It is amazing what a few drops of water could do for a landscape. As much as my pets hated the rain, the city simply came to life. Shriveled up gardens have exploded in a gorgeous color display. I am loving my walks! I can’t say though that I am enjoying the 90 degree weather we are having this week, nor daylight saving time; I want more rain! Sorry pets.

We all become more active this time of year. Butterflies are not the only ones that come out of their cocoon. For those of you who stop flea and tick product in winter, it is time to start re-applying them products even if the rain or the cold weather returns. Please watch out for rattlesnakes if you seek the local hills and consider the rattlesnake vaccine if you are out there a lot. Please consult with your veterinarian as the vaccine is somewhat controversial. Watch out for bees out there also, particularly if you have a curious puppy.

A couple of other items are worth mentioning this spring for those of you who are politically motivated. There are two bills that are on the legislative floor that may be of interest to you. AB 292 provides a tax deduction of $100 for adopting any cat or a dog over 4 years of age from a shelter or non-profit rescue society. Another bill, AB 942 would provide, if it passes, a tax deduction for an individual, of up to $2000, for qualified veterinary services for a dog or cat. These bills may never come to fruition though and for all we know, our services could become taxed as there is always an attempt to tax some services in California, so far without success. Think sweet thoughts and enjoy your spring!

Care Credit for Animals

Can CareCredit help defer the cost of emergency veterinary bills? CareCredit is a healthcare credit card designed to be used for many health care needs including your pet’s veterinary bills. While CareCredit can be used for vaccines and preventable care, its true need is facing unexpected emergency veterinary bills. CareCredit offers special financing options of varying terms and that are interest free as long as you pay the minimum monthly payments and settle the bill at the end of your term. You can apply at the veterinarian via a simple application or online at www.carecredit.com/apply and a response is obtained in less than an hour. When accepted, typically a financial amount is selected based on your credit report. You must be 18 or older to apply. Many people who think they do not qualify end up qualifying for some credit. Having a monthly income and a good credit rating certainly helps.

Many of you are faced with emergency veterinary bills that that are beyond the capacity of most middle class families. CareCredit offers the financially responsible client just another option for a rainy day.
How Far Would You Go to Save Your Pet? By Dr. Nada Khalaf

Khloe is a five year old Rottweiler with a healthy appetite. Nothing tastes bad for Khloe, be it food, sticks, mud, etc... Khloe is healthy otherwise. Last week, Khloe ate a large piece of fabric and most likely a Play-doh lid. The fabric got tangled and twisted in her intestines and some got stuck in her stomach. By the time it was said and done, Khloe had stomach surgery and about 1 1/2 foot of intestines were resected because they were too compromised. Khloe went home Saturday and is still on the mend. The price, about $6000.

How far would you go to save your pet’s life? Where do you draw the line when your pet is ill? Would you spend $5000? Would you spend $10,000? At what point is price “no object”? Is it always about money? Would you do chemotherapy? Would you do back surgery? Brain surgery? Would you give your cat daily fluids if he/she had kidney disease? How about a new kidney? Would you get a set of wheels for your Dachshund? What if he/she is incontinent? Would you express your pet’s bladder every single day of his life because he no longer is able to urinate on his own? Would you do anything? Really, truly, anything? The examples above are not random. They represent patients of ours or cases that we encounter daily. Unlike with Khloe, whose parents drew the line over her capacity to recover, the line is often blurry. After 25 years of being a veterinarian, I can tell you also that it is not always about cost.

In 2009, my 13 year old beloved Dachshund Zoe ruptured a large intervertebral disc in her spine and became paralyzed. I was faced with the emotional and ethical dilemma to subject this already old dog to a major surgery without any guarantee that she’d walk again. I went through with the surgery and looked out as Zoe walked again and lived another four and a half years. The first two days post hospitalization were grueling though. I had Zoe confined to the kitchen and had the whole floor lined up with thick blankets to provide her with padding and decrease urine contamination. She was painful and cried; it was truly hard, but a mere 48-72 hours! I remember feeling like a client and wondering how many of you had endured so much more!

So how much is too much? There is no easy answer here. Veterinarians differ in their beliefs on when to stop; they are also usually obligated to follow the clients limitation — within reason at least. Veterinarians struggle with euthanasia when money is the main drive, but how about when the pet is simply too ill! Let’s face it, euthanasia does offer an “out”. Could clients and veterinarians differ on when to stop? What about pain and suffering and what is the difference between the two?

I have asked a lot of questions and I think it is time to try to answer some. There are no rights nor wrongs here, but I will do my best to present some guidelines that help us veterinarians go to sleep at night. They are not designed to be dogma, just a few helpful steps...

First of all, there is a difference between pain and suffering. Suffering is a non-retractable pain or condition that one can’t necessarily alleviate, while pain is often treatable or temporary. A broken leg is painful, and probably expensive, but one does not have to suffer with a broken leg. There are many effective and accessible pain medicine available these days that have dramatically improved our pet’s quality of life and sped up their recovery.

Also pain is not the only way by which an animal suffers. The inability to groom or eliminate, inability to move away from one’s waste, confusion, dementia, lack of mobility or trouble breathing are all signs of suffering and are sometimes subtle to spot, particularly in the geriatric population or when pain is not evident. While losing a limb or an eye or being cosmetically maimed may represent emotional suffering for us humans, it is not necessary so for an animal. Finally, it is the quality of life that matters and not the quantity.

In humans, cancer remission is measured in five years increments. Five years is a long time in veterinary medicine and clients are often shocked to hear us talk in months. For many people though, buying a few months is well worth it if a pet’s quality of life is maintained. Take for example spleen surgery: splenic tumors are often, but not always, malignant. They tend to occur in older dogs. It is often not possible to know the outcome until after the spleen is removed and submitted for biopsy. Do you support surgery knowing that you may have your dog for only three months if the tumor turns out to be malignant?

So what is you are faced with a tough decision? Ask yourself first: what is the prognosis? In Khloe’s case, the prognosis was potentially good, but not guaranteed. With the spleen issue, it is a bit harder. Ask yourself if you would be ok if you bought three months of happy times with your dog; she can still go to the park and on walks, she can eat and drink but is unlikely to live long. Would you accept it and be her devoted parent until the end or would it tear you apart because you are too emotionally distraught? Do not forget about yourself too in this equation; after all, you are the primary caretaker and your mental health is very important, not to mention being able to provide for your family. If your answer is not readily apparent, ask your veterinarian if you can take 24 hours to think about it. In some cases, the decision does not have to be done right away as you can opt to start treatment while you weigh the issues. Sometimes you are able to see a lot clearer after all the cards are laid out on the table.

Finally, money does not grow on trees, so review your financial status and ask about payment plans such as CareCredit (page 1). Ask for alternative and less costly treatment plans if available but never lose sight of the ultimate goal: good quality of life. We all strive for it and it is our pet’s right as much as ours.

In summary, there is no such a thing as doing too much as long as the quality of our pet’s life is maintained and we do not lose ourselves in the process.
Hoodoo’s Diary: Spring Fever

I am chasing squirrels again.  Ah, the rush of it all! Oh, how I love the smell of citrus blossom.  Mama said it’s called Spring.  Tortoise woke up again.  I am supposed to be excited like Mama, but tortoise bores me after a few sniffs.  Can’t get him to chase squirrels with me.  Cat is now sleeping on the patio chair instead of sleeping inside.  Yippee, he expanded energy!  Mama sure has picked me siblings who live life in the fast lane...

I have to tell you about winter.  It rained!  Mama got excited as usual and insisted on having me appreciate the wonders of nature in winter.  I knew though the minute she pulled that ugly sweater that she wanted me to wear that it was time to run.  “It will keep you warm Hoodoo”, said Mama.  Warm?  Do you see the frost of the roof?  My cute bare buns just froze warm me to sleep and I sleep comfortably knowing that life is beautiful!

Mama told me that they’d be days like this; she was right for once.  You see, Mama lies a lot.  The other day, she said it was raining cats and dogs and I rushed excited for something to break the monotony... Lies, again, it was the same drops of water falling from the sky, a lot of them this time.  She was even worried a bit about the water in the yard.  I, as usual, was a very good boy throughout winter; not one “accident” in the house, even when mama was not looking!

Then one day, just like that, the rain stopped.  Mama said it may come back again.  I hope she is lying as usual.  It was really warm yesterday and I sunned my cute little buns.  The grass was all green and Mama’s wild goldfinches were all over the feeder.  She is nice that way, my mama, feeding the birds and giving them a bird bath and all.  I thought that silly cat of mine was supposed to chase them like they do on TV, but it is hard to catch a bird while asleep, so they are safe, for now.  You know what I miss though, I miss Mama as asleep, so they are safe, for now.  You

“Easter Lilie’s Petal, Leaves, Pollen, Even Water in Vase Are Toxic to Cats if Ingested”

The problem is so severe, particularly this time of year, that it prompted the Pet Poison Helpline to create a campaign titled “No Lilies for Kitties” to help educate the public about this danger: www.noliliesforkitties.com

The website above.

Top Ten 2016 Toxins in Dogs and Cats.

Cats:
1. Lilies (see below).
2. Insecticides (majority are store-bought insecticides not designed for cats or wrong size).
3. Household cleaners.
4. Human Antidepressants (Prozac, Cymbalta, Effexor).
5. Veterinary and Human NSAID (such as Advil and Aleve).
6. Rat and Mouse Bait.
8. Chocolate.
9. Acetaminophen (Tylenol).
10. Onions/leeks/shallots (causes anemia).

Dogs:
1. Chocolate.
2. Rat and Mouse Bait.
3. Xylitol (sugar substitute in chewing gum and some peanut butters).
4. Insecticides (most purchased without veterinary guidance or products designed for garden or lawn).
5. NSAID (see above).
8. Cosmetic products e.g. lipstick, mascara, cologne, deodorant.
9. Acetaminophen (Tylenol).
10. Fertilizers.


“No Lilies For Kitties”

With Easter and Mother’s day approaching, we would like to remind you once again that Easter Lilies are highly toxic to cats.  As a matter of fact, the same holds true for the Daylily, Tiger Lily, the Japanese Show Lily and the Stargazer Lily.  These lilies and all members of the genus *Lilium* and *Hemerocallis* lead to acute kidney failure if they are ingested by cats.  Unfortunately, they are beautiful flowers and are often added to many Easter and Mother’s day bouquets.

Exposure to these common lilies kills thousands of cats annually.

What should you do if you catch your cat eating a poisonous lily?  Immediately rush your cat to the hospital, even if it is in the middle of the night!  Early treatment including de-contamination, aggressive fluid therapy and monitoring kidney function can improve the prognosis.  Lily ingestion can prove fatal and ALL parts of the plant are toxic.  Please note that although dogs can have a stomach upset if they consume these plants, they do not develop kidney failure like cats do.  On a side note, Peace Lilies and Calla Lilies are not true lilies and do not cause kidney disease.  For a list and pictures of the true toxic lilies and recommendation on safer ornamental flowers, please visit the website above.
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Visit us at www.vcameclclave.com
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