



A very "exotic" vet

We are often asked by our long standing clients, "Whatever happened to Dr. Jodi?" Joanna Sherrill, DVM was Shoal Creek Animal Clinic's first associate veterinarian. She left her position here in 1996 to pursue a lifelong interest in exotic animal medicine. We recently caught up with Dr. Sherrill as she was performing an autopsy on an octopus! She then graciously consented to an interview:

Tell us what you have done since you left Shoal Creek Animal Clinic?

Well, it has been a whirlwind these past few years... I completed my master's degree in Medical Microbiology at UGA, helping to develop a vaccine against "Ich" in Fish. I then spent a year as a small animal intern in medicine and surgery at a large referral hospital in San Diego followed by a second internship in aquatic animal medicine at the Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut, and then a residency in zoological medicine at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. Currently, I am the veterinarian at a new aquarium in Long Beach, CA where we feature over 12,000

Pacific Ocean animals. However, I am soon headed for one last move, hopefully the last for awhile, to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago where I'll be part of the veterinary staff working with dolphins and Whales. I went to



Dr. Sherrill (right) examines a sea lion

vet school to become a dolphin vet and eleven years later, here I am!

What is the most interesting case you have had?

Probably our geriatric female sea lion who has a nasal blockage caused by an old infection of nasal mites in the back of her

nose that caused a lot of inflammation. She has not been able to breathe through her nose. She had a CT Scan at a local hospital, multiple rhinoscopies, and last month we performed laser surgery through the rhinoscope to vaporize the offending blockage so she can breathe again. The press has been very interested and we have been on TV about this. When I got here, everyone believed she was a "goner" - so I am particularly proud that we have gone the distance to help her.

What was the most difficult, or dangerous, animal you have had to work with?

A tie between the 500 pound male Silver Back gorilla at the National Zoo and the Cuban crocodile who needed several teeth pulled!

What would you share with young people who may want become Zoo or exotic animal veterinarians?

Work hard in school and be persistent in your dreams. You can do anything you want to but you need to be kind to everyone and respectful in order to land the really cool jobs!

FeLV and FIV Testing

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) are major causes of illness and death in cats. Both are spread contagiously from cat to cat and research has shown that up to 15% of sick cats are infected with one or both of the viruses. However, even healthy cats may harbor infection and spread the viruses to others. In some cats, the signs of disease may not become apparent until weeks, months or even years after they first become infected. FIV is typically spread when one cat bites another. FeLV is spread when the saliva or urine of an infected cat comes into contact with another cat. This can occur from grooming or sharing the same water bowls and litter boxes. It may also be passed from mother cat to offspring. Research to date has shown that FIV and FeLV only affects cats. Both diseases affect cats in similar ways, primarily by interfering with the immune system's ability to ward off infection. Bacteria, other viruses, protozoa and fungi found in the everyday environment - where

they usually don't affect healthy cats-can cause severe illness in FIV and FeLV infected cats. In addition, various kinds of cancer and blood diseases are much more common in infected cats. Early signs of infection are



often subtle and commonly seen in cats that are described as simply not feeling well. These signs include decreased appetite, decreased grooming, and decreased energy. As the diseases become more advanced, the following signs may develop: marked loss of appetite, weight loss, weakness, pale gums, mouth sores, diarrhea, enlarged lymph nodes, and abscesses.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners urges cat owners to have their pets tested for FeLV and FIV. Testing is important in the following situations:

- If your cat has previously never been tested
- If your cat is sick (even if it may have been tested free of infection in the past)
- When a cat is newly adopted
- If your cat has recently been exposed to an infected cat
- If your cat is exposed to cats that may be infected (such as an indoor/outdoor pet)
- Prior to receiving FeLV vaccination

Talk to your veterinarian about having your cat tested for FIV and FeLV. Your veterinarian is the best source of information on the prevention, diagnosis and management of FIV or FeLV infection. Infected cats may live for years if diagnosed early and treated properly. Early detection offers infected cats the best chance for a long and happy life, and may help prevent the spread of infection to other cats.

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Old pets...new problems

Observant owners are an old pet's best friend. As our pets age, things change. What is significant and what is not? Here is a short list of possible changes that may be seen in the aging pet and what those changes could signify. While this list is by no means complete, it demonstrates the multitude of problems that are often associated with aging. Many of these conditions are quite treatable when diagnosed early. If you observe any of these items, have your pet evaluated by your veterinarian.

"Doc, my pet...

...is drinking lots of water. ."

...is having accidents in the house."

...seems to be constipated. He is straining to urinate or have a bowel movement. I'm not sure which."

...is not eating well and seems to be losing weight."

...has developed some lumps and bumps on her body."

...is bumping into things."

...gets disoriented sometimes."

...acts like she doesn't hear me.

...has difficulty getting up."

...is reluctant to go up or down stairs or get in and out of the car."

...sits down halfway through our walk."

"What could it mean?"

Kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, hormonal changes, incontinence, urinary tract infection

Prostate disease, bladder infection or bladder stones, tumors or polyps in the urinary tract, muscle weakness

Dental disease, eye pain, poor sense of smell, liver or kidney disease, gastrointestinal diseases

Benign or malignant tumors, enlarged lymph nodes from infection

Vision loss, senility/dementia, central nervous system disease (e.g., brain tumor), Stroke, low blood sugar

Deafness, joint pain (could make a pet reluctant to rise or respond to a command)

Joint pain due to arthritic or degenerative joint diseases, heart disease, thyroid deficiency

Staff News

Hello... to our new technicians and receptionist! After receiving her BA in Psychology from Indiana University, **Jenna Painter** worked at the Rape Crisis Center in Savannah, GA. She is currently pursuing a degree in Animal Science at UGA. Jenna spends her free time with her dogs, Savannah, Sasha, and Jean. **Shannon Parfitt**, from Kennisaw, GA, plans to apply to vet school in the fall. She spends her free time reading, running and traveling. **Jason Ballenger** is a junior at UGA. Jason enjoys wake boarding and riding jet-ski's. He also loves to draw and would one day like to draw his own daily comic strip. See Jason's work on our web site at <http://www.shoalcreek.com>. **Christine Gaston**, our new part time receptionist, graduated from UGA last year with a degree in anthropology. Christine enjoys hiking and camping with her two dogs, Bronson and Alex.

Good-bye... **Ed Averett** has resigned as senior veterinary assistant in May. This fall, Ed will be teaching high school in Glascock county, GA. **Deborah Wall**, our part-time receptionist, left in April to move to Florida where she will be studying massage therapy. **Sara Armstrong** became Mrs. Ray Pope on May 12 and is now working in the insurance industry in Lawrenceville. We wish all three the very best in their new careers.

Rabies Update

A client who had moved away from Athens shared the following story with us. She had been feeding a stray cat and her kittens and was making progress in taming them when the mother disappeared. A week later the mother cat returned with what appeared to be a broken leg. Not wanting her to suffer, the woman attempted to put the cat in a carrier to take her to the veterinarian. She was successful, but the woman received scratches and bites. At the vet's office, it was discovered the cat's leg was not broken. Rather, the animal had a neurological disorder. Given the unknown history of the cat, the neurological symptom, and the fact that someone had been bitten, the recommendation was made for euthanasia and rabies testing. The test was positive and the woman had to undergo the ordeal of post-exposure rabies treatments. This story serves as a wake-up call regarding the reality of rabies. The disease is out there and, possibly, in our own back yards. Please be sure that your pet is up to date on rabies immunization. If not, call your veterinarian today to schedule an appointment for protection against this deadly disease.



Shoal Creek Animal Clinic

2226 Barnett Shoals Road

Athens, GA 30605

706-369-0962

animalclinic@shoalcreek.com

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In This Issue... An exotic vet, FeLV/FIV, Staff News, Rabies update

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