



## Deborah Cowan, DVM Animal Hospital of Walnut Cove

Doctor Deborah Cowan graduated from NCSU-CVM in 1993. She has been working with Exotic animals since 1982 when she attended North Carolina A&T University for her BA in Lab Animal Science. She was part of the group that started the Wildlife Rehabilitation League in 1978. In addition, Doctor Cowan

has done a month long internship at Texas A&M, Galveston campus in Fish Medicine.

## Summertime, ...let's help make the living easy

It's almost summer and time to do fun stuff, let's remember that bringing wild animals into a home environment should not be one of those things. Leave turtles, birds, snakes, wild rabbits, frogs, salamanders, newts in their own environment. They are not meant to be pets. They need the wild outdoors to help them thrive and grow. Observe them in their natural environment and learn from them.

—Rabbits: Pet rabbits do not like the heat, and do not fare well outdoors. They have been bred to be domesticated and do much better in cooler temperatures. As the temperature gets past 75° their comfort zone is very diminished. If you must keep them outdoors, try to ensure that they have fans, plenty of fresh water and extreme shade. Indoors is even better. Rabbits make great pets since they can be litter box trained. They also do well in their kennels when you have something else to do, and do enjoy peace and quiet.



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—Pigs: If you have a pot belly pig that has been staying indoors, summer is not when you put them out. They can and do get sunburned. They enjoy warmth, but they really do need lots of shade and fresh water. One of the reasons that they wallow in mud holes is to keep flies off themselves. You can use Avon Skin So Soft® original bath oils on their skin to help keep flies and other insects off them. They do need shelter and secure surroundings to prevent dogs and coyotes getting to them, they cannot defend themselves.

—Birds: You can put their cages on screened porches. It is best NOT to hang them out in trees etc. Other wild birds carry both diseases and parasites that can fatally affect your pet. Make sure that they cannot get out and that no neighbors' kitties can get to them either.

—Fish: Fish deserve veterinary care. If you have taken on the responsibility of a "pet" fish, then you should be willing to help them if they are sick, if they are having medical problems. Husbandry: the quality of the water, the aeration of the water, the type of water, the ph, the temperature, the type and amount of food that you feed, how many fish and the lighting necessary, are some of the issues that normally tend to cause illness and disease in fish. They are very easy to prevent.



—Pocket Pets: Hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs, English hedgehogs and sugar gliders, should all have a yearly check up to ensure that teeth are not overgrowing, their hearts are not having issues, they are not developing cancer and their nutrition is up to date. They deserve the same care as dogs and cats. They are living creatures that should be cared for with the same consideration given to all pets.

—Reptiles: Snakes, lizards, turtles, etc. also tend to have more problems due to husbandry. Once again, things that we do or do not do correctly, can cause environmental and health problems. By taking these pets to the veterinarian once per year, you can greatly improve their health and also the quality of their lives, as your veterinarian gives you information that will help you provide the best husbandry possible. Many people spend large amounts of monies on these animals, yet lose them due to improper care. Please contact us and we will gladly send you information.



Most of these pets do not require vaccinations, therefore owners do not realize that there are diseases that they can and do get that are caused by us the humans. By taking them to your veterinarian once per year and having them checked out, you can help them live long, healthy happy lives and you can enjoy the company of your pet.



Animal Hospital of Walnut Cove has been seeing and helping exotic pets for over 20 years. Please call us for more information and to make appointments at 336-591-8250, and/or visit our webpage at: [www.animalhospitalwalnutcove.com](http://www.animalhospitalwalnutcove.com).