

New Year Message
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE

Article WS136/07

Christopher Day - Veterinary Surgeon

Copyright © 2007 **AVMC**

Chinham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ UK

01367 710324

This is a page from www.alternativevet.org

A New Year Message

Christmas is behind us and a New Year is unfolding, beckoning us into the future. No doubt the post-festive mind is full of worthy resolutions. The box room **will** be tackled this year. The weight that accumulated last year, topped off by Christmas indulgence, **will** be vanquished. There may be a car restoration project, that has been languishing in the garage for years. This may be the year to give yourself that long-promised 'trip of a lifetime'. There may be distant or close relatives, who should be seen more often. It may be something simpler but possibly more worthy. Smile at fellow travellers. Lend a helping hand to those in need, whenever encountered. Each day, contribute to someone's happiness. Some of these resolutions will fall by the wayside, lost in the turmoil of the first weeks of January. Many will, undoubtedly, be seen through, for a happier and better-fulfilled year ahead. How many of us, however, will have had thoughts of the **family pet**, at this traditional time of self-examination and resolution?

Just as we ourselves fall prey, during the year, to inertia and to the penalties of succumbing to the pressures of stress, the temptations of over-indulgence and falling into unhealthy lazy lifestyles, so too do our animals, who depend upon us for their lifestyle and well-being. Perhaps there has been a nagging feeling that all is not hunky-dory, in the dog or cat department, despite an outward appearance of health, needing a closer look at the details of life, to ensure the best in well-being, enjoyment of life and longevity, for our much-beloved companion.

This could be the year to get out and about more with the dog, to the physical and mental benefit of both man and beast. How many times have I heard, in discussions with clients, that retiring or becoming redundant has brought unexpected health benefits, as a result of more time to walk the dog. A habit that started as a way of filling idle time can become a keenly-protected and precious essential activity. The reverse can also be the case. If one or other becomes unable to go for walks, for whatever reason, the health penalties quickly show in both. We

happily don't need the unwelcome jolt of redundancy, to bring about such changes. We can simply resolve to do it.

The beckoning year could make you think that the poor old dog is only given manufactured and highly-processed food, day in and day out, when the family feasts on fresh and wholesome variety. Some families even seek '[organic](#)' food for themselves, for health reasons, little realising that their dog can also benefit from this [natural diet](#) approach, for exactly the same reasons. Many families come to see me and are surprised and overjoyed to hear that they can offer their dogs or cats a share of their own food or can freshly prepare the pet's daily diet, as they do so carefully for themselves. I cannot count the telephone calls I have received, that simply tell us how liberated the family can feel, when changing over to fresh and wholesome food prepared at home and how obvious the health benefits are, within weeks, in the sparkling eye and the gleaming coat. All that is needed is to banish the fear that you cannot do it yourself, for lack of knowledge, and to accept that the nutrient requirements of dogs are broadly similar to our own.

None of us eats a truly balanced meal, any day of our lives. What happens is that we take in a goodly variety of fresh and healthy foods, compatible with our species' evolved requirements and the body miraculously balances the uptake of nutrients. If we don't do this for ourselves, maybe this January is a good time to resolve to do so. It's never too late to start but it is a case of the sooner the better.

To go back to our dogs, they can also benefit from this approach, so long as we remember that they are better adapted to meat-eating than we are and have the jaws and teeth to handle lumps of raw meat and to deal with raw bones, in a way that we cannot. This adaptation places a requirement in them, for such items in the diet. The old adage 'if you don't use it, you lose it' is very appropriate. Dogs that do not have regular access to such food ingredients soon tend to suffer tooth problems, as a clear sign that all is not well. There are even enzymes in raw meat, which serve to maintain mouth health. The early signs of trouble are stained teeth. Later, there is a build-up of tartar and this soon leads to gum disorder and smelly breath. In more advanced cases, teeth become compromised and have to be removed. Experience shows that, given a suitable diet, dogs keep their white teeth and healthy gums right into old age. If the early signs are there, in your dog's mouth, the change has become an urgent necessity, if you are to avoid a series of expensive dental vet visits and a progressive decline in mouth health.

Dogs are unable, because of their specialised dentition, to deal with and properly to use vegetables, in their raw, chunky state. They cannot chew them properly and do not have the bowel anatomy and function to break them down and digest them. In the wild, they overcome this obstacle and supply their needs for vegetable material, by eating fruit and by consuming herbivore dung, rich in the minerals and vitamins they require. Have you noticed how your dog is so proud of himself,

New Year Message - AVMC

to have found a fresh lot of sheep dung, while on a walk on the moors, that he will come up to you straight after, to offer you a kiss? In our domestic environment, we can supply this need for our dogs by giving fruit (but watch for the recent reports of toxicity from grapes and raisins, which are not fully explained as yet) or by giving vegetables that are prepared for him. Lightly-boiled or lightly-steamed vegetables can readily be utilised and digested. Raw vegetables provide essential nutrients but should be liquidised, for full benefit. Juicing is not so good, as essential fibre is lost.

Good supplements are seaweed (kelp), freshly-squeezed garlic, grated fresh parsley and water-cress, brewers yeast, evening primrose oil, fish oil, flax oil, star flower oil and live yoghurt. We tend to avoid dairy products and wheat, if there is a tendency to allergy.

Cats are different, in some aspects. They can, sadly, show a great reluctance to be weaned off 'fast-foods', if accustomed to them. They are prone to food poisoning, if meat is not hygienically prepared and if bowls and dishes are not kept clean. They are not so good with garlic and the onion family and they have an absolute dietary requirement for meat. Dogs can go veggie, if this is important to a family, but the needs of teeth and gums must then be more carefully addressed, without the natural benefit of raw meat and bones.

A good New Year present for your pet is to buy ceramic food and water dishes and to wash them in ecological reagents. This really tops off your health initiative and prevents the ingestion of potentially toxic material from other types of receptacle and household chemicals.

It is worth adding, at this point, that the general remarks made about diet may need some modification, in the case of animals with specific illnesses, such as kidney trouble. A natural diet can still be offered, but with modifications that a holistically-minded vet can recommend.

I wish all readers and their animal companions a healthy and happy New Year, which brings all the benefits that a healthy lifestyle and diet can bring.

Written by Christopher Day for New Year 2004

See also: <http://www.naturalfeeding.co.uk>

N.B.: Don't feed your dog chocolate. The theobromine in it appears to be toxic to sensitive individuals.

To return to the web site of the AVMC, click the 'BACK' button of your browser or click www.alternativevet.org

This site is subject to frequent ongoing development and expansion - please revisit to view new material