

P1 / PREVENTIVE HEALTH

7 Tips for Keeping Your Senior Pet Happy and Healthy

P2 / ZOOONOTIC DISEASE

Raccoon Roundworm: What to know to keep you and your pet safe!

P3 / PET SAFETY

Common Spring Time Hazards to Pets

P4 / FOOD SAFETY

Disaster Preparation for People and Pets

Veterinary Connections



News about Animal Health, Food Safety, and One Health
Army Public Health Center

2020

SPRING EDITION
Approved for public release,
distribution unlimited.

7 Tips for Keeping Your Senior Pet Happy and Healthy

> Content contributed by CPT Leslie Brunker, DVM, First Year Graduate Veterinary Education (FYGVE), Public Health Activity Fort Campbell VS

Sometimes it creeps up on us. You notice your pup's formerly black muzzle is sprouting some gray hair, your long walks through the neighborhood have become strolls, or your vigorous laser-chasing cat now prefers a good nap in the sun. Just like us, as our beloved pets enter their senior years, their needs eventually change. With those changes comes the requirement for a little extra attention to maintain optimal health and happiness for years to come.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA®) considers medium-sized dogs to be a senior at the age of 7 years and cats at 10 years. Age is just a number, but when pets reach those older years, the incidence of disease can increase. The most common conditions to consider as pets age are:

- Vision loss
- Hearing loss
- Arthritis
- Kidney Disease
- Cognitive decline

Just like in people, diet, lifestyle, genetics, and other factors combined all play a large role in your pet's health as they age. There are many opportunities to keep your senior pet happy, comfortable, and healthy in their golden years including these 7 tips:

1. Schedule regular visits with your veterinarian

You and your veterinarian are the best team for maintaining your pet's health. It's important that your veterinarian stay up-to-date with your pet's health status to provide them the best care. Routine medical exams and conversations with your veterinarian are key to catching illness or disease early on and for maintaining optimal health in older pets more prone to developing various medical conditions. Semiannual or more frequent exam visits may be necessary depending on your pet's status.

2. Watch for changes in your pet's behavior

Our pets can't always tell us where it hurts, but their behavior can give us huge clues that something isn't normal. Keep an eye out for these common changes and contact your veterinarian if you notice them:

- Decreased appetite or weight loss
- Increased water consumption
- Increased agitation or stressed appearance
- Changes in urination or defecation
- Reluctance to participate in beloved activities
- Disorientation, altered social interactions, anxiety, or memory issues



7 Tips for Keeping Your Senior Pet Happy and Healthy

>> CONT. FROM PAGE ONE

3. Look for signs of arthritis

Just as in humans, pets can develop arthritis as they age. Arthritis is a degenerative change in the joint that can be painful and limit mobility in both dogs and cats. Common signs in our pets are:

- Difficulty climbing stairs
- Decreased activity
- Reluctance to jump up onto things they normally would have easily
- Problems sitting or standing
- Difficulty posturing to urinate or defecate
- Urinating or defecating outside the litter box or inside the house

4. Maintain an ideal body weight

Too much weight puts unnecessary strain on the joints and can accelerate the onset of arthritis and other conditions such as diabetes mellitus. Your vet can help you determine your pet's ideal weight and food needs during routine exams.

5. Keep them moving

While your pets might be slowing down and not as active in the backyard or on walks as they used to be, it's essential to keep their aging joints moving for their overall health and comfort. Low-impact exercises such as leisure walks for your pups or laser-chasing sessions for your cats should be worked into the daily routine. Regular movement not only benefits their joints, but it also helps keep excess weight off and engages them mentally in a positive way.

6. Make your home senior-friendly

Getting around your home may get harder for your pets as they age. Help them stay comfortable and prevent injuries by putting down rugs for traction on slick floors, making their food and water bowls easily accessible to include adding more water bowl locations, providing more cushioned sleeping areas, providing steps up to areas they normally would have jumped to reach when younger, and blocking off access to areas they could fall down, like stairwells.

7. Keep their minds engaged

Your pet may be more content to relax or sleep all day as they age, but they still need regular mental stimulation to keep their minds sharp. Teaching old pets new tricks, feeding your pet in a puzzle feeder, or getting new toys are all great ways to keep their minds cranking and healthy.

Just because your pet is heading into their senior years does not mean you can't still enjoy a fulfilling relationship that you have grown to love. Being informed about common conditions and knowing what to look for are keys to keeping them healthy and happy for years to come. Remember, you and your veterinarian are a team, so always keep them in the loop and contact them with any concerns or questions.

Reference: Senior Pets. <https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/Senior-Pets.aspx>. Accessed October 18, 2019.

Raccoon Roundworm: What to know to keep you and your pet safe!

> Content contributed by MAJ Danielle Tulloss, DVM, DIMA – Arizona Branch Veterinary Services, Public Health Activity - Fort Hood

Baylisascariasis is a parasitic infection caused by a specific type of roundworm found in raccoons called *Baylisascaris* that can infect humans, dogs, other mammals, and birds. Baylisascariasis is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be transmitted between animals and humans. While infection in humans is rare, it can be severe if the parasite larvae migrate throughout the body and invade the eyes, abdominal organs, or brain. The raccoon roundworm is found in the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, and South America. In the United States, *Baylisascaris* is most commonly seen in raccoons in the Mid-Atlantic, Midwestern, and West Coast states.

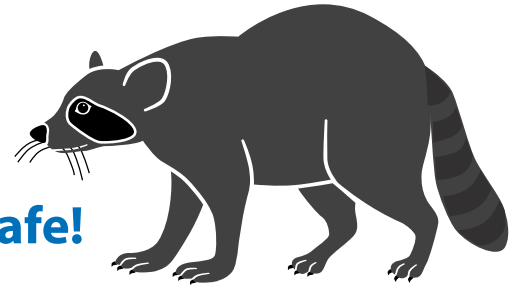
The roundworm is spread to humans or other animals through oral ingestion of infected roundworm eggs found in the environment or animal waste. The primary host of *Baylisascaris* is the raccoon, meaning the raccoon is required for the parasite to reach maturity without necessarily causing signs in the host. The mature worms shed infectious eggs through the gastrointestinal tract into the raccoon waste that can survive for months to years under the right conditions.

If dogs become infected with the parasite, they can shed the eggs in their feces, which can also contribute to contamination of the environment and exposure to humans or other animals. In some

cases, the parasite can invade the central nervous system, resulting in neurologic disease in dogs. The parasite cannot be spread from one human to another since it needs an additional host to complete its life cycle. Children and immunocompromised people are the most susceptible population for infection in people.

Infection with *Baylisascaris* is preventable. This parasite can be prevented with a few simple steps. Avoid areas frequented by raccoons. Raccoons tend to live in close proximity to humans, but there are steps you can take to avoid making your living space attractive to them.

- Keep all trash in closed tight-fitting trash cans. Clean up trash regularly.
- Do not keep raccoons as pets.
- Prevent raccoon access to attics, garages, and roofs.
- Clean up brush and leaves around your property. Raccoons like to defecate in these areas and at the base of trees.
- If you have children, do not allow them to ingest sand or dirt when playing outside at home or on playgrounds. Wash their hands with soap and water after playing outside. Keep sandboxes closed when not in use.



Raccoon Roundworm: What to know to keep you and your pet safe!

>> CONT. FROM PAGE TWO

- Keep your pets on a monthly intestinal parasite preventive, and have their stools checked for parasites regularly. Clean up dog waste regularly.
- Keep pets on a leash or in a fenced area. Do not allow pets to roam freely.
- Wash hands with soap and water after gardening and other similar activities.

Baylisascariasis is a serious zoonotic disease in humans but is easily preventable with these simple steps for you, your children, and pets. If you become ill after spending time outdoors or coming into contact with animals, always contact your healthcare provider.

References: Parasites – *Baylisascaris* infection. <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/baylisascaris/index.html>. Accessed October 22, 2019. *Baylisascaris Procyonis*. <https://capcvet.org/guidelines/baylisascaris-procyonis/>. Accessed October 22, 2019. Reducing *Baylisascaris Procyonis* Roundworm Larvae in Raccoon Latrines. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3204634/>. Accessed October 22, 2019.

Common Spring Time Hazards to Pets

> Content contributed by CPT Leslie Brunner, DVM, First Year Graduate Veterinary Education (FYGVE), Public Health Activity Fort Campbell VS

It's finally warming up and spring cleaning is upon us! You're dragging out the cleaning products, digging through your garage to throw out those unnecessary winter items, and finally getting out the gardening tools. With renewed cleaning efforts comes added risk to our pets. Beware of these common hazards to your furry family members during spring cleaning:

1. Household Cleaners

Many of our go-to cleaning products can be hazardous, especially to pets and kids. Read the label for these chemicals before using products. Many can injure skin, eyes, or lungs through direct contact or exposure to fumes and are toxic when ingested. When using, be sure to thoroughly remove from any surfaces before allowing pets in the room; be sure that pets are never closed into a small space where strong cleaning products are being used. Birds and other exotic pets are even more sensitive to cleaning products so take extra care around these pets.

2. Fertilizer, Insecticides, and Herbicides

Ingredients in fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides may be dangerous if your pet ingests them. Always store products in sealed, out-of-the-way containers, and use only in areas that your pets can't access for a quick snack. If your dog or cat ingests grass with fertilizer in it, it is very unlikely to cause poisoning. However, eating large amounts directly from the bag can result in gastrointestinal upset, bloat, or even tremors or seizures, which can be fatal.

3. Toxic Plants

Lilies, rhododendrons, and azaleas are beautiful but potentially deadly to our pets, particularly feline friends. Take care to keep out of reach of your furry family members and contact your veterinarian immediately if your cat has ingested any part of a lily as this is always an emergency! Spring bulbs, such as daffodils or tulips, may also be hazardous to canine companions.

4. Pest-Control Products

Beware as you put out baits or traps for pesky critters as they can be just as harmful to your pets as they are to pests. The sweet smell that draws rodents to the bait trap can also tempt a hungry pup and are potentially fatal if ingested. Getting rid of pests is a must, but keeping baits and traps away from pets is imperative as well!

5. Antifreeze

Antifreeze poisoning is one of the most common forms of poisoning in small animals. Commonly used in our cars during the winter time and frequently put out with the trash during spring cleaning, this solution containing the toxic compound ethylene glycol is sweet and appetizing to pets. The worst part—it only takes a small amount (less than 3 ounces) to poison a medium-sized dog. So even if you plan on ditching the antifreeze for the spring, keep all disposed containers tightly sealed and away from pets and take care to immediately clean up any spills before your pets can lap it up.

If you are unsure what products to use, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency places a "Safer Choice" logo on over 2,000 products that offer safer packaging, ingredients, and usage for animal and human family members. If you notice your pet ingesting any of these poisons or exhibiting unusual signs, contact your local veterinarian or emergency center immediately—receiving appropriate care in a timely manner can be life-saving.

These services are available 24/7 to receive calls: Pet Poison Helpline: (855) 764-7661 AND ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435.



Disaster Preparation for People and Pets

> Content contributed by CPT Aidan Wolfe, DVM, 438th MDVSS

Each year the news warns of impending disasters: tropical storms brewing in the Atlantic or Pacific, whiteout blizzards, or tornado and flooding risks. It is important to maintain awareness of likely disasters in your area and ensure you prepare your family, to include pets, with an emergency plan.

A key aspect of disaster preparedness is to prepare a supply of safe food and water to use in case of an emergency. During an emergency or natural disaster, weather can damage supply chains and availability of items may be disrupted. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends collecting a minimum of 3 days' worth of food and water for your family, but if possible a 2-week supply is most ideal. Food items need to be nonperishable and tolerate storage at room temperature. Choose ready-to-eat canned or boxed foods, which have a long shelf life. Avoid foods with a high salt content, as this will increase thirst and water consumption. Some ideas of items to include in your stockpile are: canned vegetables, fruit, soup, and meat. Also consider including beans, dried fruits, cereals, crackers, peanut butter, nuts, trail mix, granola bars, and other snack items. Purchase a manual can opener to open canned goods during a power lapse. Store emergency food supplies in a cool, dry location off the floor in a temperature of 40-70 degrees Fahrenheit. Date emergency food supplies, and restock every 6-12 months as needed. Use air-tight, moisture proof, and insect-proof containers, which are food-grade to store items.

Securing safe drinking water prior to a disaster is also key. The CDC advises maintaining a minimum of 1 gallon of water per person per day in your emergency kit. Label containers as "drinking water" as well as with the date placed in the kit. The ideal emergency water source is unopened, commercially purchased bottled water. If bottled water is unavailable, you can use food-grade water storage containers to prepare emergency water sources. Avoid using glass containers to store water as these can break. Pregnant or ill family

members may require additional water quantities, and your family may also need extra water if you reside in a warm climate or will need water for infant formula or pets.

Lastly, consider what unique needs your four-legged family members may have in the event of a disaster. It is important to include necessary supplies for your pets among your emergency supplies. These include a collar, leash, water and food bowls, cleaning supplies for accidents, and a litter box or bags to manage dog and cat waste. Your pet will also need a 2-week supply of food, water, and any medication. Ensure your pets' ID tags contain your current contact information. Ask your veterinarian about microchipping your pet to assist with reunification if you are separated. Purchase a pet carrier for each pet and practice familiarization prior to an emergency. Lastly, contact your veterinarian to obtain a copy of vaccination and medical records for your animals.

It is important to plan for lodging for your pets prior to a disaster. Research what pet-friendly options are available in your area and your pre-planned evacuation site(s). In the event of an evacuation, some housing shelters will not accept pets unless they are a service animal. Consider if your companion will need to stay with a boarding facility, animal shelter, family member, or a pet-friendly hotel outside of the evacuation area.

Disasters occur when least expected. It is important to start preparing your family, both two- and four-legged, for success by collecting and storing food, water, pet, and other emergency supplies in an emergency preparedness kit. Examples of additional items to collect for an emergency kit include flashlights, first-aid kits, a battery-operated radio, and extra batteries. Regardless of the type of disaster, having an emergency plan with supplies in place will increase your family's readiness when disaster strikes.

Petpared Basic Emergency Kit

- ✓ Copy of rabies and other vaccinations
- ✓ Two-week supply of pet food and water
- ✓ Appropriate-size crate or kennel
- ✓ Non-spill food and water bowl
- ✓ Medication and prescriptions
- ✓ Poop bags, Litter box and litter
- ✓ Disinfectant, newspaper/paper towels
- ✓ Familiar items, toys, treat, blanket
- ✓ Recent photo of your pet (add species, breed, sex, age and color)
- ✓ Microchip information/proof of ownership
- ✓ Calming medicine/thunder shirt
- ✓ Grooming supplies
- ✓ Manual can opener (if needed)
- ✓ Flea, tick and heartworm preventive products
- ✓ Pet first aid book and kit
- ✓ Leash, harness and collar with ID



Veterinary Connections

Goal of publication: Veterinary Connections is a quarterly publication written by Army Veterinary Service personnel and published by the Army Public Health Center to inform and educate Service members, beneficiaries, and retirees about Animal Health, Food Safety, and One Health. One Health refers to the intersection and overlap between animals, humans, and the environment. Army Veterinary Service personnel serve around the world supporting the Department of Defense as proponents for Animal Health and Food Protection.

Comments or questions regarding content can be directed to ARMY-VSPublications@mail.mil. **Subscribe** to the electronic issue of Veterinary Connections by emailing: usarmy.apg.medcom-aphc.mbx.iph-vet@mail.mil. Place "Veterinary Connections" in the subject line. Locate your local Veterinary Treatment Facility at <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/animed/vtfo/Pages/Veterinary-Treatment-Facility-Interactive-Map.aspx>

Use of trademarked name(s) does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Army but is intended only to assist in identification of a specific product.

TA-349-JAN20

