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VERNON
COUNTY
HUMANE
SOCIETY

Tails

FALL 2004



Dedicated to the welfare and protection of all companion and domestic animals by promoting programs that benefit the health, safety and well-being of all residents of Vernon County.

Cosmetic Surgery: Tail-Docking, Ear-Cropping, and De-Clawing

By Kate Bonny, Shelter Manager

Cosmetic surgery for humans is a growing industry in this country. Unfortunately, many dogs and cats are also subjected to cosmetic surgery—surgeries that are painful and, in most cases, unnecessary.

As a pet owner, you have many choices and decisions to make. Before subjecting your dog or cat to cosmetic surgery, we suggest that you weigh all the pros and cons, speak to your veterinarian, and consider whether or not these procedures will have any benefit for your pet.

This article will deal specifically with the three most common types of surgeries—tail docking and ear cropping of dogs, and de-clawing of cats.

Tail Docking

Tail docking is the amputation of a dog's tail at varying lengths to suit the recommendations of a breed standard. Docking involves the amputation of the puppy's tail either with scissors, a knife or with a rubber band. There is strong biological evidence that tail docking is painful for the puppy.

The practice of tail docking started hundreds of years ago. Theories as to the reason range from tax evasion, rabies prevention, prevention of back injury, increase of speed, and prevention of tail damage due to fighting or the "job" that the dog is bred for. In some medical situations, a veterinarian may recommend that the tail be amputated as a means of alleviating some other serious health problem, such as cancer.

Today, many working dogs are kept as house pets. When tails are allowed to remain intact, there are no more tail injuries in breeds that are usually docked than in other breeds of dogs.

Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, and Germany have banned the tail docking. One state in Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, has also banned the practice. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMS), and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) have position statements against tail docking for cosmetic purposes.

Ear Cropping

Most ear cropping is done to select breeds of dogs (including the Boxer, Great Dane, Doberman Pincer, and Schnauzer) to meet breed standards. The procedure is usually done around the age of 10–14 weeks old and requires full anesthesia. The pinnas (flaps) of the ears are surgically altered to a certain length and then usually

Continued on next page



Tail docking, ear cropping, and de-clawing are outlawed in many nations around the world for humane reasons.



This is a Great Dane puppy with natural ears.



Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.

Helen Keller

A Bridge

I am a bridge

I am a bridge of love

*I am a bridge between
what was and what will be*

*I am a bridge strong
enough to carry you to
your future*

*I am a bridge weary
with despair yet
full of hope for what
I know WILL come*

*I am a bridge who will cry
tears of sadness
and tears of joy as
you walk out my door.*

I am a foster Mom.

~

*Please consider fostering
for the Vernon County
Humane Society.
The animals need you.
Your love will help them
find a forever home.
Contact VCHS at
637-6955.*

Cosmetic Surgery *Continued from previous page*

taped and bandaged for a few days after the surgery to support the pinnas while they heal. The ears are sensitive and painful for at least a few weeks following the surgery.

Some breeds like the American Staffordshire Terrier and other “pit bull” breeds have their ears cropped to eliminate any appendage on the dog that another dog may hang on to when fighting. However, dog fighting is illegal in the United States. There are also some people who argue that a cropped ear will help prevent ear canal infections and make trauma and infection of the ear less likely. There is no medical evidence to support such a claim.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association opposes ear cropping for cosmetic purposes, and the American Veterinary Medical Association encourages veterinarians to counsel owners about the risks and lack of medical benefits of ear cropping prior to performing this surgery.

De-Clawing

De-clawing is usually only performed on the cat. Surgery is preferably done on cats less than 6 months of age. The most common type of procedure is amputation of the claw and the end toe bone joint. Infection, regrowth of the claw and altered feeling in the toes are the most common complications from the surgery. An alternative type of surgery is the tendonectomy, which involves the severing of the tendon that is attached to the end toe digit, but keeping the claw intact. Recovery time is minimal, but the cat's claws still grow, and can do damage by scratching.

Animal behaviorists believe that the main function of scratching is communication. Scratching not only leaves a scent and visual mark but is also a display of happiness. There is some anecdotal evidence of declawing leading to behavioral problems.

The Cat Fanciers' Association currently states that declawing is an “elective procedure without benefit to the cat.” However, the procedure is acceptable as a last resort to euthanasia or to prevent disease transmission to owners with bleeding disorders or compromised immune systems. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association considers declawing an option for domestic cats who would otherwise face euthanasia. The American Veterinary Medical Association states that declawing is justified when the cat's scratching becomes destructive.

Sources for this article include: World Small Animal Veterinary Association, Australian Veterinary Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, Cat Fancier's Association, The Pet Center, and Vet 4 Petz.

“Brown Bagging It” for the Animals

Here's an easy way to contribute to the Vernon County Humane Society—brown bag your lunch once every month!

If you regularly buy lunch out, consider carrying a sack lunch to work once every month, and donating the money you would have spent to help animals in the Vernon County Animal Shelter. If only 50 people in the county start brown bagging for the animals once every month, it could mean an additional \$300 every month to help purchase badly-needed supplies and veterinary care for the animals in our shelter!

To contribute, please send your donations to us at VCHS, PO Box 185, Viroqua, WI 54665.

BUY A VCHS RAFFLE TICKET—

You May Win a 16-foot Monark Marine Tracer 160 SC boat!

Time is running out to purchase chances in the Vernon County Humane Society 2004 fundraising raffle! This year's grand prize, a 16-foot Monark Marine Tracer 160 SC recreational boat, will be awarded on Saturday, Sept. 18, at the Vernon County Fair.

The Tracer 160 SC is decked out with a 75HP Mercury Marine four-stroke motor, and a full fishing package, including integrated live and bait wells, trolling motor and fish finder. Trailer is included.

Tickets are \$5 or five for \$20, and will be available all summer long from many local merchants, VCHS members and at area events.

Shelter Construction Makes Rapid Progress

Progress is moving ahead rapidly at the construction site of the new Vernon County Animal Shelter!

As of this writing, all of the rough-in plumbing is complete, the in-floor heating tubes are installed, the concrete floors are poured and the interior walls are framed in place.

Over the next few months, exciting progress will take place:

- Exterior walls and ceilings will be insulated.
- Wiring will be run.
- Plumbing can be completed.
- The shelter will be outfitted with kennels, cages and equipment we need to move in!

The pieces are falling into place, and by fall there will be a lot of excitement brewing.

You can be a part of this wonderful project. There will be volunteer work days set up where we can all pitch in and do some of the less technical jobs as a way of keeping costs down. You can make a donation of \$100 and have a commemorative brick engraved and placed on the wall. You could make a larger donation and have your name placed on a "room," cage, or dog run.

Day by day we will watch things take shape. Tours can be arranged for those who want to see the shelter to which they are contributing. Talk to one of the Directors. Give us a call. Become a part of this great cause!

Happy Ending

It's always gratifying to hear from people who have adopted new and beloved family members from the Vernon County Humane Society.

We have plenty of dogs and cats of all sizes, genders and personalities available for adoption. Won't you consider bringing a new friend into your life?



VCHS members and friends gathered on July 3 for the early bird drawing in the Vernon County Humane Society's 2004 fundraising raffle. The winning ticket, belonging to Gordon Misner and Dr. Deborah Prior of Viroqua, was drawing by Daron Jelson, Viroqua assistant police chief. The early bird prize was a \$2,000 shopping spree at Buzzy's or Simply County furniture in Viroqua.



The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

Mohandas Gandhi

Penny Pinching for the Pooches & Pussycats

The staff at the Vernon County Animal Shelter are doing their best to pinch pennies. The way we look at it, the more money we save on every day items, the more dollars there are to take care of the animals' comfort and medical needs. But, we need you to help us! You, too, can be a penny-pinching person by donating any of the following items to the shelter:

- Bleach
- Paper towel
- Dish soap
- Laundry soap
- Cat litter
- Collars and leashes
- Newspaper
- Rawhide chews for the dogs
- Interactive toys for the dogs and cats

Thanks for your help and support!



License Tag Reunites Lost Poodle

How many times does a person in California find a find a lost dog from Vernon County? The odds must be low, but it happened just this spring.

In April, Joelle, 11, and her mother, Collette, of Claremont, Calif., found an unfamiliar little black poodle in her neighborhood that was crying and looking totally lost. She brought the sad little puppy to her mom, and they set out to find an answer.

The only clue to this dog's identity was a dog license medallion issued in Vernon County. Collette called the local authorities to report the lost dog, and called the animal shelters in the area to see if someone was searching for this dog. No answers there. Joelle was enchanted with the cute little thing, but the dog would go from room to room looking for his "master," and her heart went out to the poor lost baby. So they found a phone number for the Vernon County Humane Society.

Working with the Vernon County Sheriff's Department, Anne and Steve Zastrow of VCHS were able to track the poodle's license tag number to Bergen Township. A few phone calls later, Treasurer Ann Hendricks used township records to identify the dog and his owner. While VCHS members and Township officers set about contacting the owner's family locally, Anne Zastrow called Collette in California with the owner's name.

Joelle, the 11-year-old who first found Mac, was determined to see the poodle reunited with his owner. Armed with the owner's name, she searched door-to-door in her neighborhood ... until she finally found Mac's owner, who was vacationing at a relative's home.

Sadly, not every "lost dog" story wraps up with such a happy ending. Dog licensing is required by law in the State of Wisconsin, and it can also mean the difference between temporary separation and lost forever when you and your beloved companion are separated. The Vernon County Humane Society urges you to identify your pets with license and rabies tags, a personalized identification tag, and through microchipping. Available from many area veterinarians, microchips are small devices (about the size of a grain of rice) that enable animal shelters nationwide to reunite stray animals and their families.

Vernon County Humane Society
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Visit us online at
<http://www.vchumane.org>

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