



“Fix” Solves Many Problems



Spaying or neutering is one of the most important preventive health care measures that can be done for a pet. Our communities face serious pet overpopulation problems and preventing dogs and cats from reproducing decreases the numbers of healthy animals destroyed each year for lack of a loving home. However, there are also significant health benefits to the individual pet provided by spaying and neutering.

For male animals, neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and reduces the risk of prostate enlargement and infection, particularly later in life. Most importantly, neutering reduces testosterone related behaviors which place the pet at risk for infectious disease and injury. Neutering greatly decreases the male dog and cat’s tendency for inter-male aggression and roaming. For cats in particular, this change will significantly decrease the chances of FeLV (Feline Leukemia) and FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) transmission as well as bacterial infection from cat bites. For dogs, the intact male is at risk for obtaining sexually transmitted diseases such as, brucellosis, which also causes serious illness in humans. For both dogs and cats neutering reduces the risk of being hit by a car as their tendency to roam is decreased. Neutering also reduces behaviors which can be bothersome to pet owners. For example, all intact male cats will spray and their urine has a particularly pungent odor which prevents them from being housed indoors.

For the female cat and dog, spaying decreases the risk of breast cancer. Spaying before the first heat cycle provides the best protection. There is some protection if the procedure is performed between the first and second heat cycle but after that period, there is no additional protection. The majority of

intact females will develop mammary nodules as they age and fifty percent of these nodules are malignant cancers. Female dogs are also at risk for developing life-threatening uterine infections every time they go through a heat cycle and this risk increases as they age. When this occurs, the dog must be spayed immediately necessitating surgery on a very sick, older patient instead of a young, healthy one. Intact females are at higher risk for some skin diseases such as demodicosis (a mite infection) and hormonal disorders such as diabetes. Both the dog and cat experience physical and behavioral changes when they cycle which can be unpleasant for the owner. The female dog will have a bloody discharge for 5-7 days and will attract attention from male dogs. Some dogs will experience false pregnancies and even begin collecting stuffed animals as “babies” and lactating. Intact female cats become quite agitated, rolling vigorously on the floor and vocalizing. Dogs will cycle approximately twice a year and cats will cycle continuously for 9 months of the year if they do not become pregnant. Pregnant animals are at risk for complications from the pregnancy or delivery. Abortions, infections, and problematic deliveries are not uncommon. Emergency cesarean sections are sometimes needed and can be an expensive and dangerous surgery.

For both the male and female dog and cat neutering and spaying will provide many health benefits. Not only will these procedures help reduce the pet overpopulation problem but can help to ensure our companions live a long and healthy life.

Out of Africa...and beyond

Shoal Creek Animal Clinic has been fortunate to have many outstanding pre-veterinary and veterinary students as staff members. Those who have moved on in their educational goals continue to impress us with their commitment to animal health and welfare both at home and around the world. This issue of Shoal Creek News features two of our former staff -- John Bryan and Shannon Parfitt.

John Bryan, who is now in his last year at the College of Veterinary Medicine, recently traveled to Central West Africa. He shares

some thoughts about his experience for Shoal Creek News...

Having previously served as an Agriculture Volunteer for the Peace Corps in Gabon from 1994 to 1996, working primarily with animal husbandry, agroforestry, and fresh water fisheries, I was quite anxious to return and check out how things had changed in the past ten years. I was fortunate to be able to travel with my wife, Karen, to the Republic of Gabon in Central West Africa in the summer of 2005.

As a rising third year veterinary student and a candidate in the veterinary college’s certification program in International Veterinary Medicine, our trip was graciously funded by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, with a great deal of help from private donations. My project consisted mainly of examining rural village goat herds for gastrointestinal parasites (gut worms), anemia, and overall body condition. The data we collected was organized into a short paper that I presented to the Dodge Foundation this past March. My wife, Karen, is employed as the Curator of the International Garden at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia and had quite an interesting project herself. Karen coordinated with the Missouri



John, Karen, Grace, Eleanor, and Audra State Botanical Garden in their efforts to describe and catalogue previously unknown forest flora in Gabon. She also worked with local village healers and shamans in pursuit of medicinal plant knowledge and identification. It was quite exciting taking tours through the jungle with the village healers as they identified the different plant species, demonstrated their medicinal preparations,

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

and showed us villagers whose ailments had been cured.

A word on Gabon: Gabon is located at approximately zero degrees latitude on the West Coast of Africa; i.e. on the equator. It is a country about the geographical size of Colorado, and has just over one million inhabitants. It is a peaceful country that is mostly covered in tropical rain forest and wide, beautiful rivers. The official language is French, and my wife and I strongly recommend visiting. We plan to return in 2006 to work with the Wildlife Conservation Society (out of the Bronx Zoo, New York) and study gorillas in the lowland areas. We are very much looking forward to returning to our "second home" nation and contributing in part to increased knowledge of both animal and human health.

Of all our adventures, the greatest gift Karen and I received from our trip to Gabon that summer is the newest addition to our canine family: Clara. Clara was a village puppy who followed her mother to our door. We had been feeding her mother for a week or so, and the puppies naturally followed when their legs could make it, trotting behind her. Karen and I quickly became attached, and the rest is history. Clara is named for Cap Santa Clara where Karen and I first discovered her. Cap Santa Clara is one of the capes north of the capital of Gabon, Libreville.



Clara

Shannon Parfitt, also a senior at the University of Georgia Veterinary College was recently named as one of UGA's "Outstanding Students." The following is reprinted with permission from the UGA web pages... Vet student Shannon Parfitt will go wherever it takes to get the best UGA education she can. As an undergraduate, she participated in the UGA at Oxford program, which allowed

her to pursue her degree without being too far from her parents who lived in the United Kingdom at the time. After she graduated and began studying at UGA's College of Veterinary Medicine, she worked with exotic animals at a zoo in Brazil. She enjoyed it so much that last year she put together a program and secured corporate support to go back to South America. She went to the Pantanal ecosystem in southwestern Brazil and worked with the Brazilian government in a project to trap vampire bats and assay them for strains of rabies. After graduation, she hopes to secure a medical internship and residency.



Shannon and her dog, Buster Brown

Other Staff News

Welcome to all our new staff...

Kristi Smith, RVT, recently graduated from Athens Technical College with an Associate Degree in Applied Veterinary Technology. Kristi is a Georgia native and lives in Com-

merce with her husband, three cats, three dogs and a rabbit. **Eric Pavlovsky** comes to our front office staff from a career in both the finance industry and the Army. Eric and his wife (who is in her first year at the Veterinary College) have a menagerie of four dogs and two cats. **Sara Nacman**, also a member of the front office staff, is a student in the Veterinary Technology Program at Athens Technical College. Our full-time veterinary assistant is **Gina Lang**, a native of the Athens area. She graduated from Oconee County High School, and attended UGA. Gina shares, "After spending many years in retail management, I've found my true calling as a veterinary assistant." Shoal Creek welcomes four new part-time veterinary assistants, all pre-veterinary students at the University of Georgia. **Sylvia Ferguson** is a native of Athens majoring in Biological Sciences. She is interested in pursuing degrees in both Veterinary Medicine and Public Health. **Emily Smith**, a native of Mississippi, has lived in Athens for two years. When not studying she enjoys spending time with her boxer and kitten. **Rachel Milner**, from Atlanta, GA, is currently a sophomore at the University of Georgia. She spends much of her free time horseback riding. **Abby Dietz** is an Animal Science major at UGA, a leader of Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship and an avid reader.



Shoal Creek Animal Clinic

2226 Barnett Shoals Road

Athens, GA 30605

706-369-0962

animalclinic@shoalcreek.com

<http://www.shoalcreek.com>

Pre-sort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Athens, GA
Permit No. 515

In This Issue... Benefits of Spay/Neuter, Globe Trotting Students, Staff News

Visit our Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.shoalcreek.com>