

## **THE ANNUAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATION**

August 8th was “World Cat Day” so I thought it only appropriate to dedicate this article to cats.

Recently, I read an article based on a poll of cat owners, which indicated that, an alarmingly large percentage of cat owners do not take their cats to their veterinarian on a regular basis. The reasons were numerous, the most common being that their cat was strictly indoors and the perception was that it was not necessary.

On reflection, I realized that I have many clients who visit me with their dogs on a yearly basis (or more often) but also own cat(s) whom I have never met.

Also, I often meet cats in their teens, whose last visit was when they were spayed or neutered as kittens. Unfortunately, many of these cats present with long standing illness undetected by their owners, because of their ability to hide symptoms of illness and pain from their owners. Often there is nothing that can be done to remedy except for humane euthanasia. Most of us visit our family physician yearly and so should our beloved felines (who, unlike us, can’t even verbalize health problems)

A physical exam is just as it suggests. Ears, eyes, nose and throat are examined thoroughly. Oral exam can unveil periodontal issues. A stethoscope can detect early heart and lung disease. Detailed abdominal palpation can detect changes in the liver, kidneys, spleen urinary bladder and gastrointestinal tract. Abdominal masses can be detected as well.

By performing blood and urine tests we can detect early signs of systemic disease such as diabetes, renal and liver disease and hyperthyroidism, all which are not uncommon in cats, particularly as they age.

EARLY detection allows for EARLY treatment and management and enhances quality of life and will prolong longevity.