gardening hazards, sunburns, heat stress, exercise, and holiday festivities, read the summer 2007 issue of the WSU Community Practice Newsletter at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/newsletters](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/newsletters).



## Why is my pet itching?

Fleas are often suspected when people see their pets scratching. After all, fleas cause itching, right? While a possibility, fleas are not a large problem in the Inland Northwest area. Fleas usually flourish in warmer, more humid regions. Fleabites and flea saliva can cause allergic reactions in affected animals. In this region, itching pets are more likely suffering from inhaled allergies related to pollens and grasses, or food allergies.

An allergy is when an animal's immune system recognizes a certain substance as foreign and develops an immune response to fight it off. Signs of seasonal or chronic allergies in pets include chewing, licking, head shaking or rubbing, and scratching. Over time, a dog or cat may develop scabs around the ears, head, and neck, ear infections, anal gland problems, moist eczema otherwise known as "hot spots," or even hair loss. If your pet is experiencing these symptoms, call us for an appointment so we can provide a complete workup to find the source of the problem and develop a treatment plan.

When allergies are involved, animals must be exposed to the offending substance more than once for its immune system to react. This is why a cat or dog can have



an allergic response to a food in its diet, even if it has been eating that food for years without any problem. If an animal has an adverse reaction the first time it is exposed to a food, such as vomiting or diarrhea rather than itchiness, it is most likely exhibiting a food intolerance. The majority of food allergies in pets occur between two and six years of age, but can take place as early as five months to as late as 12 years.

Other causes of itchiness include fly bites, parasites such as mites, fungal infections like ringworm, and yeast and bacterial infections, such as moist skin infections stemming from moisture on the skin from rain, ponds, or lake water.

Aside from chronic allergic reactions, bee stings and spider bites may also cause an acute allergic response in some animals. Symptoms may include a swollen muzzle, swollen eyes, hives on the body, and breathing problems. If your pet is bitten or stung, carefully remove the stinger and watch the area for an allergic reaction. It can also help to wash the area and apply a cold compress to the affected area. If a reaction occurs, or

if there have been several wasp or bee stings, bring your animal in immediately for veterinary attention.

## Want to know more about the Community Practice and small animal specialty services, or receive our quarterly newsletter online?

Visit the WSU Veterinary College Web site at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/smallAnimalServices.aspx](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/smallAnimalServices.aspx), or subscribe to the online newsletter at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/newsletters/online.asp](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/newsletters/online.asp).

Also feel free to call 509-335-0711 for **veterinary appointments** or **emergency care**.