

Acupuncture is here!

We are pleased to add veterinary acupuncture to the services provided by Ingersoll Animal Hospital! Dr. Meythaler-Mullins has completed extensive training at the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society in Atlanta, Georgia.

Acupuncture is indicated mainly for functional problems such as those that involve paralysis, noninfectious inflammation (allergies, for example), and pain. For small animals, some of the general conditions that may be treated with acupuncture include:

- Musculoskeletal problems, such as arthritis or vertebral disc pathology
- Skin problems, such as lick granuloma
- Respiratory problems, such as feline asthma
- Gastrointestinal problems, such as diarrhea
- Selected reproductive problems

Look in our next newsletter for more detailed information on acupuncture and when it may be useful in treating your pet.

Pet Portal is now active

Sign up now to get online access to your pet's health information, free of charge! It's easy, thanks to Pet Portal, available through our website at www.ingersollanimal.com.

Use your private pet health website to:

- Manage your pet's health care
- View medication schedules
- Search our extensive pet health library
- Request an appointment...and more!



Ingersoll Animal Hospital

3009 Ingersoll Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50312
515-274-3555

www.ingersollanimal.com
Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday: 7 a.m. - Noon
Emergencies: 515-280-3051



Now you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter!



Ingersoll Animal Hospital
3009 Ingersoll Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50312

WHAT'S INSIDE



Instead of relying on store clerks or cute TV ads, why not listen to what experts have to say about pet food?

PAGE 2



Scientific advances make pet anesthesia a much safer procedure today. Read more here, then pick up our handy brochure.

PAGE 3



We are pleased to add veterinary acupuncture to the list of services provided by Ingersoll Animal Hospital.

PAGE 4



SUMMER 2010

HEALTHY ADVICE

for you and your pet

from the experts at Ingersoll Animal Hospital

Animal Talk

selecting the right pet food:

WHO DO YOU TRUST?

There has been an explosion in the number of cat and dog diets available on the market in the past couple of years. So many more pet food manufacturers, so many more advertising claims, so many more negative reviews of ingredients (yet those condemned ingredients have been eaten by healthy pets for many years). Let's face it – selecting our pet's diet today is both confusing and difficult.

As veterinarians, we also find it very difficult – if not impossible – to keep up with many of these diets and their claims. When we have questions, we consult with our veterinary nutritionist colleagues, who make it their business to evaluate and recommend diets for individual pets' needs.

If you aren't sure about your pet's diet or are thinking of changing to another diet, be sure to let us know. We would be glad to answer your questions as best we can.

IN FACT, we will start by answering some basic questions now!

Are breed-specific diets a gimmick?

Although there is not enough scientific research available to establish specific nutrient requirements by breed, the breed-specific diet manufacturers tend to focus on one or two health problems common in the breed when formulating the diet.

For example, the Schnauzer diet

may have decreased fat content, because Schnauzers, as a breed, are prone to pancreatitis.

Otherwise, manufacturers make the kibble shape and size "appropriate" for that breed. An example would be the attempt to make kibble easier to grasp for the flat-faced Persian cats.



instead of relying on the clerk at the pet food store, or those cute tv ads, why not listen to what the pet care experts have to say?



What is a food allergy, and how do I know if my dog or cat has one?

A food allergy is a hypersensitivity reaction to one or more ingredients in a diet to which your pet has been continually exposed. The ingredient, or allergen, causing the reaction is most commonly a meat-based protein rather than a grain protein.

If your pet is having clinical signs (excessive licking, itching, recurring ear infections, etc.), we may recommend a hypoallergenic diet trial. This diet will contain a novel protein that your pet has not previously been exposed to, and will be fed for approximately three months. No treats, table scraps, flavored medications, etc., can be given to your pet during the diet trial. If this diet is strictly adhered to, we should be able to successfully rule in or out food allergy/hypersensitivity as a cause of your pet's clinical signs.

What does Holistic or Whole Food mean?

Actually, there is no regulatory or scientific meaning to these terms. In fact, pet food companies that label their diets as such are using marketing and advertising strategies rather than nutritional science.

What is the most important information I should look for on the pet food bag?

Unfortunately, ingredient lists and guaranteed analyses do not indicate the quality of pet food. The labels on pet foods can be confusing and sometimes misleading. Just because a nutrient can be measured in a food, and therefore listed in the ingredients, does not ensure that it is adequately absorbed or giving your pet the desired effect.

We feel that the most important thing to look for when evaluating pet food is whether or not the diet has undergone a feeding trial under the direction of AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials). Dogs or cats in these trials receive physical exams, blood work, observation, and other tests to ensure that the diet meets the standards for a majority of animals. Look for the actual AAFCO feeding trial label on the bag (not just the AAFCO symbol). The AAFCO feeding trial label means that adequate nutrients have been added to the diet.

Large-breed dogs in particular need to be fed diets in their growth phase that have passed AAFCO feeding trials. Errors in nutrition during their growth phase can have especially detrimental life-long consequences. Large-breed growth diets that have been subjected to feeding trials are widely available and are recommended for these pups/dogs.

Should I feed my pet a gluten-free diet?

Gluten is the "gluey" substance remaining when the flour of wheat or other grains is washed to remove the starch. Gluten-sensitive intestinal disease is actually very rare in companion animals, and cannot be diagnosed without specific tests and biopsies. If a sensitivity to gluten is suspected, we would recommend a gluten-free diet trial for your dog or cat. Because corn, rice, and potatoes don't contain gluten, we would help you choose a trial food that has one of those ingredients rather than a diet containing wheat, barley, rye, buckwheat, or oats.

Melamine-contaminated gluten from China was thought to be the contaminant in the 2007 pet food recalls. This will likely never happen again! So, if your pet is doing well on a pet food containing gluten, why change to a gluten-free diet?

How about raw meat diets for dogs?

Are you prepared to take the precautions necessary to ensure that your dog, you, or your child does not come down with a zoonotic infection such as E Coli, Salmonella, or Campylobacter? That's what you will need to do if you feed a raw diet.

While there is no scientific evidence that there is any benefit to feeding a raw meat diet to your dog, there are multiple published studies that have documented concerns as to the ability of dogs to receive a properly balanced raw diet. That's because dogs are not exclusive carnivores and an all-meat diet can cause severe nutritional problems along with safety concerns like Salmonella. There are veterinary nutritionists that, for a fee, will evaluate a sample of a homemade diet for its nutrition value. We would strongly recommend this for anyone feeding a homemade diet.

What is a prescription diet?

A prescription diet is a veterinarian-recommended diet that is used to help treat or prevent a particular disease process or condition. Liver disease, kidney disease, cancer, feline lower urinary tract disease, diabetes, and obesity are some of the conditions that prompt us to recommend a specific prescription diet for your pet. Proper nutrition is often one of the most important parts of many treatment regimes.



Are the Special Ingredients added to some of the newer pet foods needed?

If a particular diet has *special* ingredients such as, for example, chickory root, cranberries, yucca, etc., you can call the pet food company and ask to have the scientific paper that supports the use of these ingredient(s) sent to you.

It is also important to know whether these ingredients are included in adequate amounts to provide any of the nutritional benefits that may be attributed to them.

So...

Ask yourself how your pet is doing on its diet, and ask us for our opinion at your pet's next exam. If your pet is doing well, there is most likely no reason to make a diet change. But, if you really want to try a diet change, and your pet seems to handle diet changes well, changing the diet for a few months to see if there is a difference is an alright thing to do. However, prior to changing diets, remember to:

1. Look for the AAFCO feeding trial label on the bag.
2. Don't hesitate to call the pet food company for more information if needed.
3. Ask us for our recommendation or input.



What about grains in food?

Except for a few dogs that may have a food hypersensitivity/allergy to a particular grain, dogs do not generally react poorly to grains. In fact, there is no published evidence that dietary grains cause any problems in healthy dogs. Corn, wheat, rice, oats, soy, etc., are healthy ingredients in human and animal diets.

These grains provide energy, protein, fat, fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Corn seems to be the grain that receives the most "bad press." However, as well as adding fiber and amino acids to the diet, corn also adds essential fatty acids. It is inexpensive, U.S.-grown, nutritious, and well tolerated by most animals.

Some of the "grain-free" diets replace cereal grains with ingredients such as tapioca and white potatoes. These ingredients actually contain fewer nutrients than traditional grains. And while the label may say "grain free," the product may contain other plant materials. Pet food companies do not define what they mean by grain, wheat, rye, corn, and grasses.

Pet Anesthesia

Scientific advances make it a much safer procedure today.

Veterinarians anesthetize animals on a daily basis. Yet at least once a week in any clinic, a pet owner expresses concern about anesthesia:

- Is it safe?
- Will my pet survive the procedure?

Modern anesthesia is very safe. The risk of a pet dying under anesthesia is less than one percent. The rare patient that is lost under anesthesia is generally an emergency surgery, when the patient's condition is extremely critical. The risk of a pet dying under anesthesia while undergoing a routine spay, neuter, dental, or mass removal is extremely low, but this risk can be affected by the anesthetic drugs used and how well the patient is monitored.

At Ingersoll Animal Hospital, before we anesthetize any patient, we perform advanced screenings, use only the most up-to-date anesthesia techniques, and monitor your pet throughout the procedure to help ensure vital functions are maintained.

We've prepared a brochure to help you learn what's involved in modern anesthesia. Ask for a copy the next time you're in the clinic. Then, should the need arise for your pet to be anesthetized, you'll have the answers at hand.

