

Ask the Vet



Kelley Gebhardt, DVM

Dr. Kelley Gebhardt graduated from North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2005. While in veterinary school, Dr. Gebhardt worked with cardiologists in researching feline hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, one of the most common heart conditions of young, male cats. Because of her interest in emergency medicine and alleviating pain in pets, she devoted extra time during veterinary school to studying with emergency/critical care specialists and pain management specialists at the NC State Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Since graduation, Dr. Gebhardt

has worked in both general practice and in emergency medicine. Her passion for emergency medicine inspired her and her family to open the Happy Tails Veterinary Emergency Clinic in February 2008.

Dr. Gebhardt is happily married to her husband, Lee Allen (Clinic Director of HTVEC). They share their home with their four furry children – one dog (Nugget) and three cats (TJ Meow Meow, Uno, and Nimbus). In their limited spare time, Dr. Gebhardt and Lee enjoy hiking with their dog, mountain biking, kayaking, and spending time outdoors.

Hot Topics Discussed By Pet Owners in the Veterinary ER

Why can't someone tell me over the phone what's wrong with my pet?

First, giving medical advice over the phone (or via the internet) is illegal and prohibited by the NC Veterinary Medical Board. Second, it is very difficult to accurately determine what is wrong with a pet without a full medical history, physical exam, and possible diagnostic tests. Symptoms communicated over the phone are often misleading. For instance, we often have owners call stating that their pet is straining to defecate because they are constipated. When in reality, the pet is straining because they have diarrhea or may actually be straining to urinate. Without obtaining a full medical history and performing an exam, it would not be possible to accurately diagnose the problem.

Why can't a veterinary emergency clinic refill medications that were prescribed by my regular veterinarian?

It is illegal for a veterinarian to prescribe medication without examining the pet and establishing a veterinary-client-patient relationship. This is required by the DEA and the NC Veterinary Medical Board.

My sick pet just had blood work sent off by my regular veterinarian, but they won't have the results back until tomorrow. Why do you need to repeat the blood work?

Having the blood work results in the moment allows us to assess your pet's systemic health, better advise you on what may be causing your pet's symptoms, and determine the best treatment recommendations.

Why can't you access my pet's medical record from my regular veterinarian?

Our veterinary clinic is a completely separate hospital and business from all of the daytime veterinary clinics in the area. While we

work together with your regular veterinarian to provide the best care for your pet, we do not have access to their medical records, x-rays, or computer system; and they do not have access to ours. For this reason, we give you a copy of your pet's x-rays and fax a complete medical record to your regular veterinarian.

Why are veterinary emergency clinics so expensive?

The pricing for our products and services is very close to what most regular veterinarians charge. Unfortunately, the patients that we see on emergency are often sick or have serious problems (i.e. heart failure, traumatic injuries, toxicities, etc.), which require extensive diagnostics, treatments, and hospitalization. Therefore, a trip to an emergency clinic will almost always be more expensive than a trip to your regular veterinarian for a healthy pet annual exam. Pet insurance is designed to help defray the costs of pet emergencies and is worth considering if you own a pet.

Why does a pet emergency visit take so long?

Veterinary emergency clinics function with a flow similar to human emergency rooms. The sickest and most critically injured patients are seen first. However, we try to see everyone in a timely way. The length of your visit will depend on how many sick or critically injured patients are being seen by the veterinarian. If there are no other patients in the hospital and your pet's medical needs are minor, your pet may be treated and discharged in less than an hour. However, if there are multiple critically ill or injured patients being seen at the same time, then your visit may be much longer (2-4 hours). We know that emergencies are unexpected and stressful. After all, no one plans an emergency! We always appreciate your patience and understanding while we attend to your pet and to our other patients.

See ad for Happy Tails Veterinary Emergency Clinic on page 29.