



Maria Garrett, VMD Greensboro Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Maria Garrett obtained her BS in Biology from Washington & Lee University in Virginia, her VMD from The University of Pennsylvania, and completed a small animal medicine and surgery internship in Charlotte, NC. Happy to be settled in Greensboro for the past several years, she and her husband Jonathon share their home with their inquisitive cat, Goose, and their rescue pups, Scout & Deacon. Dr. Garrett has fallen in love with Greensboro through her volunteer experiences with the Junior League of Greensboro, the March of Dimes

and the American Cancer Society Bark for Life event. Having always been fascinated by the human-animal bond, she also enjoys volunteering with therapeutic horseback riding programs and is currently in the process of training her dog for therapy work. A proud member of Christian Veterinary Mission, she has participated in two missions trips to Nicaragua with aspirations to return! Professionally, her interests are varied, as Dr. Garrett enjoys the diversity of general practice. Dr. Garrett feels privileged to be in this profession and considers it an honor to be entrusted with the care of your four-legged family members!

The Value of Loving Your Pet Through Preventative Care

Regular veterinary visits for your four-legged family member are not only essential for his or her longevity and quality of life, but will be economically more favorable for you, the pet owner, over your pet's lifetime. During a routine visit your veterinarian can detect early disease processes, administer vaccines for incurable diseases, provide valuable nutrition counseling, detect and treat pain, and prescribe preventative products for parasites that are not only potentially fatal but could also cause serious illness to people in the house. Working together with your veterinary team, you will be able to ensure that your pet is healthy and comfortable from puppy and kittenhood through his or her golden years!

Preventative Pet Care Visits—What to Expect

The first thing the veterinarian will do at a preventative health visit is take a history and perform a thorough examination of your pet. This allows for the detection of several diseases that can be nearly impossible to detect at home, such as heart, dental, joint, skin and ear disease to name just a few. Has your pet been exhibiting a change in behavior? This could be their way of telling you they are in pain or suffering. The doctor will also recommend a screening blood test to look for abnormalities undetectable on physical exam, such as kidney disease, thyroid disease and diabetes. Early detection of disease means more treatment options and improved longevity. Additionally, disease prevention is much more affordable than disease treatment!

Your veterinarian will then review with you recommended vaccinations for potentially incurable diseases based on your pet's lifestyle. The highly contagious and potentially fatal parvovirus (a very prevalent virus in North Carolina) can be prevented with a series of puppy vaccines and regular boosters that cost around \$20 each. The disease itself can cost \$1000-2000 to treat and, sadly, treatment is not always successful. Vaccine administration for any disease must be done by your veterinarian so that the appropriate vaccine is given correctly, at the right age and with the correct frequency.

Regular veterinary visits are an ideal opportunity to discuss your pet's nutrition. Pet food is a highly debated topic in recent years and there is tons of misinformation out there! For example, did you know that a high protein diet may actually be harmful for your pet? Your veterinarian's education and clinical experience make them the ideal resource for you and your pet in deciding what diet is appropriate

based on their breed, lifestyle, age and systemic health. Additionally, your veterinarian can show you how to evaluate your pet's body condition score (weight to body size ratio). Studies show that 45% of dogs and 58% of cats are overweight, and that a pet whose weight is ideal lives on average two years longer than an overweight animal. We all want our furry family members to be with us for as long as possible, but we may be loving them to death with incorrect nutritional choices.

Parasite prevention is another important topic that will be covered by your veterinarian. Parasites are not only potentially fatal to your pet, but some can be transmitted to people and cause serious illness. Each of the common parasites can make your pet critically ill, resulting in lengthy and expensive hospital stays. Prevention is the key! There are several products for sale that are ineffective or even potentially harmful to your pet. Your veterinarian can review with you the appropriate preventative products for fleas, ticks, intestinal parasites and heartworms.

Cats and Preventative Health Care

Studies show that cats are not being brought in for preventative visits as frequently as dogs. This is concerning because cats are much more likely to hide their illness than dogs. By the time a cat shows you they are not feeling well they could be critically ill. Symptoms such as decreased appetite and gradual weight loss can be imperceptible to owners, and pain is often hidden as a survival instinct. Early disease detection and treatment implementation can make a crucial difference in the patient's outcome.

We know that getting your cat to the veterinary hospital can be a challenging feat! To make your cat's carrier more appealing, leave the carrier with bedding open in a room in your house. Sprinkle catnip on the bottom and leave toys and treats in there. You can also try spraying the carrier with Feliway, a cat pheromone that reduces anxiety. If your cat is absolutely opposed to the carrier, you can try scooping them up in a pillow case. Always make sure that your cat is properly contained on their trip to the veterinarian!

Remember, loving your pet through routine preventative care from your veterinarian is more affordable than sick visits and will ensure that you enjoy the best possible bond with your pet for as long as possible!

See ad for Greensboro Veterinary Hospital on page 37.