

Feline Health Topics

for veterinarians

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Improving Relationships with Cat Breeders

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Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from Dr. Arnold's presentation given at the Comprehensive Seminar for Cat Breeders on August 15-16 at Cornell University. The seminar was cosponsored by the Cornell Feline Health Center, College of Veterinary Medicine's Continuing Education Department, and Cornell University's School of Continuing Education and Summer Session.

The veterinarian-breeder relationship is different from the usual pet owner relationship. When working with breeders, veterinarians should be flexible and willing to change some of the customary ways of providing care.

"Herd" Approach to Health

The veterinarian must consider the individual not just by itself, but also in relationship to the cattery of

which it is a part. There is a need to develop a "herd" approach, but not in the same context as a farmer raising livestock. If the cattery were analogous to a herd, decisions would be based entirely on economics, and emotional attachments to animals would not enter into the decision process. Medically, we are dealing with a multiple cat environment similar to a herd, but emotionally we are dealing with the human-animal bond.


The cattery environment is quite different than a typical pet environment. The veterinarian must consider such things as the mobility of cats in and out of the cattery due to shows, stud service, purchases, sales, and leasing. The number of cats, sanitation, housing, ventilation and nutrition are factors that affect the health of the individuals as well as the entire population.

Consideration of the whole cattery instead of just the individual patient will have marked effects on the way situations are handled. For example, one kitten with an upper respiratory infection might be successfully treated with antibiotics, while a cattery with endemic upper respiratory problems may require changes in management including identification of carrier cats, isolation procedures, evaluation of housing and ventilation, and evaluation of vaccination protocols. Similarly, one kitten with ringworm is a different problem than a cattery with ringworm.

The breeder's estimation of a particular cat's value may be very different than a pet owner's

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valuation. While all owners love their pets, the veterinarian should be sensitive to the importance a breeder may place on a show quality animal or one of a special bloodline. Frequently, a breeder will be more willing to pursue a diagnosis by sophisticated diagnostic tests and referral to universities or specialists. Sometimes cat breeders are much more demanding about getting answers than average cat-owning clients.

Client Education

The veterinarian should appreciate the client's participation and willingness to learn, since the best relationships are team efforts. The veterinarian can teach techniques such as administering subcutaneous fluids, giving injections and medications, and stomach tubing kittens. However, you must be assured that the client can accurately observe and assess the patient, will consult with you, and appropriately use medications. The breeder must have the wisdom and judgment to know when the problem can be treated at home and when the cat should be evaluated and treated by the veterinarian.

Veterinarians must be careful about dispensing medications to clients. However, once the client is educated and you trust that the client will call before commencing treatment, you can supply the client with antibiotics, fluids, oxytocin, and vaccines. This approach is similar to the relationship established by large animal veterinarians with their clients.

The veterinarian should be an educator and advisor in cattery management as well as individual patient care. This advice may include cattery planning and design, management of infectious diseases (i.e. vaccination and testing protocols, isolation and quarantine methods, appropriate use of disinfectants, and other husbandry measures), genetics, and heritable defects.

While veterinarians have a social and moral responsibility to educate the public about the importance of spaying and neutering, this approach is

inappropriate for breeders. For example, the standard treatment for a pet cat with pyometra is to spay it, but alternatives such as antibiotics and prostaglandins are more appropriate for quality breeding cats. Limited information is available on reproduction, so a veterinarian with a special interest in cat breeders must be willing to seek information and try different techniques. Since many problems related to reproduction present themselves as emergencies, it is helpful if the veterinarian and breeder have discussed in advance how to handle such situations. For example, if caesarian sections can be scheduled or at least performed before 12:00 P.M. (midnight) or after 8:00 A.M., the surgical success rate and your relationship with the breeder may benefit.

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Feline Health Topics

A publication for veterinary professionals

The ultimate purpose of the Cornell Feline Health Center is to improve the health of cats everywhere, by developing methods to prevent or cure feline diseases, and by providing continuing education to veterinarians and cat owners. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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- 3 Make a charitable contribution to the Feline Health Center before December 31 to reduce taxes on your 1992 income.
- 4 Encourage your cat-owning clients to become supporting members. (Our office can supply you with membership applications for cat owners.)
- 5 If clients indicate an interest in providing funds in their wills to an organization, tell them about the Cornell Feline Health Center. (Our office can provide free copies of our bequest brochure, "*How do you say Thank You?*") A majority of the bequests received this year were the result of veterinarians informing their clients about the Cornell Feline Health Center.

Please contact our office for more detailed information on the above programs by calling or writing:

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Research Briefs

Effectiveness of antiviral agents against FIPV in vitro

The effectiveness of twelve compounds at inhibiting the growth of feline infectious peritonitis virus (FIPV) in monolayer cell cultures was evaluated by Drs. Jeffrey Barlough and Fredric Scott. Of the compounds tested, adenine arabinoside, amphotericin B and ribavirin demonstrated statistically significant ($P < 0.01$) antiviral activity.

Chemotherapeutic intervention in feline infectious peritonitis is a considerable challenge due to the complexity of the feline immune response to FIPV and the ability of virulent viral strains to replicate within macrophages. Combining antiviral agents with biological response modifiers such as macrophage activators (interferon or lentinan) and T-cell immunostimulators (interleukin-2) may provide the key to treating FIP.—(*Resource: The Vet Rec 126: 556-558, 1990*)

Use of ultralente insulin in cats with diabetes mellitus

Veterinarians have been forced to use other types of insulin for managing diabetic cats since protamine zinc insulin (PZI) is no longer available. Currently, the insulins available to veterinarians include crystalline, lente (semilente, lente, ultralente), and isophane. The lente group of insulins rely on alterations in zinc content and size of zinc-insulin crystals to alter the rate of absorption from the subcutaneous site. The larger the crystals, the slower the rate of absorption and the longer the drug's duration. Semilente is short acting (4 to 10 hours) and ultralente is long acting (7 to 18 hours).

When initially substituting ultralente for PZI, do not change the dose or frequency of administration. Cats must be reregulated since the managing dosage will be different with ultralente insulin. Some cats

may require a higher dosage, whereby others may require the same or slightly less. Therefore, the cat should be evaluated 4 to 7 days after initiating ultralente insulin treatment. The goal of insulin treatment is to maintain a blood glucose concentration between 100 to 250 mg/dl.

The most common problem associated with ultralente insulin in cats is ineffectiveness in lowering the blood glucose concentration. When dosage exceeds 8 to 10 U/cat given every 12 hours with minimal decrease in blood glucose concentration, consider substituting another insulin.—(*Resource: Jour Amer Vet Med Assoc, 200(12):1828-1829, 1992*)

Treatment of Feline Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma

Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common oral tumor in the cat. Drs. G. Neal Mauldin, Glenn Mauldin and Karri Meleo of the The Animal Medical Center in New York have been examining the response of feline oral squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) to various therapeutic modalities.

Preliminary results show that radiation therapy alone modestly improves survival time in cats when compared to surgery or doxorubicin chemotherapy alone. The addition of hyperthermia to radiation therapy does not improve response rate or survival time. A previously unreported predisposition of female cats for oral SCC has been identified among the cats in this study.

Successful treatment of feline oral SCC will require aggressive, multimodality therapy. The efficacy of biologic response modifiers and chemotherapy combined with radiation therapy and hyperthermia is now being assessed for treating SCC.—(*Resource: Vet Cancer Soc News, 16(1):4-5, 1992*) ■

Improving Relationships *(continued from page 2)*

House Calls

Most breeder visits cannot be successfully handled in a fifteen minute office call. Litter and group exams are time consuming and can become confusing if rushed. It might be more advantageous to schedule breeders outside of the primary appointment schedule (such as during lunch) or to consider making house calls. House calls can be a more efficient way to handle procedures such as vaccinations and leukemia testing. An added benefit is that the veterinarian can actually see and evaluate the cattery.

Fees

Fees may need to be structured differently than for pet owners. Providing discounts on certain procedures and services or charging an hourly rate plus supplies may be a good approach.

Summary

A veterinarian-breeder relationship can be very rewarding when mutual respect and understanding is at the basis of the relationship. The relationship requires the willingness of the veterinarian to try new things and deviate from normal structured routines. It requires that the breeder be responsible and willing to follow the veterinarian's recom-

mendations. A good relationship involves both breeder and veterinarian as partners in cat health care. ■

Dr. Betsy Arnold is a 1980 graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. She has a feline practice in Rochester, NY. Dr. Arnold has bred and shown Siamese cats for over 20 years. For the past three years she has served as a grant reviewer for the Robert H. Winn Foundation .

Correction Notice

Please make the following correction in the summer issue of *Feline Health Topics* (Vol. 7, No. 3) on page 7:

In the table for group 3C the correct #ADE/FIP is 0; and for group 3B the correct #ADE/FIP is 8.

Important Notice

Our offices will be closed December 25 through January 3.



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