



Monroe Pet Press



*r*ounsed Quarterly by the MONROE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
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Monroe Animal Hospital Celebrates Our 4th Anniversary

April 26, 2012 will mark our 4th year since we opened our doors. It seems like only yesterday that the Monroe Animal Hospital was under construction and now we have seen over 2000 pets. We also regularly have volunteers from local middle and high schools observe and have even had interns from the Middlesex Community College Veterinary Assistant program.



As the hospital has grown, we have expanded our hours. We now have appointments in the evening three nights per week.

Even though the hospital is still relatively new we continue to offer new services. During the last year we added low-level laser therapy and acquired an ultrasound unit for in-house use. Our current laboratory offers twice daily pick-up so many routine tests that are taken in the morning can have results available to us the same day.

We look forward to many more years of serving the local communities pet care needs. We thank all our valued clients for their support, enthusiasm, and referrals.

Giardia

One of the most common stool parasites that we diagnose in dogs and cats is giardia.

This common parasite is caused by a microscopic organism called a protozoan. It has small whip like structures called flagella which it uses to swim with.

They live as a form called a trophozoite in the intestine where it causes diarrhea. In fresh stool samples, trophozoites can sometimes be seen. They swim around in a jerky fashion characteristic of flagellates and appear as a funny face (the two nuclei form the eyes and median bodies form the mouth).



The organism forms cysts when shed from the intestine. These cysts die with drying but when cool and wet the cyst can live for many months ready to infect a new host. Contaminated water is the classical source of a *Giardia* infection, but it is also commonly seen in kennel and petstores.

Since the organism is only shed intermittently it is missed on routine fecal microscopic examination

approximately 30% of the time. What has made *Giardia* testing much more accurate is the development of a commercial ELISA test kit. A fecal sample is tested immunologically for *Giardia* proteins. At the Monroe Animal Hospital we



routinely run this test with all dog and cat stool specimens.

Giardia is detectable in a patient's feces 5-16 days after infection and can lead to diarrhea and soft stools. While people can also be affected by diarrhea it is unclear what percentage of pet cases are potentially transmissible to people. Therefore we recommend that all pet owners wash their hands after handling pets and especially before eating. Most people become infected with *Giardia* not from their pets but by drinking contaminated water, which

typically is tap water from a contaminated lake or stream.

The traditional treatment for giardia is an antibiotic called metronidazole. Unfortunately, this medication is currently only about 67% successful. What has been shown to be the most reliable treatment is a broad spectrum dewormer called panacur. Often both medications are used simultaneously. Since giardia cysts can stick to the fur of the infected patient and be a source for re-infection, we recommend bathing affected animals at least once during the course of treatment. To ensure success of treatment, we typically will recheck a stool specimen 3-4 weeks after treatment is finished. It is important to note that some patients will remain positive on the ELISA test for weeks to months after treatment but may not require further treatment if no cysts are seen.

Allergy Season is Coming!

Just like people our four legged friends can be affected by allergies. Common allergies in pets include flea bite allergies, inhalant allergies, and food allergies.

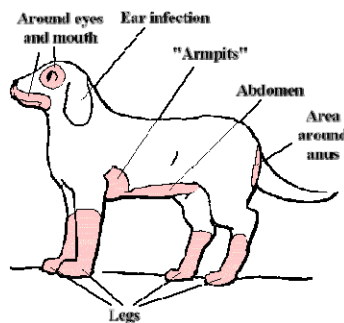
Unlike humans, most dogs and cats that are affected by allergies do not sneeze, cough, or wheeze. Typical signs in animals include scratching and biting, red skins, or recurrent ear and/or skin infections. In fact 90% of animals with repeat ear infections probably have an underlying allergy as a cause.

Animals that are allergic to flea bites can demonstrate signs due to the presence of only one flea. Even indoor animals can be affected, and last year we saw a large number of indoor cats with flea problems. All dogs and cats should be on an appropriate preventative such as Vectra 3D or Certifect for dogs and Revolution for cats. Due to the mild winter and concern about year-round exposure we recommend that flea and tick preventatives be used in all patients year-round.

Inhalant allergies, otherwise known as atopy, are a common cause of discomfort in pets. Typically atopic animals have a set season for discomfort which corresponds to what the animal is allergic to (pollen, ragweed, mold, etc.). Most animals that have atopy develop signs between one and five years of age. Certain breeds are known to be higher risk

including golden retrievers, west highland white terriers, bulldogs, and shar peis.

Typically atopic dogs respond quickly and dramatically to cortisone type medications; however due to side effects their use should only be short-term. 50% of atopic dogs can be helped with antihistamines but in only 25% of these cases will the



best antihistamine be found initially. It also does not seem to matter whether newer or older antihistamines are used. The effectiveness of antihistamines can often be enhanced through the use of fatty acids. Regular bathing is also helpful for

allergic dogs in order to both reduce skin infections and cutaneous absorption of allergens. For resistant cases a medication called Atopica is often very effective when antihistamines are not helpful. Also allergy testing through blood or skin tests and immunotherapy may be considered.

Another common cause of allergies in dogs is food allergies. It is important to note that food allergies can develop over time to common proteins in dogfoods such as beef, chicken, wheat, or soy. Therefore changing brands is often of little benefit. A recent study found that over the counter novel protein diets that contain venison, fish, or other proteins have a high percentage of contamination with other proteins; therefore their use initially is not recommended.

To date blood tests and skin tests have NOT been shown to be a good method for diagnosing food allergies. Therefore diagnosis is usually made by changing the pet's diet to a new protein source or a protein source that has been altered or hydrolyzed so that the immune system does not react to it. Typically pets with skin signs of food allergy may take four to 12 weeks to show signs of improvement. If seen, then the diet is continued indefinitely. It is important to note that during the initial trial no other foods, treats, snacks, or flavored items should be given.

Despite the frequency of allergies in pets there are many options for treatment to help them enjoy the warmer months with a decreased risk of discomfort.