



## May I introduce you?

### Guidelines for the introduction of a new cat

Whoever said, "Every life should have nine cats" may not have given much thought to the initial problems such a large feline family may present. The first hurdle, of course, is introducing a new cat into the household. With a little care and patience, however, this may be achieved with a minimum of stress. Remember this principle: new pets should be introduced gradually and with supervision. A conservative method is to introduce a new cat to the resident cat by scent, sound and sight...one sense at a time. The new cat should be given a safe zone for the adjustment period: one non-traffic room with food, water, blanket, a few toys and a litter box. Other pets should not be allowed in the safe zone. Rub a towel on the new cat and present it to the resident cat. Reverse the process to familiarize each cat with the other cat's scent. This may be done repeatedly. The cats may also smell and hear one another under a closed door. Next they are allowed to see one another through a barrier like a glass door or screen

door. Alternatively each cat can be placed in a carrier with a grate-type door. The carriers should be placed a distance apart facing each other. When the cats are calm and not responding to each other they can be moved closer together. When both are calm, release one cat to freely approach the other cat in the carrier. Reverse the process. When the cats



are calm and not responding to each other with one cat free, the second cat can be released so that they are free together under close supervision. A bell attached to the collar of the new cat can help the owner to know its whereabouts during the adjustment period. Obviously the cats should not be alone unsupervised until it is clear that they are not aggressive one

toward the other.

It is a good idea to spend ten minutes alone each day with each pet to satisfy the pet's need for interaction with the owner. **Warning:** *Aggression in response to the presence of a strange cat is expected.* Direct staring and elevating the rump and tail base is the prelude to attack and it should be interrupted immediately. An air canister, spray water bottle or foghorn may interrupt the encounter or a physical barrier like a sheet of cardboard or wood may be used. *Do not put your hands (or other parts) between the animals. This is the most common way people are injured by pets!!* Hissing, snarling and pouncing are also threats. Subtle threats may be missed by the unobservant owner. Be aware that laid back ears and reclining in front of the food dish, litter box or doorway may also be threats or challenges between the cats to establish dominance hierarchy. The adjustment period may require days to weeks. If there are significant problems or aggressive activity after two weeks, a consultation with your veterinarian or animal behaviorist is appropriate.

-Dr. Roberts

## Home vaccination has risks

There has been a growing trend among pet owners to purchase biologicals (vaccines) at feed stores, through mail order catalogs, or over the Internet and to administer these products to their pets at home. Veterinarians strongly discourage this practice for the following reasons. First, the purpose of a vaccine is to produce an appropriate response from the immune system leading to protection against infectious disease. It is essential that an animal be in the best of health prior to immunization. For this reason, veterinarians require a complete physical examination prior to inoculation. Administering a vaccine to a less than healthy animal could lead to failure in immunization. In addition, whatever problem may be affecting the pet could be seriously exacerbated by the stress of inoculation. Second, the handling and administration of vaccines can impact their efficacy. Veterinarians order vaccines direct from manufacturers or medical distributors and refuse

delivery for biologicals that are improperly packaged or arrive unrefrigerated. Many nonprofessional sales outlets can not insure the proper shipping, handling, and storage of these medical products. Improperly handled vaccines may have lost their viability and not provide expected protection.



Although administering injections may appear simple, this is a medical skill which does require proper training. Site preparation, depth and location of injection are just a few of the factors that can affect proper immunization. Also, adequate immunity in a previously unvaccinated pet requires adherence to a strict booster schedule. Failure to do so will leave a pet unprotected. Third, in this day of fear over medical hazards, the proper disposal of medical and biological wastes is a very serious concern. Simply throwing used needles, syringes, and biologicals away with household garbage

violates regulations and creates liability for the pet owner if sanitation workers are accidentally exposed. Finally, while vaccines are a critical part of preventive health care, they are not without risk. Although rare, adverse reactions may occur. In the event of a reaction, the speed with which emergency care is provided may make the difference between life and death. The USP Veterinary Practitioners' Reporting Program has received numerous reports describing allergic reactions that occurred after an owner vaccinated a pet at home. Twelve recent reports involved dogs, four of which did not survive the reaction. One of the dogs died while en route to the veterinary hospital, two arrived at a veterinary facility alive but subsequently died despite therapy, and one dog died at home without treatment after showing signs of weakness for several hours. For these reasons, Shoal Creek News encourages its readers to have their pets vaccinated against infectious diseases by a licensed veterinary professional.

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## A Tribute to Bentley

In February, I said goodbye to my canine companion of 17 years, Bentley. I miss him more than words can express. However, sharing in the days of this little dog's life was a gift filled with countless, joyful memories, and I am thankful I can look back in celebration of his life with both a tear and a smile. As I remembered Bentley's life, I realized a desire to share how special he was. Why would others be interested in an article about my dog? The reason might be that we all have special relationships with our pets... and, one day, we will all have to let them go. Life does go on and we can get to the place where we can celebrate the life of our pets even though we miss them terribly. Bentley never wanted me to be sad. In spirit, he is here right now playfully biting my nose to tell me to lighten up!

On our first day together, Bentley was a perfect fit inside the pocket of my winter coat. Despite a long car trip with numerous stops, he was quite calm and not the least bit scared. With his little face and shiny black button nose peeking out of my pocket, he was "taking it all in." He was bright, alert and as content as he could be in the safety of that pocket with the whole world unfolding before him. This openness, intelligence, and inquisitiveness would define my new best friend throughout his life.

**Bentley the money manager.** This remarkable little dog was fascinated with the exchange of money...especially for food at the fast food drive-up window. He was sure that this was the way to hunt! He once won First Prize in a talent contest for being able to repeatedly choose the largest denomination of bills no matter how scrambled they would be when placed in front of him. **Bentley the traveler.** Early in his life, he fell in love with this whole human, alternative "transportation" idea. In my car, he was my co-pilot. He rode motorcycles too... instantly taking to the wind in his ears and the warmth of the sun on his face as he rode down the back-roads of the Heartland on many a golden autumn day. There was no struggle and no fear inside of him because he trusted me. At 15, Bentley flew as a carry-on to New York. I will never forget the look of astonishment on his face when he looked out of the window at 35,000 feet! He never stopped enjoying these new and exciting experiences. **Bentley the musician.** Bentley had quite an illustrious musical career which began as a pup singing along with Grandpa's harmonica. He demanded applause at the end of each performance! Later, Bentley sang on a recording released by a local, all-girl garage rock band. He then traveled with the band, making new friends wherever he would go. **Bentley the celebrity.** He (literally) rubbed noses with the

likes of singer/songwriter, Bob Dylan, as well as famous local musicians around Athens. The story of Bentley's meeting with Mr. Dylan has been recently published in a book entitled, **If You See Him, Say Hello (Encounters with Bob Dylan).**

There is so much more to Bentley's story but this tribute must end somewhere. Bentley lived his life to the fullest. This little guy touched the lives and hearts of so many people in those years. I was the lucky human to get to share in that life. I was honored to be a part of it. Gervais De Bentley lived a life full of dignity and grace... and left the world with it as well. It is my belief that when he grew tired and very sick this past February, he gracefully and without hesitation called to my heart to let him go. I was not ready for him to go, but my love and devotion outweighed the selfish thought of allowing him to suffer when his body could no longer maintain quality of life. Our bond was made of this love and devotion to the care of each other in life. Letting him go was to honor him beyond all comprehension. Bentley had taught me many things in our time together - but the lesson in strength that he taught me the day I said goodbye was possibly the greatest lesson of all. -Deb

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." - A. France

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## Staff News

Our senior technician, **Ed Averett**, has been on staff since August 1999. When not working, Ed enjoys running, hiking, camping, playing guitar, and reading. Ed, a native of Sandersville, Georgia, was graduated in 1996 from the University of Georgia with a degree in Classical Culture.

Our newest technician, **Liz Nesbit**, lives in Athens with her husband, three dogs, and a cat. Liz received a master's degree in medical microbiology in 1998 and is currently a student at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. When she is not studying or working, Liz enjoys running, cooking, and gardening.

**Deborah Wall**, our part-time receptionist, is a performing/recording musician; owner of an online Mandolin Outfitter business; and a published contributing author of a recent book about Bob Dylan. In her spare time Deborah continues her life-study of the architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, with interests also in American Bungalow architecture and the Arts & Crafts Movement. These pursuits are all secondary to her dog Nigel's frisbee needs however!



### Shoal Creek Animal Clinic

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*In This Issue... New cats, Home vaccination warnings, A tribute, Staff news*

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