

MECA NEWS

Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals
Greater Milwaukee's Choice for Prompt Animal ER Care, 24/7



UPDATE FROM MARLA

Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, DACVECC
Owner, Board-Certified in Emergency & Critical Care

I am proud to say that MECA is the only animal ER hospital in Wisconsin where a Critical Care Diplomate personally manages all the cases in the Emergency and Critical Care Department seven days a week. This level of training requires an extra four years of instruction compared to the training of a typical ER veterinarian. Several of our doctors—Jochman, Temo and I—have this advanced training in emergency and critical care medicine and surgery, and run the ICU at MECA.

We provide primary case management, supervision and guidance for all of the cases. We act as the patient's advocate in identifying all diagnostic and treatment options, gaining an accurate prognosis and administering advanced life support. We also help facilitate the clients' decision-making process by coordinating consults obtained from the primary care veterinarian and other specialty doctors.

Your pet's survival, following an injury or severe illness, will ultimately hinge to a substantial degree on the extent of training and experience of the treating veterinarians.

At MECA, rest assured that we've got your pet covered.

3670 S. 108th Street • Greenfield, WI 53228 • 414-543-7387

Baby Pacifier Nearly Kills Dalmatian

Modern veterinary surgery saves him

An innocuous plastic object designed for a human baby nearly ended the life of a canine one. Ted, a 10-month-old Dalmatian, managed to swallow a pacifier, which caused what would have been lethal internal damage.

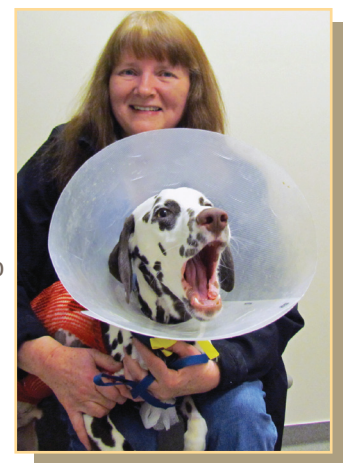
"Ted had eaten a pacifier that eventually went from his stomach into his small intestine," recalls MECA surgeon David Brdecka, DVM. "The pressure from the rubber pacifier caused a hole to form in the intestine and leak into the abdominal cavity, leading to Ted becoming so sick," explained Dr. Brdecka. To fix the hole, the diseased portion of the intestine had to be removed and the remaining two ends sewed back together.

Ted had a bout of vomiting and diarrhea a few months before coming to the ER, and for the most part, it resolved with conservative management. Ted would vomit intermittently until it became more frequent.

The pacifier that was stuck in his intestine had broken through the intestinal wall and caused intestinal contents to leak into his abdomen and cause an infection in the abdomen, known as peritonitis. Ted's owners were informed of the findings and surgery was recommended on an emergency basis if Ted had any chance of surviving.

The intensive anesthesia and surgery allowed Ted to get into the intensive care unit (ICU) and on his way to recovery. He was treated with pain medications and antibiotics and improved day by day, and eventually made a full recovery and went home.

"Ted is living proof of how specialty disciplines, in the veterinary field, such as critical care and surgery can work together to maximize our chances of success in cases that otherwise have may have had a different outcome," said Dr. Brdecka.



Ted's owner urges all parents with babies to use pacifiers that connect with a string to the baby's clothing, so they don't end up on the floor, threatening the life of a curious dog.

Massive Patient Leads to Small Animal Practice

Back in the day, a younger Dale Hermann was a volunteer at the Milwaukee County Zoo, and was the guy who drove the Zoomobile. But Hermann also had the opportunity to assist a veterinarian there with a necropsy (animal equivalent of an autopsy) on an elephant.



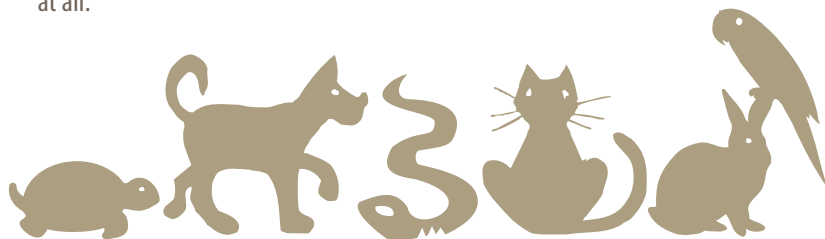
"I was hooked" after that experience, recounts Dr. Hermann, owner of New Berlin Animal Hospital, where he runs a small animal practice. The elephant may have cemented his interest in pursuing veterinary medicine,

but Hermann's passion would lie in much smaller creatures—dogs, cats, birds, small caged pets and reptiles.

"I saw a bullfrog that swallowed a plastic plant," he recalls. There was also chemotherapy for a screech owl and middle-of-the-night surgery on a golden retriever who ate a Little Pony toy.

Doctor Hermann loves both the animals and the variety the profession offers, and he's continually impressed with the advances that have occurred over the years. "It's gotten a lot more sophisticated," he says. "There's more specialized equipment, greater surgical options and diagnostics, and ultimately, better care for patients," adds Dr. Hermann.

Since a pet elephant is out of the question, Doctor Hermann and his wife have settled for a cat named Buck, who he describes as "kind of a thug." Unlike his owner, he says, "He doesn't like other animals at all."



Heavy Dogs at Risk for Joint Problems

By David Brdecka, DVM, DACVS

Excess weight is a real killer for dogs because it can hasten arthritis progression and adversely affect their longevity. About 80% of the dogs I see for orthopedic problems have the degenerative joint disease osteoarthritis (OA), and it's linked to their being overweight. Being too heavy is a problem not only for abnormal joints, but for other issues as well. A study looked at two groups of dogs with the same parents and followed them throughout their lives. One group was given free choice food and was overweight and the other was kept at a normal weight. The thinner dogs had less metabolic issues, less OA and lived significantly longer.

There are many surgeries out there that will drastically help a dog with OA, but they will do even better with long-term weight loss along with the surgery rather than just surgery alone. In addition, dogs that are lighter will minimize the risk of complications that can be seen with orthopedic surgery. Skinny dogs can still suffer from OA or other orthopedic problems, but they may stay comfortable longer without the need for medications, especially in instances when there is no surgical treatment for the cause of the problem.

By far the two most common areas we see OA that affects dogs are the stifle/knee joint, as a result of cranial cruciate ligament disease, and the hip joint, as a result of hip dysplasia. As soon as there is an initiator of OA, it will continue to progress. There is no way to stop it. At that point all we can do is try to slow it down with either conservative medical management alone or in combination with a surgical procedure, when possible.

So keeping your dog trim is just one of the powerful ways to lessen the risk of getting OA. What's more, a good diet is a relatively inexpensive alternative to medical care. Careful nutrition also has other positive effects that will make your dog happier and healthier for the long run!

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