

WELLNESS:

FOR YOUR PETS, TOO

by Suzanne Swarengen, DOM, AP

Pets are an integral part of the family for many households. A sick animal or nagging ailment can create stress for family members. This is certainly not conducive to a happy household. There are several things pet owners can do to ensure quality of life in their beloved pets.

PURE FOOD AND WATER

Beginning with the basics, be aware that not all pet food is created equal. Feeding good quality food to your pet is essential for skin, kidney and digestive health, and you must read labels like you would for your groceries. Bright or unnatural colors are a good indicator of artificial ingredients to avoid. There are many affordable brands that focus on quality ingredients without harmful preservatives. The phrase "you are what you eat" applies to animals, too. Also, be sure there is always plenty of good quality chlorine-free filtered water available for your pet. Hydration is as important to their kidneys and health as it is to ours. Following these simple guidelines can save thousands on veterinary bills and prolong the life of your family companion.

HOLISTIC TREATMENT FOR HEALTH

Like humans, animals can experience troublesome ailments, such as skin conditions, digestive issues and osteoarthritis. There are many natural solutions to get your pet's health back on track after you have consulted with a trusted veterinarian to rule out serious conditions. For most skin problems, such as flaking or itching, flaxseed or flaxseed oil have proven beneficial for skin and coat health. There are flax-based food supplements available for animals, which are palatable and convenient. Apple cider vinegar made with garlic is a good blood tonic and helps deter fleas and ticks. A few drops per day mixed in with food will help to prevent skin problems caused by these parasites. For digestive upset, the homeopathic remedy nux vomica is recommended. It is available over the counter and can be administered by adding it to their water. One can also obtain herbal essences formulated for animal digestive issues. For short-term diarrhea, psyllium husks or slippery elm bark powder will congeal loose stool and soothe the intestines. These can easily be administered through a

portion of soft food. Arthritis commonly develops in animals as they age. It is as debilitating for them as it is for people, and there is no reason for them to suffer. In mild cases, the condition may be relieved with anti-inflammatory supplements, such as flaxseed or MSM (methylsulfonylmethane). Glucosamine and chondroitin are wonderful for additional joint support and prevention of further degeneration. Acupuncture is another option. Animals typically respond very quickly to Acupuncture treatment – better than most humans.

SAFE AND STRESS FREE

Another issue that can be addressed at home are natural remedies for emotional-based situations. In South Carolina, we experience thunderstorms on a regular basis. The noise and barometric pressure associated with these storms create fear and panic for many pets. A simple solution, which is safe and effective, is a Bach Flower formula called Rescue Remedy. This combination of herbal essences has a calming effect without any side effects. It is available in many pharmacies and health food stores. Simply put a few drops in their water, directly on their gums, paw pads or behind the ears. This remedy is good for any emotionally charged situation originating from stress or fear.

It is important to keep our family companions' well-being in mind. Prevention is as vital to their health as it is with humans. Providing them with quality food, water and activity will ensure fewer vet bills. There are many simple solutions to common ailments, including those listed in this article. However, should a concern arise, never allow time to pass before consulting a professional. Animals often show symptoms after a condition has progressed. Addressing the problem quickly will lead to a faster recovery, which will enable you to enjoy the company of your furry family member for years to come.

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