

# 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

With fall having arrived and holidays approaching, it's time to think carefully about preventing serious seasonally-related problems that can harm and even kill our pets.

As the cold weather starts to roll in, many owners will replace their car's antifreeze in the garage or on the driveway. Beware, as there is an active ingredient, ethylene glycol, which is very sweet but can be fatal to your pet. As little as 1-2 tablespoons of the substance can kill a pet. If you suspect that your pet has ingested antifreeze, take him or her to the veterinarian immediately. A blood test can be done to confirm ingestion and if positive, treatment can be quickly started. Prevention is the key, keeping pets out of the garage, keep cars from dripping antifreeze on the ground and keep antifreeze in a enclosed cabinet.

Antifreeze isn't the only threat that tastes sweet. Chocolate is a favorite holiday treat, but which poses serious issues for pets. Chocolate contains a stimulant that can be toxic to your pet if consumed in sufficient quantities. Dark chocolate and bakers chocolate have the highest concentration of stimulant per ounce. The signs of toxicity are tremors, hyper-excitability and vomiting and diarrhea. Later signs can even include seizures. If you suspect your pet has ingested chocolate, call your veterinarian and inform him or her of the quantity ingested. If the quantity is toxic, the veterinarian will advise that you bring the pet to the hospital for induction of vomiting and intravenous fluids.

*Continued next page...*

## Securing Meds the Right Prescription for Safe Pets

Dogs, cats and other creatures are curious and can get into just about anything lying about the house. In fact, a common complaint in the animal ER is the ingestion of various types of human and animal medication. Be aware that many common medications can be toxic to furry family members.

Here are some tips to help avoid this dangerous situation:

- **Keep all medications**, both for pets and humans, securely stored in an area where pets do not have access. Medications should also be kept in child-proof containers.
- **Do not give any** over-the-counter medications to your pet without consulting with your veterinarian – some common human medications are toxic to pets. For example; Tylenol (acetaminophen) is toxic to cats, causing liver failure and damage to red blood cells.
- **If you suspect** that your pet has ingested medication, contact your veterinarian. It is best to treat potential toxicity cases as soon as possible. The veterinarian may contact the ASPCA Poison Control Center (888-426-4435). This is a national hotline, staffed by veterinary toxicologists, that maintains a database of toxicities from human and animal medications. This service can help us to determine the best and most recent recommendations for treatment of your pet.
- **In many cases**, if ingestion was recent, decontamination will be part of the treatment plan. This can involve inducing vomiting, or giving medications such as activated charcoal to bind toxin that is left in the intestinal tract and help prevent



its absorption. Other treatments will depend on the type of medication ingested and may include fluid therapy.

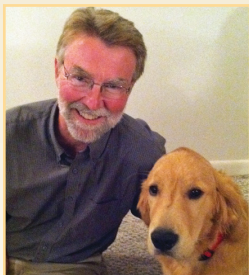
A little precaution on the front end, with respect to medication storage, can save you and your pet a lot of grief.



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

## West Allis Vet has Seen it All *by Steve Busalacchi*

It can be exciting to have a veterinary practice near State Fair Park. One day, two guys from the midway dropped by West Allis Animal Hospital with a 60-pound python. "It was six to eight inches at its widest point," recalls Dr. Brian Nelson, who's been with the Hospital since he graduated from veterinary school in 1978. He now owns it. Nelson's practice focuses on dogs, cats and ferrets, so it was quite a departure to inject a huge



snake with Vitamin A and Vitamin B. "But I was more frightened by the guys from the midway than the snake," says Dr. Nelson with a hearty laugh.

More commonly, he treats dogs, one of

which had a proclivity for eating underwear. "We've done five gastric foreign body surgeries on this pit bull," says Dr. Nelson. As a general practice veterinarian, he also enjoys soft tissue surgery on other pets, much of it on ferrets. He says they tend to develop tumors, which respond well to surgical removal.

Nelson's lifelong love of animals extends to his own family, with three dogs and two cats. No snakes.



## First Aid Course for Pet Owners NOVEMBER 22

What would you do if your pet suddenly required emergency help? If you don't know, get the training necessary to help pets in distress. Dr. Marla Lichtenberger, owner of Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals and Specialty Services, teaches the first aid courses and CPR certification.

"Knowing what steps to take in an emergency could save your pet's life," says Dr. Lichtenberger. "I know because I've seen animals that have survived only because their informed pet owners took quick action to help their furry friends." The Wisconsin Humane Society first presented this popular course, primarily designed for new pet owners.

"We have a first aid course every 3-4 months and donate all the money to a humane society or rescue organizations," says Dr. Lichtenberger. The course is \$60 and includes a first aid book, CPR certification certificate and a 2-hour course. The next course is November 22, for Happy Endings rescue.

For more information, please call (414) 543-PETS or visit [erforanimals.org](http://erforanimals.org).

## Fiber-Rich Diet Essential for Guinea Pig/Rabbit Health

*by Katie Williams, DVM, Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, DACVECC*

Pet rabbits and guinea pig commonly suffer from an often preventable condition called "bloat" or gastric stasis. The animal suffers from a decreased appetite or anorexia, decreased stool production, and/or a distended and sometimes painful abdomen. Signs are often acute.

Gastric stasis has several causes, including inappropriate diet, stress, and/or pain from another underlying disorder or illness. The most common cause is inadequate fiber in the diet. Rabbits and guinea pigs that eat large amounts of pellets often develop signs of bloat due to the low fiber in these diets. Timothy hay should always be fed as the majority of the diet in these pets.

Veterinarians use abdominal radiographs to diagnose the disease and evaluate the GI tract. In animals with gastric stasis, the stomach is usually distended with air. They also may consider blood analysis to evaluate for an underlying metabolic cause.

Gastric stasis can often be treated successfully in the hospital. IV fluids, motility agents, force feedings, and pain medications are among the treatments given. Owner often will need to syringe feed their pets once they're sent home until they are eating well on their own again.

Prevention is the best medicine for this disease. Rabbits and guinea pigs should be fed good quality hay and only small amounts of pelleted diet. Regular veterinary care ensures that the animal is not developing any conditions, such as dental disease, that may predispose them to the development of gastric stasis.

### Update from Marla...continued from other side:

As the weather gets cooler, mice and rats have a tendency to come indoors, too. Home owners will sometimes use rodent bait products. Most of these products will prevent blood from clotting in these pests. Unfortunately, when pets ingest this poison, they also suffer internal and external bleeding. If you suspect that your pet has ingested a rodenticide, you must bring your pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible. The veterinarian will administer vitamin K1, which is the antidote.

I hope these fall weather tips keep our furry friends safe and out of the ER.

### Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals (MECA)

24/7 ER Veterinary Service  
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