



# Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails

**Housecall and Full-Service Veterinary Clinic**

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Iowa City, IA 52240  
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March 1, 2002  
Newsletter

**Jennifer Berger, DVM · Allan Berger DVM, PhD**

Dear friends and clients,

We welcome the addition of Dr. Jennifer Doll's clients to our mailing list this quarter. As some of you know, Dr. Doll is the owner of "Animals All About," a mobile clinic covering Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and other parts of Eastern Iowa. Dr. Doll's mobile work for area animal shelters has grown to the point that she has asked us to help her serve her non-shelter clients. Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails has maintained a close relationship with Dr. Doll for a few years, and we are honored that she would trust us with the care of her clients and her clients' pets. Taped to this page, please find a refrigerator magnet. If we can help you, just give us a call.

We are planning an open house on Saturday April \*, 2002 from 9:00AM to 1:00PM. If you have ever wondered "what's in the back of the clinic?", our surgery, X-ray, laboratory, and hospitalization wards will all be open. Children (and those who feel young at heart) can scrub, cap, gown, and glove up for a mock surgery. Position a patient for X-rays. Run some real blood tests. Set up an intravenous (IV) pump. We will be serving food, and there will be a raffle. There is no need to RSVP, just show up any time between 9AM and 1PM (we are not charging a fee).

Magnet goes here

Last quarter's newsletter featured ceilings. We got a lot of feedback on that choice of features. Some of our housecall clients were so curious to see them that it prompted the open house idea. Seeking to outdo ourselves in highlighting the mundane, we include a photo of our new poured epoxy resin floors! This replaces a less durable epoxy (which replaced painted cement in 2000). As you can see from the photos, they positively shine! We added some inclusions to provide traction for our four-legged visitors with toenails that sometimes slide on smooth surfaces.

## **Corn Snakes**

*by Jennifer Berger*

So your child wants a reptile...consider the cute and relatively easy to care for Corn Snake!

Corn snakes are a variety of rat snake. This just means these little guys like to eat rats (sorry to all my clients with rats as pets!). There are many different varieties of rat snakes that live in the wild in most of the eastern



United States. Our area of Iowa is home to the black rat snake. In captivity these cute little guys have been bred for a variety of interesting colors: there are albinos, amelanistic, and even bubblegum (color not flavor).

Part of the fun of owning a corn snake is the cage decoration. Many of the rat snakes like to climb, so finding branches that will fit into the tank can be a lot of fun. If you go into the woods to collect your own branches and logs, there are some extra steps that you should take to be sure the wood no longer houses bugs. Give a call and we'll let you know how to do this. Besides climbing, corn snakes need an area to hide. There are many different options for this including preformed plastic cages, cockatiel nesting boxes, and cardboard shoeboxes.

Lighting that includes the UV spectrum is by far the best for corn snakes. We recommend putting the lights on a timer so each day they get the same amount of daylight. The summer photoperiod should be about 16 hours, and winter approximately 10 hours.

Thermoregulation is also very important for housing snakes.

As captive snake keepers, we control their weather, and a recreation of the movie "The Perfect Storm" is not appropriate. Reptiles need a temperature gradient so they can choose which temperature is right for them, and they will move between temperature zones during different times of the day. There are several types of heating elements available. Heating pads under the cage set on low are all right provided you consistently measure the actual temperature. My favorite heating unit is a ceramic heating element that screws into a standard incandescent lightbulb socket.

**For the cat lovers!**

- 1) Screaming at the can of food will not make it open itself.
- 2) I should not assume the patio door is open when I race outside to chase leaves.
- 3) The guinea pig likes to sleep once in a while. I will not watch him constantly.
- 4) If I bite the cactus, it will bite back.
- 5) I will not stand on the bathroom counter, stare down the hall, and growl at nothing right after my human has finished watching "The X-Files".
- 6) Television and computer screens do not exist to backlight my lovely tail.
- 7) If I play 'dead cat on the stairs' while people are trying to bring in groceries or laundry, one of these days it will really come true.
- 8) The canned cat food is already dead. I do not need to kill it by swatting bits of it all over the floor.
- 9) I am a carnivore. Potted plants are not meat.
- 10) I will never be able to walk on the ceiling, and staring up the wall and screaming at it will not bring it any closer.
- 11) If my human wants to share her sandwich with me, she will give me a piece. She will notice if I start eating it from the other end.
- 12) The large dog in the back yard has lived there for six years. I will not freak out every time I see it.

The temperature gradient for a corn snake should range from 65 degrees on the cold end to 82-95 degrees on the warm end depending on the type of corn snake you have.

Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink! Most people never see their snakes drink. This is normal because many snakes don't drink very much (much less frequently than dogs

and cats). Some species of rat snake will actually swim and soak in water, and others won't. When setting up a cage for your new pet, ask what level of humidity they need. If you can't find it, give us a call and we'll look it up for you.

Feeding your corn snake is usually a weekly task; much easier than that twice daily thing with dogs and cats! Plus only one poop a week to clean too! In captivity corn snakes can be fed mice, anoles, and an occasional tree frog. Some people even raise their own mice to feed to their snake.

**Welcome to the Veterinary Clinic Automated Telephone System!**

[Considering implementation: Allan spent one and a half hours waiting up last night for a midnight emergency than no-showed.]

To make an appointment please press 1.

To tell us your life history as well as your pet's before making your appointment please press 2.

To speak directly to a doctor press 3.

If you feel your pet's condition warrants pulling a doctor away from the patient he/she is currently operating on press 4.

If your pet's condition has persisted for 2-6 months but has suddenly become an emergency and he needs to be seen this evening (after 6 PM)... please press 5.

For a toenail trim on your 100-lb aggressive dog... press 6.

If you would like us to hold a check for you until the following month please press 7.

If you would like us to post date a previously held post dated check press 8.

If you would like us to mail back your post dated check so that you can send us one for less money, or to make other payment arrangements... please press 9 for our office manager.

Also, press 9 if you need to bring in 10 unvaccinated puppies with vomiting and bloody diarrhea and you have \$10 in your pocket.

If you have been on hold for 10 minutes press 10.

If you have been on hold for 20 minutes press 11.

If you are under stress and need to project your anger at someone, press 12 for a receptionist.

To determine if your pet's condition (i.e. hit by car, grand mal seizures, or unconscious) is serious and it needs to be seen today, press 13. Our team of experts are standing by waiting to debate the issue with you for as long as it takes.

If your animal has not eaten in 10 days press 14.

If you have accidentally taken your animal's flea control pill or heartworm medicine press 15.

If your initials are SB or you just want to talk press 16 and our receptionist will set up a private home appointment for you with a vet.

If your mouse was eaten by your snake, your snake killed by your cat, your cat attacked by your dog, and your dog was kicked by your goat please press 17.

None of these numbers will give you a real person, but they'll take your mind off your problems for a while.

Our automated telephone service allows us to serve your pet's needs 24 hours a day 7 days a week!

So, there you have Corn Snakes. These guys are neat little pets that are relatively easy to care for, friendly, and cute too!

**Reminder**

Since we do housecalls several days a week and close early on Wednesday afternoons, we recommend that you telephone before stopping out to pick up medication refills or food. Plus if we know you are coming we can get everything ready for you in advance and you won't have to wait for us! Thanks!

**Barb's Corner: Heartworm Disease**

*by Barb Evans-O'Donnell*

Heartworm disease is a parasitic infection of dogs and cats that is transmitted by over seventy different species of mosquitoes. The developing heartworms migrate to the animal's heart, and can grow up to fourteen inches in length. Left untreated, they can cause permanent heart and lung damage or death. Treatment is expensive and PREVENTION, as always, is the best medicine.

A mosquito, upon biting an animal already infected with heartworms, swallows microfilariae (immature heartworms) that have been circulating in the animal's blood. The microfilariae grow into infective larvae within the mosquito's tissues, and as the mosquito feeds on a healthy animal, the larvae enter the animal's skin through the bite wound. The infective larvae develop into adult worms, and within six months of the initial infection, the worms can invade the heart and pulmonary arteries.

Symptoms of heartworm disease in dogs can include breathing difficulty, coughing, and exercise intolerance. Infected cats may have vomiting, coughing, and/or weight loss, although some die suddenly with no symptoms of disease. A

diagnostic blood test is available, and is recommended before giving heartworm preventative. We recommend yearly administration of Heartgard Plus, a monthly oral medication that will prevent heartworm disease and kill roundworms and hookworms, two of the most common intestinal parasites. Pets that don't receive Heartgard Plus during the winter months should have a yearly heartworm test. We recommend testing every two years for those that are on preventative throughout the year.

We do see heartworm disease in our area, so have a heart and protect your pet.

### **Next Newsletter: June 2002**

If you would like to suggest a topic, please give us a call!

Gratefully yours,  
Jenn and Allan Berger



"Mr. Demley, for the last time, your bill is \$175. You do NOT get to divide it by nine because it's a cat!"