

honed her small animal surgical skills working for Cayuga Veterinary Services in Auburn, New York. Jennifer's clinical interests are surgical. Most of her experience has been with soft tissue surgery, but she is especially looking forward to attending an orthopedic surgery laboratory session offered at The Ohio State University Veterinary College in May.

Jennifer moved to Iowa City in June, 1998. In addition to her work with Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails, she works at the Abel-Keppy Animal Hospital in Bettendorf. Starting up the new business has taken up pretty much all of her spare time.

Many of Jenn's hobbies involve animal training. She performs a lot of canine behavior work, including basic obedience, problem behavior elimination, and teaching special skills (hunting dogs, search and rescue). Her secret love is horses, and she's done hunter/jumper training and dressage work. Now that she's moved off of the east coast, Jenn is starting to do some western riding. She dreams of running a horse breeding facility when she retires from veterinary medicine. Additionally, Jennifer was an interior firefighter and an emergency medical technician in New York.

As always, we'd love to hear suggestions for future newsletter topics. If you have any questions, concerns, or requests, give us a call!

Gratefully yours,

Allan L. Berger, DVM, PhD

Jennifer L. Berger, DVM

**Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails Housecall Veterinary Service:**  
*Personalized Medical Care in the Comfort of Your Pet's Home.*

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Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails  
Quarterly Newsletter  
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Hi again. Well its almost spring and that means **heartworm season** (for some of us).

Did you know that not only *dogs*, but also *cats and ferrets* are susceptible to heartworm infection? Heartworm disease is caused by a worm called *Dirofilaria immitis* (you can use that little tidbit to impress your family and friends). The heartworm starts its development cycle in a mosquito. If an infected mosquito bites your pet, the heartworm then travels inside your pet to undergo further maturation before finally ending up in the heart.

In dogs, we see several different signs indicating heartworm disease. These include difficulty breathing, decreased ability to exercise, coughing, and weight loss. However these signs develop after heart damage has already begun. Cats can sometimes manifest these same signs, but unfortunately sudden death is also a sign commonly seen in cats with heartworm disease. Less is known about Heartworm Disease in ferrets.

It's best to avoid heartworm disease entirely by giving preventive to both your dogs and cats: it just takes ONE mosquito bite from an infected mosquito to give it to your pet!! Even indoor pets are at risk; remember back to last summer (what a nice WARM memory) about dusk when you opened the door to go inside? Even though you went quickly, several pesky mosquitoes still often managed to get inside.

Luckily for dogs, they can usually be treated with a drug to kill the heartworms, but there are side effects (the commonly used drugs are pretty toxic). Cats aren't quite as lucky because the drugs used to kill the heartworms are even more toxic for them. All we can do is give supportive therapy for cats.

The current testing and preventive treatment for canine heartworm disease by the American Heartworm Association is to **test your pet this year** (to confirm that he or she doesn't already have the disease if he or she has been off preventative during the winter), **stay on a monthly preventive year 'round**, and then only **test your pet every other year** in the future. By avoiding the Heartworm test next year, the cost is about the same, there's less risk to your pet (I did see a Mosquito this past December), and one less needle poke every other year for the test. If your pet isn't on preventative, please give us a call so we can get started!

### *Reptiles:*

No specific reptile diseases offered in this issue, just one tip about general veterinary care. There are many different types of problems that reptiles can develop. We've seen some reptiles recently which would have been much easier to treat if we'd seen them one week earlier. It is especially important to seek veterinary care for your reptile as soon as you notice a problem. Reptiles generally take a longer time to heal so the earlier treatment can be started the better off your pet is.

### *Birds:*

I'm interested in hearing topics people would like to have me discuss in birds. I can write about husbandry and diet for a certain type of bird or birds in the next letter, but I need someone to focus me on a species. One quick note for bird people—birds tend to hide their medical problems until they are very sick. This tendency is a survival technique that often does well to keep a bird alive in the wild (a predator will pick off a sick bird pretty quickly). The problem is that we often don't realize there is a problem until the bird is gravely ill because the bird wasn't showing any signs of sickness until it was VERY sick.

### *Adopting a pet:*

Sometimes, spring means that it's time for a new pet! There are many places to find good pets, but one place that many people don't know about are **breed rescues**. For every dog and cat breed, and every snake, bird, and pocket pet species imaginable, there is a rescue organization. Rescue volunteers take in unwanted animals that have been surrendered by families who can't keep them. They foster, evaluate, feed, train, and love the pets, and screen them for adoption by a new family. Animal rescue organizations save millions of lives each year. The best way to find the rescue organization for your species/breed of choice is to search the internet. We can help you with this.

There is an application and screening process because the number one goal is to place the pet in a new home that it will stay in happily for the rest of its life, and there is also an adoption fee. This goes to HELP cover the many expenses of running a rescue organization. Locally, Jayne McQuillen does Australian Shepherd Rescue and she's always seeking foster homes and people who are interested in adopting a dog. Check out her Australian Shepherd website at <<http://soli.inav.net/~branin/rescue/>>. If you don't have access to the internet, give me a call and I can put you in touch with Jayne (*guess who requested this column*) or another breed rescue. In the past few months, we've also been in contact with nearby Great Dane Rescue, Labrador Retriever Rescue, and Sheltie Rescue. All are volunteer organizations, dedicated to improving the quality of their breed.

*One last note:* Don't forget to check out our website at:  
<<http://vetplus.int-med.uiowa.edu/~bebt>>.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer L. Berger, DVM

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