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SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

8 Spring Time Hazards

*Five Great Ways to Challenge
your Dog's Mind*



8 SPRING TIME PET HAZARDS

After a long winter, we're sure that you're ready to get outside with your dog. While we couldn't agree more, don't overlook these 9 hazards of the season.

1. Ticks and Tick-borne Disease

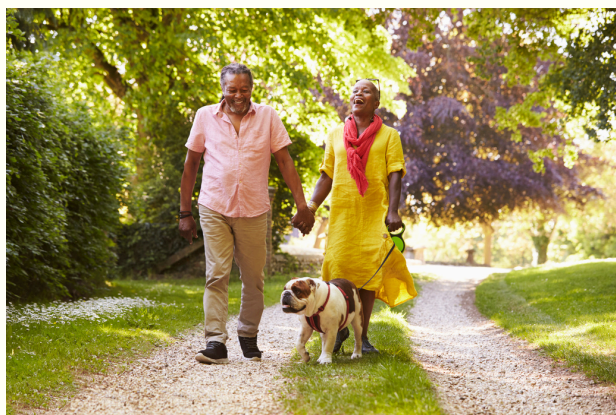
Ticks are more than just creepy; they can spread a number of different diseases that affect both pets and people: Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, anaplasmosis, tularemia, and babesiosis. The best way to protect your pet is with preventative treatment. Ask your veterinarian for advice and [click here](#) to learn more about ticks and the diseases they spread.

2. Antifreeze

Antifreeze is extremely dangerous to pets because most types have a sweet smell and taste—dogs tend to dive right in and lap it up. Because of this, antifreeze poisoning is one of the most common forms of poisoning in pets. Fortunately, “pet-safer” types of antifreeze that are not as attractive to pets are available. Beware, antifreeze is not the only garage hazard.

3. Heartworm

Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes. It is a serious disease that primarily affects the heart and lungs, but can also affect the liver, kidney, eyes, and central nervous system; if left untreated, it can cause death. Fortunately, effective preventatives are available.
(continued on next page)



8 SPRING TIME PET HAZARDS (CONTINUED)

4. Fertilizers and Mulch

According to the Pet Poison Helpline, most fertilizers contain a wide assortment of potentially toxic substances including iron and nitrogen. They could also have pesticides, fungicides, or herbicides. Even if the chemicals don't poison your pet, large amounts of fertilizer could result in gastrointestinal or pancreatic problems.

5. Metaldehyde (Slug Bait)

Snail bait represents a major risk for dogs and cats and is a more common source of poisoning than you may expect. Snail and slug bait products typically contain the poison metaldehyde, and they taste sweet to pets. It's important that [you know the symptoms](#) of metaldehyde poisoning in case your pet is exposed.

6. Bee Stings

Like people, some dogs can have an allergic reaction to bee stings, especially if stung by multiple bees. Talk to your veterinarian about how you can keep your pup safe from bee stings, and what to do if your dog is stung.

7. Snakes

There are 20 species of venomous snakes in North America, and they are found in every state except Alaska, Hawaii, and Maine. A rattlesnake can bite your dog even if the meeting is not face-to-face. Rattlesnakes can strike as far as half of their own body length. Although they usually warn before striking by rattling their tail, they don't always.

8. Thawing Ponds

Your dog may be accustomed to taking walks over ice covered lakes, rivers and ponds. As the ice begins to thaw, the new dangers presented by exposed water are likely not going to be apparent to him. By keeping your dog on a leash you can protect him from falling through the thin ice.



FIVE GREAT WAYS TO CHALLENGE YOUR DOG'S MIND

Proper exercise for dogs is important to their overall physical and mental wellbeing, but often "mental exercise" is given short shrift when looking at fulfilling a dog's needs. Dogs that are bored and that have little mental and environmental stimulation can develop mild to severe behavioral problems as a result. Providing your dog with "brain exercise" is easy to do – here's some ideas you can try out!

1. Behavior training for dogs

Obedience training can be more than just simply teaching your dog sit, down and other common manners and behaviors. Training your dog to learn a new behavior asks him to think and learn and engage his brain. You can become creative in what you teach – tricks are one wonderful way of constantly keeping your dog learning while enjoying an activity that's fun for both of you. Using a clicker to train is an excellent way of teaching your dog complex behaviors and you can use it to "shape" behaviors as well. "Free shaping" is another type of training where you "shape" small increments of behavior based on what your dog does in a given situation. A typical example would be the well-known "101 Things to Do With a Box" exercise from clicker training expert Karen Pryor.



FIVE GREAT WAYS TO CHALLENGE YOUR DOG'S MIND (CONTINUED)

2. "Outside the box" training classes for dogs

Taking your dog to a "regular" obedience class helps to socialize your dog and helps you both learn how to communicate with each other. It's also terrific mental exercise for a dog since it involves not only the learning process but also handling a new and varying environment. Once the "typical" dog parent finishes obedience class though, as many a dog trainer from my personal experience can attest, they decide they are "done."

There are many wonderful options available today for you to continue in classes with your dog, such as classes on teaching tricks, therapy dog training, and a whole host of dog sports such as agility, rally, canine freestyle, scent work, barn hunt and much more.

You don't need to become a competitor in these sports either, many classes are a mixture of serious competitors and dog parents who just want to have fun with their dogs, so don't be intimidated to try one! Certified Dog Behavior Consultant and Associated Certified Animal Behaviorist Katenna Jones encourages guardians to take the plunge: "I love classes that cover skills beyond the basics. My favorite class I teach is Brain Games, where dogs learn things like riding skateboards, color discrimination, and more. Classes and activities like this are rewarding for you both, great for bonding, improve communication, and tire out brains and bodies." If you don't know what kinds of classes are available in your area, visit the [International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants](#) website to find classes in your area.

3. Dog sniffing and using other senses

Take your dog out on more than "just a walk." Find places that are richly varied in terms of sounds, sights, textures, odors and more. A dog's sense of smell is much stronger than ours and allowing him to "see" the world through olfactory senses can really stretch his mind (hence the popularity of scent work classes and competition). Rather than taking your dog on the same walk every day, along the same path or sidewalk, look for places that may have new smells, or an abundance of them, such as parks or forest trails you don't usually go to. On the reverse side, find dog friendly urban walks to change up the pace. You can even add in some elements of "parkour" to your walks by having your dog go up onto obstacles such as curbs, steps, benches, and playground equipment – be creative, but make sure that nothing is too high or unsafe for your dog!

4. Games toys and puzzles for dogs!

Games are a fun way of activating your dog's mind, as well as building your relationship together and teaching your dog to see that spending time with you is the best reward ever! This is another opportunity to be creative – you can use variations on children's games, such as hide-and-seek, or come up with brand new games based on what you have available and your dog's interests. For example, if you have a dog that absolutely loves balls, and you have enough room for tossing it, you can create games that involve the retrieve, as well as mixing in some basic obedience behaviors. Other types of games don't even necessarily need to involve you, but can be just as mentally engaging. Toss some kibble around the room, or in your yard if it's safe, and let the dog "hunt" for his food. You can even do this instead of using a dog food bowl entirely for each meal. There are many types of interactive food toys and puzzles that you can use as well for the same purpose and they are not all just "food dispensers." For some, the dog has to really think about how to get the food out of the various types of openings.

5. Bringing your dog out

Another way to stimulate your dog's mind is to simply bring him out with you during your regular errands. Getting to see new faces, new places and a ride in the car can be very mentally challenging for a dog and also helps to reinforce socialization. Try taking your dog on trips to new places neither of you have been as well. You don't necessarily have to take him out on a long walk or hike – the experience of being outside and experiencing novel stimuli will be a highlight for your dog. There are many dog-friendly places you can bring your dog for an outing, such as local coffee shop and restaurant patios, home improvement and garden/nursery stores, pet supply stores, and even some large national chains (for items such as craft supplies and household goods). Always check with the store manager first, of course, and be sure that your dog can handle showing his good manners off in a crowd of strangers. Written by: Mychelle Blake, MSW, CDDB and Pet Behavior Expert

***"Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That's the problem".
- A.A. Milne***

ACOC Birthdays

Our very own office
cat- **Kiki!**

