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Healthier Pet Owners = Healthier Pets New Evidence Reveals Exercise Alone Can Improve Cancer Prognosis and Quality of Life

Langhorne, PA – Year after year, the nation’s number one killer of cats and dogs is cancer. Nearly a quarter of all pets will develop cancer and half of pets over 10 years of age will die from cancer. While these statistics may be downright terrifying to most pet owners, eye-opening new research shows exercise alone can greatly improve a pet’s (just like a human’s) cancer prognosis, along with its overall quality of life.



According to veterinary oncologist Dr. Beth Overlay, VMD, DACVIM of the Center for Animal Referral and Emergency Services (CARES), in Langhorne, “It’s absolutely true, pet owners living healthy and active lifestyles seem to transfer that healthy way of life to their pets. In my own practice, I’ve seen patients bounce back quicker from treatments and even into remission because of living healthfully. Great home care for pets, like exercising and eating right, can

often contribute to a better cancer prognosis.”

More and more oncology studies prove the benefits of using exercise as a supplement to cancer treatments. These studies say it improves both cancer prognosis and quality of life. In particular, The Health, Eating, Activity and Lifestyle (HEAL) study of 933 human breast cancer patients revealed that moderate-intensity physical activity reduced the risk for death by 67% in women who remained active 2 years after diagnosis (as released by Yale School of Medicine and posted by Medscape Medical News, April, 2009). The HEAL study shows a benefit from any amount of exercise. “Pets, like humans, can experience similar benefits

from exercise, especially when fighting cancer," says Dr. Overley.

"What pet parents need to know is that cancer is very common in all types and sizes of pets, with the risk for cancer increasing with age," explains Dr. Overley. More than 25,000 canine and feline cancer-related claims were filed with VPI in 2007, an increase of nearly 4,000 claims since 2006. Thanks to advances in veterinary medicine, pet cancer is highly treatable in many cases and there are numerous options for treating the disease.

How one family fought their pet's cancer with chemo, exercise and a healthy diet:



Rob and Gina Aspenleider, of the Philadelphia area, consider their dog Natasha, a young German Sheperd/Sheltie mix, their child. When their general veterinarian confirmed the red spots they'd noticed forming on Natasha's belly were actually lymphoma (a very common form of cancer in cats and dogs), they feared the absolute worst. "It was a horrific roller coaster of emotions. We braced for losing her," recalled Gina and Rob. "Our general vet referred Natasha to Dr. Overley at

CARES whose first words were 'I've seen this before. We can treat Natasha.' It was at that moment we felt hope. Natasha began chemotherapy treatments right away, but we wanted ***Above: Natasha and Rob on their daily run***

to do more at home. We started by changing her diet to homemade foods, vitamins and, most importantly, made sure she got as much exercise as she could. During the beginning, the chemo made her tired, so we'd stop and rest. We continued exercising and within weeks of treatment, when most pets might be sick and weak, she wanted to get out and play and even run! Six months after beginning chemotherapy, Dr. Overley let us know the most remarkable news, Natasha was in remission. We were ecstatic! A big part of her success was the competence of Dr. Overley." Rob and Gina have continued her healthy regimen of running her at least three times a week for at least 2-3 miles. Natasha remains in remission.

Ten Common Signs of Cancer in Small Animals

1. Abnormal swellings that persist or continue to grow
2. Sores that do not heal
3. Weight loss
4. Loss of appetite
5. Bleeding or discharge from any body opening
6. Offensive odor
7. Difficulty eating or swallowing

8. Hesitation to exercise or loss of stamina
9. Persistent lameness or stiffness
10. Difficulty breathing, urinating, or defecating

(Source: American Veterinary Medical Association)

Above all, Dr. Overlay recommends pet owners be vigilant and visit their veterinarians at the first sign of anything abnormal. "A veterinary oncologist can diagnosis and treat most cancers. Like humans, the faster a pet is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chances of beating this terrible disease," urges Dr. Overlay.

About Dr. Beth Overlay:



Dr. Overlay is a board certified veterinary oncologist, lecturer and author. She earned undergraduate degrees at both Rice University and Mercy College by 1995. In 2000, she graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine with her VMD in 2000. She is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (DACVIM).

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES: The media is invited to interview Dr. Beth Overlay, VMD, DACVIM, as well as Rob and Gina (and Natasha) Aspenleider. Video and photo opportunities of patients undergoing exams and treatments are also possible. **Please contact Julie Robbins (813) 412-3342 or Julie@FetchingCommunications.com.**

About CARES:

CARES is a full service specialty referral, emergency and critical care veterinary hospital. Specialty cases are seen by referral from the primary care veterinarian. Specialty services include: Cardiology, Clinical Pathology, Internal Medicine, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Radiology, Surgery and Client Support. The hospital also offers 24 hour emergency care. CARES has been voted 2008 Neighbors' Choice Award Winner for Best Veterinarian/Animal Hospital in Bucks County. For more information, visit www.vetcares.com