



# The Seaforth Howler

## Editorial

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### **Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Howler. In August we had a stall at the Manly Dogs' Day Out. It was a great day and Kath relates the days events.

Continually educating our staff is a priority at Seaforth Veterinary Hospital. That is why we sent Sam and Jenny, two of our nurses, to the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's annual convention. Read Sam's report on the big day's events and what they learnt and got up to.

These days there are many "natural products" on the market for the relief of chronic problems in our pets. Hendrika reviews some of the products she regularly uses and recommends.

Student vets are always useful for an article! Evan (a final Year student) insists you can

teach an old dog new tricks. Read how!

Finally I address the issue of euthanasia in small animal veterinary practice. It is a difficult subject to broach but it is something most people wish to discuss and understand. I hope my article answers some of your questions.



## *Nurses at the world Small Animal Veterinary Conference 2007*

### **Samantha Hiscock (Head Nurse)**

In August the World Small Animal Veterinary Association Conference took place in Sydney for one week. This is a notable event on our calendar as it only comes around once a year and is held rarely in Australia. It importantly encourages international communication within the veterinary industry. It enables both vets and nurses to meet like minded members of different countries, allowing them to share their experiences and knowledge, make new contacts and friends and, as well, catch up with old friends and acquaintances. During the week lectures were held on topics as diverse as cardiology, behaviour and safe anaesthetic protocols.

In the morning tea and lunch breaks we had the chance to visit the main hall of the conference centre and wander around the various stalls hawking goods and information about the latest products.

Three of our vets spent a number of days at the conference attending lectures thus following the philosophy of continuing education that we consider so important at SVH. Jenny Short, one of my fellow nurses, and I were also lucky enough to attend, spending one day each at the site and listening to some very interesting talks. Jen sat in upon a lecture that furthered her (and so our own) knowledge about safe anaesthetic practices, as well as two others, one on dentistry and extractions and another focusing on the care of emergency patients. I attended a set of management courses concerned with issues of recruitment and staff appraisal as well as



### News Column

- **A big thanks to all staff who assisted at the Dogs' Day Out!**
- **Staff promotions under way!**  
Read all about it in our next issue
- **Painting and decorating coming soon!**



squeezing in a lecture on the enrichment of environment for the dog and cat. (how to entertain your hound and moggy whilst you are at work.)  
All in all it was a fun and informative conference.

## Euthanasia

By DR Rob Miller (Veterinarian)

Θάνατος, pronounced *thanatos*, is Greek for death, euthanatos means easy death.

Euthanasia is a taboo subject to some degree, but I have noticed many people really want to know so much about it when the issue arises.

Death is inevitable.

At the end of our pets and indeed our own lives we hope for an easy pain free passing.

In the veterinary world euthanasia is possible, whereas in most countries around the world, euthanasia of humans is illegal.

As small animal veterinary surgeons, we have been charged with this great responsibility for the animals under our care. It is certainly not something we relish. We have trained for years to care and treat ill animals.

Sometimes it is easy to advise euthanasia such as when an animal arrives at the surgery in such a terrible condition that it would be overtly cruel to keep it alive any longer.

At the other end of the spectrum it can be a difficult decision when someone treats us as merely public executioners of animals. Personally I will not carry out such euthanasia. All vets face an ethical dilemma when placed in such difficult, uncomfortable circumstances.

Euthanasia is an unpleasant part of our job. So why am I writing this article? At some stage if you have a pet you will have to make a decision. It is a lot easier if you have an informed opinion from your vet.

As vets we will guide you based upon our medical knowledge and also on what most people do in similar circumstances.

Once the decision is made then there are options. Most people opt for euthanasia at the surgery, but 10-15% prefer a house call as they feel their pet will be less stressed in their home environment. Euthanasia is carried out by injection. I always tell my clients that what is felt is no more than what was experienced during their anaesthetic induction at desexing. The animal rapidly falls asleep, and passes away soon after. It is a very surreal experience, especially when the animal has been suffering, to suddenly realise they are instantly at peace.

Client's are often very emotional at these times, and we encourage them not to hide their emotions, nor to be embarrassed. In my experience clients who appear to be big tough guys often turn out to be the most openly emotional: expressing their deep seated love for their pets.

Personally I do not recommend very young children to be present, I guess because I experienced it myself at that age and it devastated me for a long time.

What after? What happens with the remains? There is the sudden realisation that this hard decision also has to be made. Personally I think if you can bury your pet at home it gives the

most closure. But on the Northern Beaches where the sandstone is never deep down it is often not an option.

These day pet cremation is as often chosen as burial. Ashes can be returned for a keepsake, or sprinkled about all their pets favourite haunts. It helps.

At the end of the day, rejoice in the fact that your pet has likely had a wonderful long happy life, and this is a rare gift given to too few animals in this world.



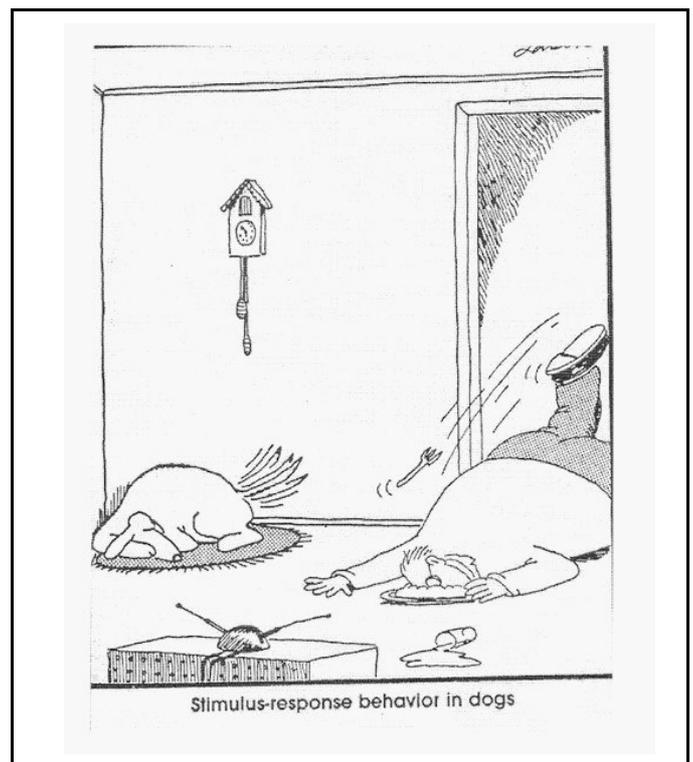
## Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks

Evan Cariola (Student Veterinary Intern)

Training your dog (or cat, bird or ferret for that matter) has many benefits for both you and your pet. Some of these benefits are obvious, for example teaching your dog to come when you call can save it from being hit by a car as it bolts towards a busy road. Others may be less apparent at a glance, for example the way that a positive training session can strengthen the bond between pet and owner and provide important mental stimulation for the both of you.

Despite what the age-old saying may have you believe, you CAN teach an old dog new tricks and for the reasons above (and many others) it is well worth your while to do so. Once you understand the principles of training you will find that with careful consideration, practice and perseverance, you will be able to teach your dog to do anything you like, provided that it is within his physical capabilities.

Good trainers now rely on positive reinforcement as their method of teaching. In a nutshell this involves rewarding a desired behaviour (e.g. a 'sit') so that it occurs more often in future. While, the principles of teaching through positive reinforcement are quite simple they are by no means



intuitive. Without some basic instruction in the use of these methods, it is all too easy for a training session to end with the trainer frustrated and angry, and the puppy confused or even scared. For this reason we recommend a course of puppy preschool followed by a course of training classes with a suitably qualified trainer (e.g. Delta accredited) to start you and your new puppy off on the right foot (or paw, as it were) - ask at reception for further information.

Regular training sessions should not stop as soon as your new puppy graduates from his first series of training classes. Once you have an understanding of how to teach your dog the simple things (sit, stay, come etc.), the benefits of training can be maintained throughout his life if you continue to teach your adult dog new tricks at home, or at least practice the old ones. Many owners lament how their puppy would always come when they called but now that he's grown up he only comes when he feels like it. In many cases, this is because the reinforcement (reward) for the behaviour has stopped. While it is not essential to reward your dog with a food treat every time he does the right thing, you must not forget to reward occasionally (a variable reinforcement schedule) or else your dog will quickly learn that it is no longer worth complying with your requests. Consider the way that poker machines pay out at variable intervals to maintain interest.

As suggested in my opening sentence, the principles above do not apply only to dogs. Through positive reinforcement you can teach your cat to sit, your cocky to shake hands or even teach your husband to put the toilet-seat down. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination and the physical abilities of your subject.

For more information on training through positive reinforcement, I highly recommend *Don't Shoot the Dog* by Karen Pryor.

## *Seaforth Vets at Dogs Day Out in Manly*

### **By Kath Salier (veterinary Nurse)**

What a great success the Dogs' Day Out was! This doggie event was organised by Manly Council and held in August at Manly Lagoon Reserve. The objective of the day was to promote responsible pet ownership and encourage micro-chipping and registration. There were plenty of fun activities such as agility (obstacle course for dogs), training demonstrations, competitions, stalls and educational workshops. There was also Q & A sessions with dog behaviour experts, Veterinarians and Manly Council Dog rangers. SVH held a stall again this year and we had lots of giveaways! Our focus was on client education



Mrs Austen at our stall in Manly

## *Thoughts From Doogles*

### **By Doogles the Dog**

Dear Readers, I am most flattered to be able to write this column for the "Howler" and would like to invite you (or your dog!) to apply for select membership, if they wish to drink deep from the cup of canine knowledge.

I am a fully fledged Spiritual Leader and have many followers from around the world.

My dad is the Membership Secretary for my followers club and acceptance is by no means

a formality as I have to be certain that those chosen will indeed represent the cause.

Every two weeks I publish an update which will give my views on various aspects of life, ranging from politics to arts and entertainment and of course, the merits of sniffing a tree.

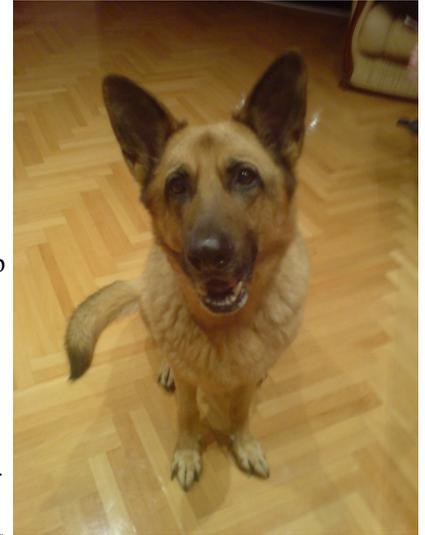
I end with the thought of the week....'Never in the history of Canine conflict have so many trees been sniffed by so many but christened by so few.'

Kindest Regards, Doogles

### **How to Apply**

E-mail me at:

Dooglesgoodtail@hotmail.com



so our bags contained samples of high quality food (because good nutrition is very important) brochures containing information about tick control (very important at this time of year), shampoo samples (soap free so it does not wash off any flea and tick products you may be using – very important!) and of course some fun toys and gift vouchers. Needless to say we managed to give away a lot of bags in a very short period of time! On the whole we all had a great day, gave out lots of treats, spoke to lots of dogs (and their owners) and generally enjoyed the vibe of the Dogs Day Out!

## *Media Snippets...*

### **By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

*Here are a few interesting snippets I have come across these past few months.....*

### **Raining Cats and Dogs?**

You have heard this expression but.....

In the Russian town of Sarov, in August this year a crocodile fell from its owner's 12th storey flat.

The one metre caiman crocodile landed on a footpath after leaning too far out of the window of the flat where it had lived for the last

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## Media Snippets...

15 years.

Frightened passers-by called the emergency services and rescuers managed to lasso the stunned animal and take it to a shelter for stray pets.

It was soon returned to its owner, unharmed apart from damage to one of its teeth, the official said.

**....Lesson, microchip your Croc. and give it flying lessons.**

### **Cat Trigger allergy in 25% of People**

Household cats can trigger allergic reactions in more than a quarter of the population, suggesting the pets have a far greater impact on human health than doctors had previously believed, scientists warned yesterday. A study of nearly 2,000 volunteers across Europe found that cats could cause breathing difficulties in people with some of the most common allergies.

Researchers think even a small exposure to cats is enough to aggravate symptoms similar to the early stages of asthma if people are already sensitised to common allergens such as house dust mites, timothy grass and a mould called *Cladosporidium*. "People need to be aware that cats are a problem for more people than we realised," said Susan Chinn, lead author of the study at Imperial College London. "If they're thinking of getting a pet and a cat is just one of their options, they might want to pause before choosing."

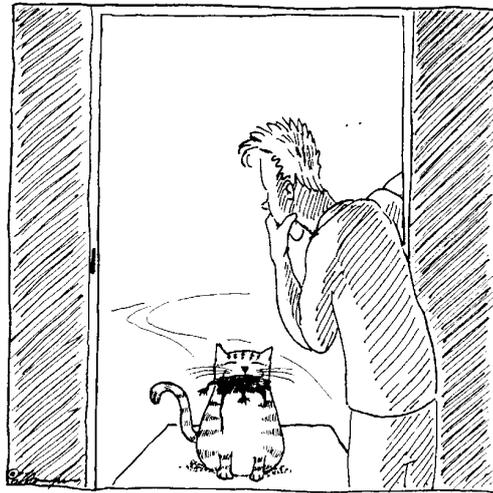
**.....all I can say is leave our cats alone you scientists! Cough on cat lovers! (Ed)**

### **A sad reflection on man's interference in nature...**

The Yangtze river dolphin, until recently one of the most endangered species on the planet, has been declared officially extinct following an intensive survey of its natural habitat.

The freshwater marine mammal, which could grow to eight feet long and weigh up to a quarter of a tonne, is the first large vertebrate forced to extinction by human activity in 50 years, and only the fourth time an entire evolutionary line of mammals has vanished from the face of the Earth since the year 1500.

**Next time you rush to blame the hapless Indian Minor as a destroyer of habitat, stop to think about the truly great destroyers of habitat, Mankind (Ed)**



FELINE AFFECTION

(Cartoon Courtesy of Dr Libby Thompson)

## Natural Treatments

**By Dr Hendrika Tegelaar (Veterinarian)**

As veterinarians treating a wide range of diseases daily many treatment options are open to us, especially for those more chronic diseases such as arthritis, chronic intestinal upsets and anxiety disorders.

Arthritis, as we all know, is a continually progressive disease process often going initially unnoticed especially in animals who tend to hide their first signs. There are many drugs on the market to ease pain and make the animal more comfortable but also products which can change the course of a disease by, slowing down the process and giving greater mobility and ease of movement. A big part of this is a course of injections we recommend after joint surgery and at the first sign of arthritis. The course consists of 4 weekly injections of pentosan polysulphate, trade named *Zydax*.

This enzyme works in four ways in all joints of the body but it is particularly effective in inflamed damaged joints.

1. Increases blood supply to the bone, which supports the cartilage (hence bone needs to have good strength and condition).
2. Stimulates cartilage matrix production encouraging healing over the defects in the joint.
3. Increases the viscosity of the fluid in the joint to improve buffering and reduce wear and tear.
4. Reduces inflammation and pain.

Food additives such as **Osteosupport** which is highly concentrated green lipped mussel extract also helps in reducing inflammation in the joint hence easing pain and giving dogs much freer movement and improving activity and quality of life. **Osteocare** biscuits supply the nutrients and building blocks for cartilage repair so aid the injections to give best results.

Homoeopathic and herbal remedies may also be beneficial in reducing inflammation and pain eg **Joint Relief Formula**.

We also carry a **Digestive Formula** for animals with chronic irritable bowel with a mixture of slippery elm, peppermint and others agents to soothe and relax the bowel.

For dogs and cats who suffer anxiety when left alone, or during thunderstorms or fireworks (or just need the edge taken off their anxiety) there is a mixture that in my view has proven to be very helpful. This is a mixture of chamomile, valerian and other herbs, is called **Anxiety**.

These days many people prefer the more natural herbal additives, reserving the stronger medications to later.