



Shawnee Kennel Club

Smoke Signals

June 2008

www.shawneekennelclub.com

Officers May 2007 – May 2008

President: Sharon Howse

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General Membership Meeting

The June General Membership Meeting will be on Tuesday, June 17th at 6:30 pm, at IJ Cann's on Valley Ave. in Winchester. Please let Sharon Howse know (cairnhowse@starband.net) if you are planning to attend or not attend as it is important to know how many people to plan on for the meeting.

Disclaimer

The Shawnee Kennel Club is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily agree with, the opinions in this newsletter.

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President's Message

Juggling Act

It can be a real juggling act when you are showing dogs, and your husband is an AKC judge. When Jerry first became a judge, there were times when he was scheduled to judge that there was another circuit where the judges were good judges for us. Jerry's first judging assignment was the same weekend as a show way down in Tennessee that I wanted to enter and did enter. It ended up being a very small entry at those shows so I ended up not going. I decided that the long drive did not justify a possible point entry each day. We've been showing long enough that we've learned the judges our dogs can win under, and the ones that we can't win under. When

Jerry judged the other weekend down in Hampton, VA, there were judges on another circuit that I would have liked to enter our dogs under. Since I've injured my back, I wasn't up to going to a show by myself and loading and unloading the show equipment plus showing a dog or two by myself so I stayed at home. There are other juggling acts that we all must contend with whether we have a family member who is a judge, or you yourself are a judge. We have always tried to minimize when Jerry takes off from work to go to a dog show, and by using common sense, Jerry has not got into trouble where he works for taking off too many days to go to dog shows. It can be a juggling act when you have school age children as your child might have a sports event, awards ceremony, or choir concert that you need to attend instead of going to a dog show. We did that when our boys were at home and still in school. Right now, Jerry has 2 breeds and junior showmanship so I can only imagine how our juggling act will become more involved with more balls to juggle as Jerry picks up more breeds.

Frank Bayliss did an excellent job presenting the program on breeding dogs. Thank you Frank for your excellent presentation. ☺ I also want to thank all the members and members to be who brought food, drinks, napkins, plates, cups, and plastic ware for the meeting. We had a nice selection of food, and all the choices made for a nice dinner. I want to welcome our 3 newest members who were voted in at the May meeting: Mary Lamphier, Urve Crowder, and MaryLou Crouch. Mary's daughter, Jamie was voted in at our March meeting. Mary brought the wonderful chicken wings for the May meeting. Urve Crowder drove all the way from Reston for our meeting, and she has Cardigan Welsh Corgis. MaryLou Crouch has already jumped into the deep end of the pool, and will be taking over our web site. Way to go, MaryLou! On behalf of the club, welcome to the club, and we look forward to a long association with all of you.

Gary and Connie Fisher are doing an outstanding job with the training classes. There are a couple of classes left so bring your dogs and take advantage of the outside classes.

I was rather dismayed at the end of the meeting last week when people were jumping up and talking to each other. There was NOT a motion for adjournment, and I was rather embarrassed for our 2 junior members who were trying to tell their brags "For the Good of the Club" time of our meeting. Please wait until the meeting is adjourned to start talking and leaving. I know that the meeting went longer than usual, but please remember to show consideration for fellow members when they are talking.

Our June meeting will be our annual meeting with the election of our officers. At the June meeting, we will be talking about our upcoming shows and passing around lists for members to sign up for various jobs before our shows, during our shows, and after our shows. It takes every club member to put on a successful weekend of shows. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the June annual meeting.

Sharon Howse

Announcements

Of Interest To All

From new member MaryLou Crouch:

A few weeks ago, information was posted on one of the many email lists to which I subscribe concerning a product named Leba III which cleans tartar off a dog's teeth. The pictures shown were dramatic so I decided it was worth a try since my border collie, Kellsea, has a very bad tartar problem. The product cost about \$50--it varies by website--but I ordered it. Her teeth looked like the before picture. I used it daily on her for 2 weeks--a quick spray in the mouth--then I missed a few days. But as I was spraying her mouth during the 4th week, I realized the stuff was working!!! Her teeth were looking so much better, not perfect, but tartar was disappearing. Amazing! And so much easier than going into the

vet for treatment. I suggest you try it--I think I will try to be more regular in the usage to make sure Kellsea's teeth improve even more.

→ Snopes does confirm it.

Unfortunate because Cocoa Mulch smells INCREDIBLE!

Snopes says this is true. Dog & cat owners beware!

<http://www.snopes.com/critters/crusader/cocoamulch.asp>

Over the weekend the doting owner of two young lab mixes purchased Cocoa Mulch from Target to use in their garden. They loved the way it smelled and it was advertised to keep cats away from their garden. Their dog Calypso, decided that the mulch smelled good enough to eat and devoured a large helping. She vomited a few times which was typical when she eats something new but wasn't acting lethargic in any way. The next day, Mom woke up and took Calypso out for her morning walk. Half way through the walk, she had a seizure and died instantly.

Although the mulch had NO warnings printed on the label, upon further investigation on the company's web site, it was learned that this product is HIGHLY toxic to dogs.

Cocoa Mulch is manufactured by Hershey's, and they claim that 'It is true that studies have shown that 50% of the dogs that eat Cocoa Mulch can suffer physical harm to a variety of degrees (depending on each individual dog). However, 98% of all dogs won't eat it.'

True information about the mulch can be found here -

<http://www.snopes.com/critters/crusader/cocoa.htm> This site gives the following information:

Cocoa Mulch, which is sold by Home Depot, Foreman's Garden Supply and other Garden supply stores, contains a lethal ingredient called 'Theobromine'.

It is lethal to dogs and cats. It smells like chocolate and it really attracts dogs. They will ingest this stuff and die. Several deaths already occurred in the last 2-3 weeks. Just a word of caution: check what you are using in your gardens and be aware of what your gardeners are using in your gardens.

Theobromine is the ingredient that is used to make all chocolate especially dark or baker's chocolate which is toxic to dogs.

Cocoa bean shells contain potentially toxic quantities of theobromine, a xanthine compound similar in effects to caffeine and theophylline. A dog that ingested a lethal quantity of garden mulch made from cacao bean shells developed severe convulsions and died 17 hours later. Analysis of the stomach contents and the ingested cacao bean shells revealed the presence of lethal amounts of theobromine.

PLEASE GIVE THIS WIDEST DISTRIBUTION!!!

→ **Pet Underpopulation: The Pet Shortage in the US by Loretta Baughan**

Last month, I had the opportunity to be a guest on a talk radio program discussing recent pet legislation efforts in Wisconsin spearheaded by a small group of animal rights extremists. Some callers to the program realized the threat to pet owners and breeders such legislation poses and expressed concern. Many callers, however, were frantic about the "pet overpopulation" problem and thought laws were needed to stop breeders.

Listen up! The notion that there is a "pet overpopulation" problem is nothing more than a figment of the imagination of the anti-pet, anti-pet owner, anti-pet breeder animal rights fanatics.

Yes, you read that correctly. There is definitely NOT an overpopulation of dogs or cats, at least not in the United States. There may have been a problem 25-30 years ago, but due to heavy promotion of spay and neuter, it is estimated that over 75% of dogs and more than 87% of cats have been surgically sterilized (1). The pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction that now, we are actually facing a shortage of pets... a pet underpopulation.

"In truth, there is no pet overpopulation problem. The Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy has collected data about pet population that are striking:

| Changes in Animal Population | 1973 | 1982 | 1990 |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| US total dogs & cats (millions) | 65... | 91... | 110 |
| dogs & cats euthanized (millions) | 13... | 10... | 5 |
| % of animals euthanized | 20%... | 11%... | 4.5%" |

-- *Animalscam: The Beastly Abuse of Human Rights* by Kathleen Marquardt, Herbert M. Levine, Mark LaRoche, published in 1993

Many in the animal rights crowd know this dirty little secret, but are unwilling to be honest about it since they would lose credibility - not to mention a very effective "tool" to leverage the public for donations, influence politicians to pass unnecessary legislation and the media to propagate their lies. Animal rights extremists have advanced their agenda by erroneously placing the blame for "pet overpopulation" on pet breeders. They have been successful at using this falsehood to convince pet owners that the "responsible" thing to do is to subject their pets to surgical sterilization in order to combat "pet overpopulation". Sadly, they have even hoodwinked many purebred breeders into thinking they must pressure their buyers to spay or neuter their puppies and kittens - to the detriment of many purebred gene pools. As a result, with fewer individual dogs being used in breeding programs, health problems are increasing as diversity is decreasing.

What are the facts?

According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association's (APPMA) *2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey* (1), 63% of U.S. households own pets - up from 56% in 1988, which was the first year this study was conducted. With national population figures having increased from approximately 244,500,000 people in 1988 to 303,200,000 at the end of 2007 (2), the number of pet homes is ever increasing and at a greater rate than the human population. This is a trend that shows no sign of slowing down. The latest APPMA figures show that Americans own 74.8 million dogs and a whopping 88.3 million cats. We are a nation that loves pets and consider them part of the family. We open our hearts, our homes and our wallets to care for our pets. We spend a lot of money on our pets. In less than 20 years, this figure has nearly doubled - from \$23 billion in 1988 to a projected \$40.8 billion last year.

A shortage of homes for pets is not the problem. So, then, why are there so many dogs and cats in animal shelters?

In a nutshell, the answer to that question is poor management of shelters coupled with a resistance to adopt methods that work. Many of the smaller shelters are operated by people who love animals and desperately want to help, but are lacking in animal husbandry experience and management skills.

One shelter manager I spoke with blamed breeders for the dogs coming through their doors, then in an emotional rant, claimed that breeders are forcing their females to have three or four litters a year - keeping them pregnant all of the time. I interrupted her and said that was physically impossible since dogs typically only come into season twice a year. She then admitted she didn't know that and said, "Well, I'm not a breeder, myself."

The woman's heart is in the right place, but without an understanding gained from hands on experience raising dogs or cats, how can we expect our shelters to succeed? Like it or not, an animal shelter is a business - and it has to be operated as such.

"Shelters and pounds reported to HSUS that by the 1980s, the number of animals they handled had decreased dramatically (Rowan and Williams 1997, 110-111). In addition, the animals handled by pounds and shelters seem to have changed demographically from unwanted litters to young, untrained dogs and cats (Patronek 1996, 1)." -- Bridging the Bond: The Cultural Construction of the Shelter Pet by Tami L. Harbolt

Most of the dogs entering shelters are surrendered by their owners due to behavior issues. Often, it boils down to a simple lack of training. Animal shelters that offer obedience classes can help curb the influx of this type of dog into their shelter - while doing the dog, the owner and the community a service.

Other dogs are brought to shelters because they are sick or old and their owners cannot afford to pay - or do not want to pay - for vet care or euthanasia.

In some shelters, cats may outnumber dogs by about a two-to-one ratio. Many of these cats are feral and are owned by no one. Most are classified as "unadoptable" - yet they are included in the shelter statistics. Programs that catch feral cats, sterilize them and release them are demonstrating success in reducing their numbers.

Animal shelters are importing dogs by the *thousands!*

Meanwhile, well run animal shelters have become victims of their own success. In order to keep their doors open and justify new million-dollar facilities and salaries, some animal shelters have found a "new" source of dogs... and have been *importing them by the thousands.*

Here, in Wisconsin, animal shelters in Green Bay and Milwaukee have a pet underpopulation problem and have been

importing thousands of puppies into the state for the past several years. Through the PetSmart Charities Rescue Waggin', they have brought in puppies from Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee and Kentucky - as many as 50 at a time. The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* reported in December that the 32 dogs arriving Thursday evening (Dec 6, 2007) were expected to be "adopted out by this weekend" (3).

H.O.P.E. Safehouse, out of Racine, is more of a rescue organization than an animal shelter as they do not have a facility of their own, but rely on volunteers to care for the dogs they import, mainly from the south. A Milwaukee Public Radio online news article reports that this group recently brought in a shipment of 100 puppies from Kentucky, many of which were sick. The same article (Jan 11, 2008) goes on to say that the Wisconsin Humane Society in Milwaukee has imported 9,000 dogs with more animals arriving there via the Rescue Waggin' "a few times a week" - and that they have "hundreds of families looking for animals to adopt" (4).

Other shelters within our state have available dogs, so rather than bring in animals from other states, why not first assist the smaller Wisconsin shelters by placing their surplus dogs? Could it be that by emptying shelters around the state, it would be difficult - if not impossible - to continue the illusion that a "pet overpopulation" problem exists?

This program is not exclusive to Wisconsin. Shelters in many other areas of the country are participating. The Rescue Waggin' transports puppies from shelters struggling to find homes to areas where the demand for dogs is higher than the supply. That's a win-win situation for all, especially the dogs. However, to continue the charade of claiming a "pet overpopulation" problem exists is dishonest. Another concern is that the thousands of animals being transferred from one shelter to another are being tallied twice, creating an impression that there are far more homeless pets than actually exist.

"Animal shelters in the USA are casting a wide net - from Puerto Rico to as far as Taiwan - to fill kennels. Critics say many shelters have solved the stray problem in their own area - but rather than shut down, they become *de facto* pet stores. Some charge more than \$200 per adoption for imported dogs," reports *USA Today* (5). More than 14,000 strays have been shipped in from Puerto Rico, and many thousands more are being imported from Mexico, India and the Bahamas each year. Another *USA Today* article warns, "Agencies in Southern California created the Border Puppy Task Force after they saw a surprising number of very young dogs being brought across the border from Mexico. The task force estimated that during a one-year span, 10,000 puppies entered San Diego County." (6)

There are legitimate concerns that animal shelters importing stray dogs from foreign countries may be importing disease, as well. Besides health issues, these street dogs lack proper socialization and may have poor temperaments. Is it ethical for animal shelters to expose the public to these unknowns, while condemning anyone who breeds a litter in our country? I don't think so.

The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP) was formed in the early 1990s. Member groups include the American Humane Association (AHA), the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPM), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Cat Fanciers Association (CFA), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and others. Between 1994-1997 they sent questionnaires to animal shelters around the country seeking to compile statistics for the numbers of intake animals, animals reclaimed by owners, those who found new homes and euthanasia. But due to a low number of shelters willing to respond, the study was discontinued a decade ago.

Without insisting on reliable statistics and factual evidence to back up their claims, we have allowed the fox to patrol the hen house. We can no longer blindly accept the pie-in-the-sky guesstimates groups such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other similar agenda-driven animal extremists put forth. Follow the money. These are organizations whose very existence are dependant upon the amount of money they can raise from misguided animal lovers *who think their donation is actually helping puppies, kittens or their local animal shelter*. The reality is that these animal rights fanatics seek to impose their vegan lifestyle and utopian dream for humans to have zero contact with animals.

"But as the surplus of cats and dogs (artificially engineered by centuries of forced breeding) declined, eventually companion animals would be phased out, and we would return to a more symbiotic relationship enjoyment at a distance." -- Ingrid Newkirk, PETA co-founder and president, quoted in *The Harper's Forum Book*, Jack Hitt, ed., 1989, p.223.

Is that the kind of future the majority of U.S. citizens envision? I don't think so. The lunatic animal rights movement does not represent mainstream American views or values.

So how do we solve the problem?

"The key is to get raw data. How many animals are coming in and how many are going home alive? And, is that improving every single year? Because, if it is not, there is a serious problem with leadership and the mechanisms going on within that shelter." -- Nathan J. Winograd, director of the national No Kill Advocacy Center, former director of operations San Francisco SPCA, executive director of the Tompkins County SPCA and author of *Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America* (7), interview with Animal Wise Radio, aired Feb 4, 2007

Mr. Winograd is spot on. A handful of states are waking up to this realization and are requiring animal shelter accountability - through record keeping and the reporting of statistics. Virginia is one such state. Since People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' (PETA) headquarters is located within that state, they are required by law to file:

"Not counting animals PETA held only temporarily in its spay-neuter program, the organization took in 3,061 "companion animals" in 2006, of which it killed 2,981 (8). According to Virginia's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), the average euthanasia rate for humane societies in the state was just 34.7 percent in 2006. PETA killed 97.4 percent of the animals it took in. The organization filed its 2006 report this month, nine months after the VDACS deadline of March 31, 2007 (9)," reveals The Center for Consumer Freedom.

In other states where shelters are required to report their statistics, euthanasia rates are alarming. Michigan reports approximately 45% of dogs and 75% of cats that enter their animal shelters are killed. Between 2001-2006 North Carolina shelters killed about 77% of their dogs and cats.

As dog owners, I think we are all deeply disturbed over the plight of animals in shelters and the high rate of euthanasia. There is a solution. Nathan Winograd has proven his "No Kill Revolution" method works - in both large and small shelters. As dog breeders and trainers, *we are the experts*, so it is up to us to step forward and assist our local shelters in overcoming their problems. The first step is to stop blaming pet breeders and lay to rest, once and for all, the myth of "pet overpopulation". It's time to embrace the fact that we have a pet underpopulation situation... and so, the solution to our local animal shelter problems is within our grasp.

Sources:

- (1) - 2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey, American Pet Products Manufacturers Association Inc. (APPMA)
- (2) - U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. POP Clock Projection and Historical National Population Estimates
- (3) - *Humane Society's Puppy Population Boom Expected to be Short-Lived: 32 dogs sent to shelter likely to be adopted quickly* by Paul Srubas, Green Bay Press-Gazette, December 7, 2007
- (4) - *Interstate Efforts to Save Shelter Dogs* by Ann-Elise Henzl, WUWM Milwaukee Public Radio news, January 11, 2008
- (5) - *More Cities Importing Pound Puppies* by Tom Vanden Brook, USA Today
- (6) - *Dog Imports Raise Fears of a Resurgence of Disease* by Alan Gomez, USA Today
- (7) - *Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America* by Nathan J. Winograd, copies available through the Spaniel Journal Bookstore
- (8) - Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2006 animal report
- (9) - *PETA Killed 97 Percent of "Companion Animals" in 2006: Death Toll Up To 17,400; Report Describes PETA's Deadliest Year Ever*, January 10, 2008 press release from The Center for Consumer Freedom, courtesy of David Martosko, CCF Director of Research

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→ *Drug resistant staph infections aren't just for humans anymore*

By Christie Keith, Special to SF Gate

Tuesday, May 28, 2008

There's a new and growing threat to your pets' health, and while I wish I could tell you it's just another Internet rumor, it's all too real. I should know, because my dog is its latest poster child. I'm talking about something you might have thought only affected humans: drug-resistant staph infections.

We hear a lot about these types of infections in people these days, severe ones spread in hospitals and less severe ones spread in daycare centers, schools and gyms. Most human infections involve methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA. In dogs and cats, the bacteria is slightly different — methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus intermedius*, or MRSI — but it's otherwise pretty much the same problem: some strains of a common bacteria found in and on most dogs, people and surfaces have evolved to resist the antibiotics we normally use to treat it.

My introduction to MRSA began three months ago, when I noticed my 9-year-old borzoi, Kyrie, had a small, quarter-sized red patch on her hip that seemed to hurt her terribly. I got her into the vet the next day, and she diagnosed a spider bite, shaved and cleaned the area, and put her on antibiotics, pain medication and a topical lidocaine spray to numb the wound. She predicted Kyrie would feel better in around 48 hours.

But Kyrie spent the night restless and whimpering despite the pain medication. And the next day, her coin-sized sore had become 8-by-8 inches of infected, oozing, red, raw skin. Unable to sleep while she was so uncomfortable, I spent a few hours on the Internet, where I learned two things. One, there are no venomous spiders in San Francisco, where we live, and two, most diagnosed spider bites are really something else entirely: drug resistant staph infections.

I took Kyrie to a specialist in the morning, and she agreed that her sore was almost certainly caused by MRSA. She put her on a different, hopefully more effective antibiotic while we waited for the results of a skin culture test which would determine what kinds of bacteria were present and what antibiotics would be effective.

At the same time Kyrie's infection was diagnosed, San Diego's Mary Ann Rose was trying to figure out why her Scottish Deerhound, Angelina, was not recovering from surgery for injuries received when she was hit by a car two weeks earlier. Rose and her husband are both physicians and Angelina had the best possible care at every stage. And yet, while she did fairly well when taking a 10-day course of prescribed post-surgery antibiotics, she went rapidly downhill in the 48 hours after the antibiotic treatment was done.

"She became very ill," Rose said. "She was weak, wouldn't eat, and had a fever for the first time since the accident." Over the next few hours, Angelina developed multiple ulcerated skin lesions all over her body.

Rose didn't waste any time. "I took her back in to the surgery clinic where she was operated on. It was a Saturday. They took one look at her and called board certified veterinary dermatologist Laura Stokking and said, 'We don't know what this is, but this is a really sick dog.' Dr. Stokking worked on her all day. She had IVs, and every inch of her body was cultured."

While caring for Angelina that day, Stokking saw evidence of some type of staphylococcus under the microscope. Knowing the dog had already been on two antibiotics that normally kill that bug, she started her on a different oral antibiotic as well as an anti-bacterial skin wash while awaiting test results. Angelina improved on the new treatment, and when the culture results came back, they confirmed that she had MRSA.

My dog Kyrie's culture showed she had MRSA as well. In fact, it indicated that two organisms were present. One was just what we expected, a methicillin-resistant staph, sensitive to a number of drugs including the one she was taking. But the other was a multi-drug resistant staph that was sensitive to almost none of the common veterinary antibiotics.

Still, Kyrie had gotten better while on the drug, so we continued the treatment and hoped for the best. Unfortunately, after the three-week course was finished, her symptoms returned with a vengeance. Back to the vet, where we faced some bad news about our options: amikacin, a drug that needs to be given intravenously every day, costs in the four figures, and has some very dangerous side effects; or chloramphenicol, a drug that wasn't included in the skin culture test that might or might not be effective.

I decided to go with the second option, primarily to avoid the stress of daily vet visits for Kyrie, and because the side effect risk, although far from negligible, was less for chloramphenicol. And at first, I assumed we'd gotten lucky, because the wound started healing immediately.

Unfortunately, it came back two days after a three-week course of chloramphenicol was finished, just like before. But I'd spent those three weeks researching MRSA and MRSA skin infections, and this time I tried dressings of medical-grade honey, which is often effective when used in combination with oral antibiotics.

Within a few hours, the wound had started healing, and within two days it was finally gone. Today, three months after it all began, the infection seems to be eradicated, her coat has re-grown in the affected area, and we're hoping her next skin culture will show her to be free of the superbugs.

Meanwhile, down in San Diego, Angelina was fighting for her life. "She had an episode of septicemia (blood infection), and the sores were all over her body, and the hair just sloughed off, and they were oozing," said Rose. "I have never seen a dog that sick that survived."

The Roses and their veterinarians persisted with Angelina's treatment, and gradually she recovered. After just under a month, they tried to stop the antibiotic, but her symptoms returned almost immediately.

In the end, Angelina was on the drug for more than 12 weeks before her cultures came back negative for MRSA. "She's lost most of her hair," said Rose. "My husband, who is an infectious disease doctor, says that in humans, when you get these resistant staphylococcus infections, they will slough skin for several months." In addition to the lingering skin and coat problems, Angelina suffered damage that will probably be permanent to the joints in one of her legs that had become infected.

I spoke with Angelina's veterinary dermatologist, Laura Stokking, and she said that, while Angelina's case was a bad one, she's seen worse. "You know, it was easy with Angelina's parents because they're physicians, so they know a lot more," she said. "She responded pretty well. I have some cases where there is a substantially higher amount of the body that's affected and a lot more tissue necrosis, and the dogs are really systemically ill." She attributed Angelina's recovery, slow though it's been, to aggressive treatment.

I asked Stokking if it's just a coincidence that I heard of two cases at the same time, or if MRSA in pets is really on the rise. She said that MRSA infections were the hottest topic at the recent North American Veterinary Dermatology Forum, and while there is some increased awareness leading to more frequent diagnosis, there's no question the infections themselves are becoming more widespread.

"Definitely in dogs it's an emerging problem," she told me. "Up until recently, the bacteria that most commonly affected dogs didn't tend to trade resistance information with other bacteria the same way that the staph in humans did." Those days are gone, however, and she says both the incidence and prevalence of drug resistant bacteria are spreading in companion animals.

Given that MRSA infections are of increasing risk to dogs and cats, the most useful information a pet owner could get would be how to prevent them. To do that however, we'd need to know where the pets were getting the infections.

While humans frequently get the more severe strains of MRSA in hospitals, Kyrie was perfectly healthy and hadn't even been to the vet's office recently. And even though Angelina had recently undergone surgery and spent time in a veterinary hospital, she actually had the infection, although it was undiagnosed, prior to her accident and surgery, in the form of two lumps on her legs — lumps that were initially mistaken for spider bites.

Stokking agreed that the origin of most MRSA infections in pets is unclear, and wasn't surprised that Angelina most likely had acquired the bacteria before her surgery. "We don't usually see a link between hospitalization or veterinary visits and the acquisition of this strain of staphylococcus," she said.

What about the canine or feline equivalents of the daycare center or gym, such as dog parks, boarding kennels or groomers? "Contaminated water, contaminated shampoo bottles," she agreed. "It's possible."

Pets living in the same household with an infected dog or cat will sometimes get MRSA from the sick pet. (Humans virtually never get MRSA from animals, although we can transmit MRSA to them.) But neither Rose's

nor my other dogs became infected, and that's not uncommon. Why did seemingly healthy dogs like Kyrie and Angelina become ill, when other also seemingly healthy pets in the same household didn't?

The truth is, we really don't know where dogs and cats are being exposed to these bugs, which makes it almost impossible to prevent our pets from getting them.

However, uncertainty about prevention doesn't mean there's nothing pet owners can do to minimize their pets' risk of resistant infections. Because rapid diagnosis and effective treatment are key to preventing the more serious forms of the disease, pet owners and their veterinarians need to be on the lookout for it.

They first need to be aware that many skin infections with MRSA or MRSE are initially misdiagnosed as spider bites, as both Kyrie's and Angelina's were. Stokking said that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a poster used in human medicine that says, "Looks like a spider bite but isn't? MRSA." Since it's such a common misdiagnosis, she believes it's probably a good idea to do a skin culture on any suspected spider bite and any skin infection that doesn't immediately respond to the usual antibiotics.

Even though it was not the case for Kyrie or Angelina, there is one other factor that should make owners and veterinarians particularly alert for signs of MRSA in pets. "We do frequently see a history (in infected pets) of repeated use of antibiotics," Stokking told me.

Owners also need to be aware that trying to save money by delaying or skipping diagnostic tests can cost them much more money in the long run. A skin culture might cost over \$100, but wasting time on an ineffective antibiotic can cost much more. The first drug Kyrie went on was priced at only around \$40, but the second one was nearly 10 times that for a three-week supply.

And if you think my dog's prescription was expensive, want to know how much that course of amikacin — or, for that matter, vancomycin, the drug of last resort for resistant staph in humans — would cost? Around \$1,000. Not to mention both have to be given intravenously and are highly toxic to the kidneys. Worse, over-reliance on vancomycin in human as well as veterinary medicine is leading to the further development of vancomycin-resistant bacteria, which is leading directly to the loss of human lives.

But the really bad news has nothing to do with your bank account. It has to do with the development of resistant bugs itself. Bacteria have a dazzling ability to trade genes and develop resistance, so strains that are susceptible to one drug today could easily be resistant to it tomorrow. Using an ineffective antibiotic, chosen without doing a skin culture first, can accelerate the development of additional resistance in bacteria. And that, again, threatens not only our pets but *human* health.

Given that risk and expense, as well as how painful and dangerous these infections are, an ounce of detection in the form of a culture may well be worth a pound of a very expensive cure.

"Don't be afraid to culture," Stokking said. "It's better to do a culture and then find out that it would have responded to cephalexin than not culture and let it go three weeks before realizing that you're dealing with a methicillin-resistant strain."

Laura Stokking PhD., DVM, DACVD is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Dermatology, and has published several book chapters and reviews in veterinary dermatology and has lectured veterinarians at national and local conferences. She is active in educating general practitioners in San Diego County on recognizing and treating resistant staph infections in companion animals. Christie Keith's [full interview with Dr. Laura Stokking can be found at Pet Connection.](#)

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Braggs

Black & tan Norwich terrier Bilbrough's Little Black Dress, who is called "Moolah," continued her winning ways at two shows in Hampton, Virginia, on Memorial Day weekend. Sunday's Judge Lydia Hutchinson awarded Moolah Winners Bitch out of the Bred-By class and then put her up over the Special for Best of Breed. At the Monday show, Moolah repeated the previous day's success by again beating the Special for Best of Breed under Judge Dennis Kniola. Despite defeating 2 bitches and a male Special each day, there was only one point at play. Moolah was bred by Donna Wiley and Regina Swygert-Smith, who also co-own her.

Jamie Lamphier was 1st in Open Intermediate at the Charlottesville KC on Sunday, June 1 with Ch. Erinfyr Sweet Dreams. She also showed Trixie's son, Lucas (Erinfyr Sports Talk) and Jamie's homebred to 2 sweepstakes and one regular class win in the 9-12 class at the Irish Setter Club of Richmond supported entries, as well as winning the open class twice with her mom's large unruly dog, Erinfyr Sweet Salvation. As if that were not enough she took in two dogs she had never seen and who had not seen a ring to win the 12-18 dog and bitch class both days. She was one tired kid by Sunday night

Laddie (Cairnhowse Corryvreckan) Cairn Terrier bred and owned by Jerry and Sharon Howse is proud to announce that a son from his very first litter became an AKC Champion on May 10th at a show in Santa Fe, NM. Now, Laddie's owners need to get "on the stick" and finish Laddie's CH.

Litterbox

Rainbow Bridge

Jokes:

Classified Ads

FREE YORKSHIRE TERRIER.
8 years old. Hateful little bastard. Bites!

FREE PUPPIES:
1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbor's dog.

FREE PUPPIES.
Mother, AKC German Shepherd
Father, Super Dog...able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

FOUND DIRTY WHITE DOG.
Looks like a rat. Been out a while.
Better be a big reward.

COWS, CALVES: NEVER BRED.
Also 1 gay bull for sale.

NORDIC TRACK
\$300 – Hardly used, call Chubby.

GEORGIA PEACHES
California grown – 89 cents lb.

JOINING NUDIST COLONY!
Must sell washer and dryer \$300.

WEDDING DRESS FOR SALE
Worn once by mistake. Call Stephanie.

And the best one:

FOR SALE BY OWNER:
Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica, 45 volumes. Excellent condition.
\$1,000 or best offer. No longer needed,
Got married last month.
Wife knows everything.