



Bathing Beauty

(Part Three in our Routine Maintenance Series)

Why bathe my pet?

Did you know the skin is the largest organ of the body? Among its many functions it produces hair, nails, ear wax and sebum. Sebum is the oily secretion which makes skin supple, water resistant, prevents excess drying, and helps control bacterial growth. Skin cells are arranged in layers which vary from deepest layers which are alive and multiplying to surface layers which are thin, dead cells constantly shedding from the surface. The skin surface constantly accumulates debris on the sebum film. Healthy skin appears smooth with clean, shiny hair. As the skin accumulates sebum, dead cells, bacteria, dirt and contaminants it becomes dull, may feel oily and an odor may develop. Pets add to this process by getting into a variety of things such as Georgia clay, feces, skunk scent, etc. Fortunately, a thorough bath gently removes this regularly contaminated layer.

What should I use to bathe my pet?

Pet shampoos are formulated with mild soap to free debris without excessively stripping

away sebum. Human shampoos can be too drying and should be avoided. Always rinse thoroughly. After rinsing, hair should be squeaky clean and the skin surface should not appear flaky. Even with warm air drying, several hours are required for evaporation of water from the hair coat. Pets should be kept warm during this period.

How often should I bathe my pet?

Frequency of bathing is individually determined. Skin diseases, external parasites (fleas, ticks, etc.), and increased access to dirt and environmental contaminants will increase bathing necessity. As a general rule, if an animal's skin and hair coat is clean, don't bathe it! Bathing a dog with normal skin every two to three weeks is sufficient for even the most discriminating owners and most cats rarely require bathing. Animals with skin disease benefit from therapeutic medicated shampoos. These are prescribed by the veterinarian in a comprehensive skin treatment plan.

What about dipping?

Flea dips are concentrated insecticides which are diluted and then poured over the pet to kill adult parasites and to provide a minimal

amount of continuing repellent effect. Newer forms of flea control such as Program and Frontline have decreased the necessity for this form of control. However, dips are relatively inexpensive and are also useful for the treatment of certain types of mange.



Isn't this a lot of work?

If you feel unable to handle the various aspects of bathing your pet, the clinic will be happy to schedule an appointment. We bathe pets on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

Travel Tips

If you choose to take your pet with you as you travel for the holidays, here are some helpful hints for making the journey a safe and enjoyable one.

1) Have all pets in carriers. This is especially important for cats and small dogs. If free to move around in the car, a pet may interfere with safe driving. Also, a possible mess from pets who are prone to car sickness can be managed much more easily in a carrier. Larger dogs may be confined to a safe area of the vehicle with specially designed barriers.

2) If there is time before travel, accustom the pet to being in a carrier by placing it out and open in the home...perhaps even feeding the pet just outside the carrier and then moving the food gradually to the inside. Ideally, the



carrier should not be viewed as punishment or seen only as a certain trip to the vet.

3) Make sure to attach I.D. tags to collars.
4) Always have a jar of water and a bowl in the car to offer pets a drink periodically.
5) Never open windows or get out of the car without first making sure that all the pets are secure.

6) For cats on long trips, a plastic sweater box with a resealable lid can be filled with litter and used as a port-a-potty. This can be taken

into hotel rooms if necessary or placed on the floor board of the car for use.

7) Do not feed pets after 6 PM the night before travel to minimize the chance of vomiting from car sickness.

8) If a pet is very anxious about car travel, sedatives may be prescribed. However, we

generally like to avoid this if possible as these medications decrease the pet's ability to regulate body temperature which can cause them to become overheated or hyperthermic.

9) Introduce you pet slowly if there are pets at the destination. Travel is stressful to animals and they may be a bit disagreeable upon arrival. Setting aside one room for the pets to acclimate to their new surroundings has been found to be helpful.

Staff News

Welcome **Mandy Foster**, our new part-time receptionist, and **Cory Christopher**, our newest veterinary assistant. Mandy is currently studying Animal Science in hopes of pursuing a career in Veterinary Medicine. In her spare time, Mandy enjoys running and aerobics. In her hometown of Griffin, Ga., she has two dogs, Patches and Duke, and a cat, Barney. Cory is from Cumming, GA and is an ecology and pre-vet major at UGA. He hopes to attend the College of Veterinary Medicine and specialize in exotics.

Vaccines, Cats, and Tumors?

Vaccines have been one of the most important advances in human and animal health. Vaccines contain viruses or bacteria which have been altered so they do not cause disease. When an animal receives a vaccine, its immune system produces substances called antibodies which work against the viruses or bacteria that actually cause disease. Later, if the animal is exposed to that disease, these antibodies lead to the quick destruction of the disease-causing agent. The protection provided by a vaccine gradually declines with time and, for this reason, regular booster vaccinations are given.

Unfortunately, few medical procedures are totally without risk, and sometimes procedures that are helpful can also cause harm. Short term lethargy, loss of appetite, and discomfort are common reactions to routine vaccination. Rarely, a patient may experience a severe allergic reaction which could be life threatening if not treated. Recently, another possible side effect of vaccinations has been theorized. Several years ago, veterinarians began to notice a higher than expected number of sarcomas (a

type of tumor) occurring in Cats at locations where injections are commonly given. Since vaccines are the most commonly administered injection in veterinary medicine, a



possible association between certain vaccines and sarcomas has been suggested. It is speculated that agents incorporated into some vaccines to help stimulate the immune system may lead to tumor development.

However, at this time, a clear relationship between vaccines and sarcomas has not been established. The majority of sarcomas are *not* linked with vaccines and those that are associated occur infrequently. This entire issue is receiving unprecedented attention and current investigations are devoting considerable resources to determine the true scope and exact cause of the problem .

Disturbing as this issue may be, there is great concern that cat owners, attempting to protect their pets from harm, may forego vaccination entirely. The result? Though well-intentioned, these owners may be placing their cats at far greater risk of acquiring a fatal infection than any risk the vaccine may pose. And, in the case of rabies, human health is at risk as well. In the vast majority of situations, vaccines are much more beneficial than harmful, continuing to do an excellent job of protecting cats from serious infection and disease. After initial kitten vaccinations have been completed, we are weighing each individual cat's individual risk of infection to guide in deciding the most appropriate vaccine recommendations. It must be remembered that in most cases, the benefit of vaccination far outweighs any risk.

Rabies: Here and Now

Rabies is a very serious public health issue. Within the last three years, there have been confirmed cases of rabies in most Georgia counties. Of these cases, approximately 90% are wild animals. The other 10% are domestic animals which include our beloved pets. Rabies is spread to humans and animals primarily through bite wounds. Raccoons are one of the most commonly infected wild animals in Georgia. They are closely followed by foxes, skunks, and bats. None of these wild animals should be handled either alive or dead. The best way to protect yourself and your pets is to vaccinate pets regularly and stay away from stray animals or animals acting strangely (either wild or domestic). If you notice any stray or strange acting animal, please call Animal Control at 613-3540. All dogs and cats in Georgia are required to be vaccinated for rabies beginning at three months of age. If you have any questions about rabies, or rabies vaccinations, please feel free to give us a call.



Shoal Creek Animal Clinic
2226 Barnett Shoals Road
Athens, GA 30605
706-369-0962
animalclinic@shoalcreek.com

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Athens, GA
Permit No. 515

In This Issue... Bathing, Travel, Staff News, Vaccines & Cats, Rabies

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