



Stacey Chappell, DVM

Dr. Stacey Chappell is a seasoned veterinarian with 20 years' experience with small animals. He spent most of his earlier career as the owner and medical director of a veterinary emergency hospital, gaining vast experience in diagnosing, treating critical care patients and performing advanced surgical procedures.

After taking over Animal Medical Centre of Greensboro, PA, in August 2014, Dr. Chappell now enjoys forming lasting relationships with his clients and patients based on lifetime preventive care.

Preventive Care: *Changing Roles and Setting Goals*

As a society, we love our pets! There are more than 140 million pets in the U.S. with the number fairly evenly divided between dogs and cats, with about 70 million of each. For 2013 the total expenditure on these pets was a little over 55 BILLION dollars, with veterinary care contributing 15 billion to this number. "Supplies and over the counter medications" contributed a nearly equal amount at 14 billion. Those are HUGE amounts of money. Corporate America realizes it and tries very hard to capture as much of it as possible. The end result is a plethora of products, a bombardment of advertising, and a consumer who is left wondering what is best for their pet.

In addressing preventive care here, I would like to offer a new perspective. I seriously doubt there is anyone left in America that does not know that their dogs and cats need "shots" and "deworming" and they sure do wish they could find a flea medicine that worked!! They have bought something different each time when they went to Costco, Walmart, Target, and the local feed store. But THEY STILL HAVE FLEAS!! Dr. Google even mentions "Brazilian oils" to control fleas. Hmmmm, do we put the oils on the food, pour them on the pet, or catch the fleas and put them into the oil? This stuff is SOOO confusing!

Well, settle in for a few minutes and let's see if we can't make this a whole lot easier and more rewarding for everyone. And no, I will not be listing diseases that should be vaccinated against and at what interval. Nor will I offer opinions on which of the previously mentioned "plethora" of products I think work best. But instead, I would like to suggest a way to better help you and your pet navigate this maze by changing your role as primary care giver for your pet, and look at setting goals for what we would all like to achieve with our furry family members.

Back in the 1980's or so we began to use the term "human-animal bond" to define the relationship we have with our pets. Overall, this concept served our pets well. By acknowledging what they mean to us emotionally, their place was elevated to that of a family member rather than just an "owned" animal with a set economic value like a farm animal.

For example, if a dairy cow needs \$1200

in veterinary care and she can be replaced for \$1000, she likely won't receive that care. Contrast this with the kitten your daughter got for her birthday. If that kitten breaks its leg and is given an estimate of \$500-700 for repair, the responsible owner provides for that repair, even though a "new kitten" could be obtained for a seventy five dollar adoption fee...or for free in the local paper.

Despite the success of elevating our animals to family member status, I would like to re-evaluate this "human-animal bond" and take it to the next level. Merely owning an animal and loving and caring for it to the best of your ability satisfies the "human-animal bond". With animal loosely defined as any living creature and pet defined as an animal kept as a companion and cared for affectionately, the new bond we discuss should use the term pet instead. Also, we replace the broad term human with responsible pet owner, defined as someone who is committed to providing for the medical, physical, and emotional well-being of their pet for the duration of their life.

To this newly defined relationship of "Responsible Owner-Pet", we need to add the term "veterinary". We will define veterinary as not just the veterinarian, but the entire team at a given practice, because we share a common goal. That goal is to utilize all the expertise and product development our profession provides to maximize the relationship you have with your pets.

Find a veterinary team that you like and trust and you now have the newly termed "Responsible Pet Owner-Pet-Veterinary" relationship that is paramount to navigating the maze of preventive care.

It is within this relationship that you are free to most enjoy your pet as a companion and family member. You no longer need to concern yourself with the specifics of vaccines and which diseases you need to protect against. You don't worry over active ingredients of flea and tick preventives and which are best, or safest, or their duration of action. Is there an insect growth regulator present or does the product only kill adult fleas? Can I give the same product to my cat too, or is it just for dogs. Oh yeah, my neighbor's dog had whipworms the last time they went to the vet. Let me Google "whipworms in dogs" so I can learn their life

cycle and how would my dog become infected. CAN my dog even go back to my neighbor's house? Max has been itching a lot. The part time sales clerk at the local Big Box Pet Store said they just starting carrying a new line of dog food that touts Cassava root and a liver extract derived from the Cambodian fire eel that will stop my dog from itching. Should we buy this food? After all, have you ever seen a Cambodian fire eel itch? Makes sense, huh?.....well no, it doesn't.

You, as a responsible pet owner, should not be a consumer of veterinary products! That is what I want to illustrate. You shouldn't come into our offices and say I want one of product X and one of product Y. Instead you and your pet become consumers of veterinary services. For example, you shouldn't buy flea medicine from Costco and vaccines from the feed store and hope you get it right. Rather you ask your veterinarian to provide you with a protocol that meets our goals of protecting your pet from the most dangerous infectious diseases, protecting your pet from both internal and external parasites and the diseases they transmit. Your team will provide age appropriate screenings of body system functions (lab work, radiographs, advanced diagnostics), proper dental care, and sound nutrition. There are many variations to these protocols based on the lifestyle and age of your pet. But again, you don't even need to worry yourself over that, we will. See how easy this can be?

Now, before you berate me for being pompous or dismissive of your input, let me ensure you that is not the case. Our best clients are informed clients. A huge part of this relationship is ensuring that you understand why we make the decisions we make about your pet's care. And, yes it does sound self-serving when I ask that you see us for your respective products. Again, this is not the case. Let's not forget the age old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". This has proven to be true SO MANY TIMES.

For example, in our hospital now is a little puppy we are treating for a parvo infection (nationwide average cost to treat parvo is \$1000-\$2000). Parvo vaccinations are about \$25. Pretty simple math. Not to mention what the puppy and his family have to endure.

So, it is safe to say that I am proud to be a veterinarian. I am also proud of my profession and the care that we are able to provide. The "team" approach to preventive care that I describe is no small undertaking but it is the most effective and most efficient means to our mutual goal of maximizing our relationships with our pets.

Science has proven that pets enhance our lives. Let's do all we can to enhance theirs! Do yourself and your pet a favor and create a preventive care team, soon! Maximize your interaction with your pet. We will provide the care, you provide the love!

**Animal Medical Centre of
Greensboro, PA**

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