



# The McClave Tailwagger

Volume 25, Issue 3

Fall 2017

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### West Nile Virus

The City of Los Angeles just confirmed its first human death from the West Nile Virus (WNV). The victim is a resident of the San Fernando Valley.

The Dept. of Public Health has surveyed WNV infected mosquitoes and dead birds and has identified the San Fernando Valley as an area of heightened risk for infection.

WNV is transmitted by mosquitoes. While dogs can't contract WNV, you can! We care about your health too! In addition, mosquitoes transmit heartworm disease to dogs and cats and their presence should be a reminder to take protective measures against harboring mosquitoes and preventing both WNV and heartworm disease. If you are seeing many mosquitoes, it may be prudent to put your dogs and cats on monthly heartworm meds. For WNV, please refer to the Los Angeles Dept. of Public Health: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm>

## Hospital Update

Fall is here and most of us valley dwellers welcome the cooler weather. We hope you all had a fabulous summer whether you sailed the open seas or basked in the California sun.

As of VCA McClave, we sadly bid Dr. Anne Dueppen goodbye. Dr. Dueppen saw all creatures great and small at our hospital and had a devoted clientele. She and Dr. Laura Romano are pursuing a career with more exotic veterinary medicine exposure than the ER set-up at VCA McClave. Good luck to both doctors and thank you Dr. Dueppen for many years of service.

Since there is a hello for every good bye, VCA McClave welcomes two new doctors: Dr. Yelena George who joined our overnight emergency team and Dr. Lorenzo Escobar who joined our daytime practice.

Dr. Yelena George has been living in California for the past 2 years. Home is the beautiful island of St. Maarten. She attended St. George's University with fourth year completion at Cornell University. She completed a one year rotating internship followed by a two year surgical internships. She has profound interest in orthopedic and soft tissue surgery. On her spare time she enjoys traveling and outdoor activities. She is both a cat and a dog lover and is currently living with her cat Salvador whom she adopted in her last year of college.

Dr. Escobar is a Southern California native who received his Bachelor's degree in Biology from California State University, Long Beach. He obtained his Veterinary Medical degree from Cornell University in snowy Ithaca, New York. Returning to his home state, Dr. Escobar is on a constant search for the best breakfast burrito in the world. In his spare time he is a frequent beach goer, snowboarder (in winter of course), and food fanatic. Welcome Drs. George and Escobar; we wish you a fun and fulfilling career at VCA McClave.



## Traveling with Your Pet Outside the U.S.A

As distances continue to shrink and pets are now included in many travel plans, we are finding a large number of clients who travel with their pets outside of the United States. Many countries have relaxed their requirements and are now welcoming canine and feline travel companions. The process though remains somewhat complex, particularly any travel to islands who are rabies free. In some cases, a plan to travel internationally, or to Hawaii, with your pet, requires preparation six months in advance. We can't tell you how many people end up disappointed or have to alter their plans because they did not research this properly. While the topic of international travel will be discussed in subsequent newsletters, we urge you to prepare ahead of time if you are planning to travel with your pet anywhere outside the US or Canada this coming holiday season. Please refer to the USDA website for all pet travel: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel>.

The check list prepared by the USDA for international travel is also very valuable and can be reached at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/pet-travel/checklist-for-obtaining-international-health-certificate.pdf>. More to follow in the December newsletter.

# Cats and Degenerative Joint Disease by Dr. Khalaf

My cat is almost 17 years old and has kidney disease. Figaro is skinny at 16.5#. Figaro's appetite is the first topic of the evening upon my return home from work. Figaro has a giant frame and immense paws. In his prime years, Figaro weighed 23 pounds and was one of the giant cats that always look photoshopped in pictures. Gorgeous and impressive, he was sadly afflicted with elbow arthritis at a rather young age — just like a large golden retriever. At first, you would never know it, but as he got older, Figaro's decreased mobility became more obvious. A while back, he quit being able to clear the yard wall. I saw that as an added plus. When he stopped being able to climb on my bed though and howled to be lifted up, I had to make some changes. Nothing like sleep deprivation to motivate someone to react. So I got him carpeted steps and needed two trials to find the right kind. We were fine for a while. Sadly, Figaro's arthritis is getting worse with time. Last week, I saw him crouching, tail up and he looked about to defecate on the living room carpet. I rushed to slide something underneath, only to realize that the poor cat was slowly lowering himself to sit.

Personal experience creates the best client education, hence the article about degenerative joint disease in cats. It is a misconception that cats do not get arthritis. Arthritis or degenerative joint disease (DJD) is actually quite common, but its signs are often subtle. Cat's symptoms are different from dogs. Cats do not usually limp as their problems are often bilateral. They don't really exercise nor are they taken for walks, so signs of pain may be missed. Because they, by nature, are solitary

hunters, cats hide their pain to protect themselves from perceived predators.

## Symptoms of DJD

It is thought that 92% of older cats have some form of DJD, so how can you tell that if your cat is affected? Just like Figaro, it is an alteration of normal behavior and motility that alert us. Arthritic cats may be reluctant to jump up or hesitant to jump down or use the stairs. They may use a chair as an "in between" to help them reach a table. They may spend more time sleeping or



**Up to 92% of Older cats Have Some Form of Degenerative**

in one location and often, they sit or sleep hunched, or sideways, instead of curled up. More severe pain may lead them to avoid using the litter box or even getting to the food and water dishes. Decreased grooming is also seen.

## Treatment

Treating arthritis in cats is not a simple task. As most people know, cats can't take aspirin nor human based anti-inflammatory drugs such as Advil or Aleve. Cats' metabolisms are very sensitive to these drugs and many are highly toxic in cats. To compound the problem, the majority of NSAID's (Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs) require optimal kidney health, even the ones that are labeled for use in cats in limited fashion. Unfortunately, many arthritic cats are older and have chronic kidney insufficiency, thus increasing the risk of these drugs. Nevertheless, two NSAID drugs are currently in use: Onsiar, which is labeled for use in the US for 3 days, and Metacam which is labelled for use in cats in the US, but is widely used in Europe. Both of these drugs, if used, should be accompanied by blood work before therapy and chronic monitoring of kidney func-

tion and blood count, among others. There are risks associated with the use of these drugs and only thorough examinations and veterinary consult could determine if the benefits outweigh the risks.

Other modalities for chronic arthritis treatment include joint supplementation such as Dasuquin or Cosequin, and in some cases, the use of injectable Adequan, again, off label. Adequan is a glycosaminoglycan which are compounds integral to the formation of joint fluid. Adequan helps keep joints lubricated and is widely used in canine medicine. Adequan should be used with caution in cats as it can have anti-coagulant properties, but some leading feline practitioners truly believe in its effect.

A medication called Gabapentin has also gained recent popularity in feline medicine. Gabapentin works by altering pain sensation at nerve endings and seems to be a beneficial medicine in the fight against DJD in cats. Because all commercially available Gabapentin pills are not dosed for use in cats, this drug has to be compounded. Some, but not all cats respond well to it.

Diets rich in Essential fatty Acids and anti-oxidants as well as decreasing obesity and encouraging low intensity exercise are also helpful adjunct treatments.

## Environmental Modification

Do not underestimate the value of environmental modification in fighting DJD. Adding gradual perches, stools and steps to access desired areas enhances affected cats' well-being, so do litter boxes with lower "sides" for easy ins and outs. Multiple feeding and watering stations may be needed for some. Many of cats with DJD are senior citizens; long ignored as a resilient creature who requires little medical care, we now know that regular veterinary visits and loads of TLC are a must to preserve these great companions.

## The Canine Flu Rears its Ugly Head

Three clusters of Canine Influenza (H3N2) have been identified to date in Los Angeles County. The first cluster occurred in March 2017. That cluster originated through a rescue society who imported dogs from Asia where the virus is commonly found. 52 dogs were exposed, all of which were quarantined and the infection was contained. Another unrelated case (one dog) was identified in April 2017. That pet originated in San Bernardino County and was isolated promptly with no further cases affected.

On August 3rd, 2017, a San Gabriel Valley dog tested positive for the Canine Flu after boarding at a local kennel. 26 other dogs developed respiratory like symptoms at the time of exposure but it was not known if they also harbored the canine flu. The source of this outbreak remains under investigation.

There is no evidence that

humans can contract the canine flu from their dogs, however, the virus is highly contagious to dogs and, on rare occasions, could affect cats. Symptoms resemble kennel cough and usually cause mild to moderate respiratory disease. Most dogs recover fully following infection. Dogs in our area lack immunity to the virus and are easily infected. They can also remain contagious for three weeks after infection. Dogs contract the disease through infected respiratory secretions as well as contamination from the environment.

Multiple outbreaks have occurred in differing states, most notably a well publicized outbreak in Chicago in 2015. Florida was

also affected this summer.

There is a vaccine for the Canine flu (dual vaccine H3N2 and H3N8) and it is available at our hospital. The vaccine should be boosted one month after the first inoculation and every year thereafter. Although the flu vaccine is not considered to be a core vaccine, owners

whose dogs spend a lot of time at doggy day care or boarding kennels should consider vaccinating their dogs and discussing the vaccine with their veterinarian.

For more up to date information about the Canine Flu in our area, please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/InfluenzaCanineH3N2.htm>



*The Canine Flu Was Recently Identified in Los Angeles*

## Hoodoo's Diary: My Summer Vacation



Hi, its is me, Hoodoo, the really good dog. My mommy works at McClave. I just got back

from Tahoe. We went on a big hike in Echo Lakes. Mom promised me that we were returning by boat, but the boat had closed for summer. Mom forgot it was fall; she is that way, my Momma. We had to walk both ways. I made them carry me—my feet were killing me as the terrain was all rocky. The rocks were little for Momma and her friends, but for me, it was like boulder hopping. Momma forgot I was a Dachshund. She is that way, my Momma. I tell you though, I was inspirational on that hike at first; people kept saying if that little guy can do it (meaning me, I am the little guy), so can they! I enclosed a couple of pictures:

can you tell which is the “before” and which is the “after” picture? I love going to Tahoe in summer. I will share another secret with you: I chase cotton tail rabbits there. Momma said that was not very nice, but I am a Dachshund so it is my life’s purpose and I have an image to protect.

I also went to Camp Bow Wow this summer. I love going to camp. I play there with a lot of other dogs. I think that I was there for a long time, but I am not sure since I am a dog and I am not supposed to know how to tell time. I can tell you though that I slept and woke up numerous times at Camp Bow Wow. Mom finally picked me up. I acted very happy to see her. It’s not that I was not happy or anything, but, you see, humans are very complex and at times, I can’t figure out my Momma. I always know when she is packing for a trip and I am not going to be invited - she acts very guilty. But

when I realize that I am going to Camp Bow Wow, I get so excited! Once there, I run and pull on the leash and rush in to play without looking back. And do you know what happens? Momma, who is feeling guilty thinking I was sad, simply says: “Hey little guy?” (that’s me); “No good byes? No kissies for your momma?” So I am supposed to be really upset and hang on to my wretched Momma who, a second ago, had no qualms about abandoning me for a century? (Is that a long time?) So I play the human game and give her a royal welcome at pick-up time, then I jump in the car and act like I am pouting. Then she hugs me and promises she will never ever leave me. Oh, but she will, she is that way, my Momma!



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## VCA MCCLAVE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

The McClave Tailwagger is a  
publication produced by  
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We are open 24  
hours with a Doctor  
on the premises at  
all times.

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