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In this issue

- 1 Featured Dog & Cat
- 2 Ask Homer & Hope
- 3 Importance of Heartworm Preventatives
- 4 When Ya Coming Home? Petting Can Make Them Purr

A

D

O

P

T

Our featured pets



Meet Lilly!



Sweet Lily is not the dog for everybody, but she desperately wants to be the dog for somebody. She's had a couple false starts, but we know her home is

out there. Please take the time to read about her--maybe she's the dog for you!

Sweet Lily is a 4.5-year-old, 55-lb. mix with a beautiful brindle coat. She has a lot going for her! She has an energy level many would consider ideal: she is calm and laid back in a home but still enjoys a romp in the yard (a fenced yard is required for her), playing fetch, or a forest preserve walk. Sweet Lily already knows commands and is fully house-trained. She doesn't have accidents, is not a barker, and is not destructive when you leave her loose. Sweet Lily enjoys car rides. She would like to be the one and only dog in your home, but she does not act up if she sees another dog and has done well on pack walks.

What makes Sweet Lily a dog that is not for everyone is that once she settles in at a home, she becomes protective of things she considers "hers," including toys, beds, and people. Although she has never hurt anyone, Lily needs an adults-only home for this reason. Sweet Lily comes with free in-home training and ongoing support to ensure that her people know how to handle her proclivity for resource guarding. We are certain that Lily can and will thrive in the right home, with the right support, and will make a wonderful companion.

Meet Cirrus!



Cirrus, a lovable and playful kitty, who was rescued from Alabama about three years ago. Almost Home took him in as a kitten and he is still searching for his forever family.

Cirrus finds joy in playing with toys and chasing the light from his laser pointer and entertains himself watching the outside world through any available window. When he's not exploring, Cirrus enjoys snuggling up in a warm and cozy spot for a nap and is fond of cuddling with his human and settling in for the night. Unlike many cats, Cirrus appreciates being held and carried around. He also finds comfort in resting on your shoulder and rubbing his face against yours.

His favorite forms of affection are chin scratches and head rubs, but he also loves a good cuddle from atop your chest while you're laying in bed or sitting beside him. Cirrus doesn't mind being brushed and benefits from regular grooming sessions. He thrives in the company of adults and children because more family means more pets! While he tolerates the presence of other cats, he does not get along well with dogs. Cirrus is looking for his purrfect family where he will get lots of pets, cuddles, and daily play sessions with his favorite wand and feather toys.



Ask Homer and Hope



Homer, why do dogs stare?

Over 10,000 years ago, the wild dog became a human companion rather than an adversary. Domestication developed through mutual safe keeping as both human and canine hunted and protected for each other's benefit. How did they communicate their common trust? One way was through the eyes. Canine staring has evolved because dogs recognize the importance of humans in their lives, and very few dog owners have not experienced the sense of being watched.

Interpreting that stare, however, is a challenge because staring may be a positive or a negative emotional expression. For example, staring may communicate the dog's love for his owner who responds likewise. This mutual staring releases the hormone oxytocin that promotes bonding and love. A dog also stares to interpret the owner's body language for behavioral signs such as "sit" or "stay", to demand the owner's attention if the animal is bored or confused, or to beg for food and playtime. On the other hand, staring may be a call for help or protection or a warning in the form of a hard, steady stare that the dog is angry or aggressive. An extreme form is resource guarding of food, toys, or family members. Staring may also be a sign of cognitive dysfunction due to aging, stress, or a seizure. Some dogs will even stare regularly at the wall.

The solution to unwanted staring is to prevent it before it becomes a habit such as begging for food at the table. An owner should never reinforce unacceptable behavior by rewarding it. Staring gets attention, but it is the owner's responsibility to direct it to a positive partnership.

Hope, why isn't my cat peeing in the litter box?

I know this behavior can be infuriating and puzzling and you want it to stop asap. There are four main reasons a cat may pee outside the litter box.

He might have an underlying medical condition. If he's peeing EVERYWHERE, it's time to see a vet. Good news here is after your vet performs some tests, he can diagnose the problem and possibly prescribe medication or a change in diet. And most of the time once the underlying condition is addressed, your cat will resume his normal habits.

Is kitty peeing outside the litter box? Check to see if the box needs scooping or change of litter. If you changed the brand of litter, this can affect your cat. Changing the location of the box is another possibility. Did something happen in or near the box that spooked your cat like something fell or was he ambushed by another animal while they were in it, etc.

A distressed cat can legitimately forget routines and have difficulty with bladder control. For example a new cat has been brought into the house or a new child suddenly shows up. This can disrupt his territory and make him uncomfortable. Kids and new pets can make unexpected noises. Cats get nervous if there is a change in the daily routine. Maybe you got a new job or you have visitors or there's construction going on.

Lastly, if your cat is peeing on your pillow, bed or clothes, this might be a sign of separation anxiety. Check with your vet or cat behavioral specialist about ways to help kitty feel more secure. There are many solutions available, and these professionals can point you in the right direction.

The importance of heartworm preventatives

Heartworm is a serious disease and if not treated, can cause severe damage to the heart, lungs and other organs. Heartworm infections are transmitted to an animal when an infected mosquito bites the animal.

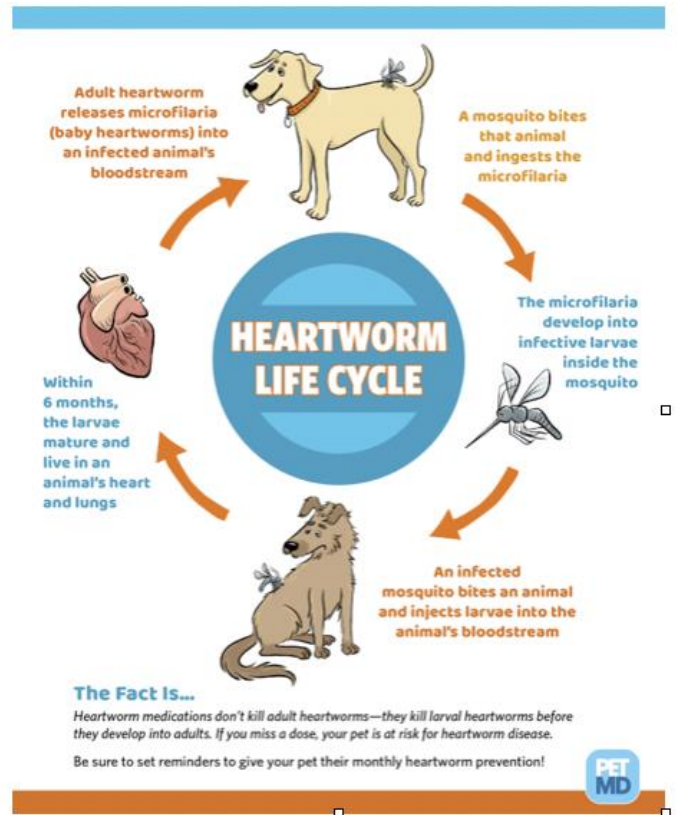
A heartworm infected mosquito that is carrying a heartworm larva, leaves the larva behind in the animal's bloodstream during the bite. If the larva is not destroyed in the animal by a heartworm preventative within a few weeks after the bite, the larva will turn into a small worm and continue to grow in the animal's bloodstream for a total of 6 to 7 months. At this time the worm is called an adult heartworm.

The adult heartworm is a blood parasite that finds its way to the animal's heart/lungs during the time it is growing. If the animal is not treated for adult heartworm, the worm can live 5 to 7 years in dogs and up to 2 to 3 years in cats. There is a recommended treatment protocol for heartworm infections but it takes months to clear the infections.

Only infected mosquitoes can transmit heartworm infections to certain animals. Heartworm disease affects dogs, cats, ferrets, wolves, coyotes, foxes and sea lions. If an animal tests heartworm positive, that means adult heartworm are living in the animal's heart, lungs or blood vessels. The worms are very thin and can grow up to a foot-long.

The good news is that heartworm disease can be prevented if heartworm preventatives are given to your animal on a regular basis throughout the entire year for your pet's life. There are monthly preventative chewables available as well as preventative injections which are given every 6 months or every 12 months.

The dog is a natural host for heartworm. This means that heartworm that live inside the dog can mature into adults, mate and then produce offspring called microfilaria. If the dog is not taking preventatives and is not treated, the number of heartworms can increase with each infected mosquito bite. Dogs have been known to have a hundred or more adult heartworm with an abundance of offspring in the bloodstream when preventatives and treatment have been delayed for years.



The American Heartworm Society has guidelines to follow for canine heartworm treatment. It is a successful treatment plan for dogs with mild or more severe heartworm infections. NOTE: Heartworm preventative medicine will only kill the larvae up to 6 weeks after the bite. After 6 weeks, the larvae turns into a small worm and preventative medicine will not be strong enough to eliminate the worm. The small worm will continue to grow in the bloodstream until it becomes an adult heartworm which takes 6 to 7 months.

Heartworm disease in cats is very different from heartworm disease in dogs. Cats are not a good host for the heartworm life cycle and most heartworm in cats do not survive to the adult stage. However, the immature heartworm can still cause respiratory damage in the cat. The medication used to treat canine heartworm infections cannot be used in cats, so prevention is the only means of protecting cats from the effects of heartworm disease.

PLEASE, GIVE YOUR PET MONTHLY HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVES IN CHEWABLE FORM OR BY GIVING A 6 OR 12 MONTH PREVENTATIVE INJECTION TO YOUR PET.

Don't miss a dose. REMEMBER, we have only 6 weeks to eliminate the larvae when the infected mosquito leaves a heartworm larvae behind.

When ya comin' home?

Can dogs tell how long you'll be gone when you leave the house? They sure can! They use their keen sense of smell, called olfactory memory. Their nose will tell them that you are there because your odor is strong. Daily experience teaches them that as your odor weakens and they can barely smell your scent, your reappearance gets closer. Then their ears kick in when your car pulls into the driveway and that's why they are at the door eagerly awaiting your arrival.

Dogs don't know it's 5pm or Tuesday but circadian rhythm, which is usually guided by light and dark, can be redirected by you as they get used to the way your schedule affects them. It's helpful to get, and keep them, on a daily routine. For example, feed them at the same time every day. That way, their bodies will tell them they are hungry at their regular feeding time.

One problem that can be helped by getting your dog acclimated to a time schedule is separation anxiety. What is it? Separation anxiety is distress and anxiety, often exhibited as destructive behavior your dog shows when he is afraid of being separated from you. It can be relieved by gradually getting them used to you being gone for short and then gradually greater periods of time. Eventually they learn that you are, indeed, coming back. And once they get used to the routine, you won't have to tell them it's time to eat, sleep, walk. They'll tell you!!!

Petting can make them purr

One thing is for sure: not all cats are the same. Some experimentation and exploration will help you learn how to make your kitty purr.

How do you pet a cat to make it purr?

Start by softly and gently petting his forehead, around his ears, and under his chin. When you've got it right, he'll purr and his body will be relaxed. Expand your efforts to his back, the base of his tail, and his chest.

Do NOT touch his whiskers or he will show great displeasure. Avoid touching his paws, one of the most sensitive parts of his body. He'll also be annoyed if you mess with his tail. However, if he DOES let you touch his tail, it means he trusts you. Avoid his belly. Cats do NOT like belly rubs. It can be a bit tricky to remember this when your cat turns over on his back. You're rubbing his chest and his soft, warm, belly is right there asking for a rub. RESIST the temptation. However, you can feel very special when your cat exposes his belly, the most vulnerable part of himself, to you because he is saying he TRUSTS you.

How do you know when he wants you to stop? He stops purring, his skin twitches over his back and his tail is swishing. When he rises and starts to move away, he's had enough. Petting and cuddling your cat can help relieve anxiety and stress he may be feeling. A bonus is the activity may also relieve your stress. How do you know your cat wants cuddling and petting and maybe a massage? He'll head butt you, rub himself against your legs, or jump onto your lap. It means he's ready for some lovin'.

Adopt, don't shop! Let's keep spreading the word!