

## **“The importance of the “annual check-up”**

Most of us agree that the annual trip to the veterinarian with our pet is synonymous with shots or vaccinations

This in most cases is true; however I believe that the opportunity for our pets to receive a thorough physical examination is of equal importance. We humans are no different as we visit our doctor on a yearly basis, and we consider the visit of key importance to our health and well being.

The huge difference is that we can verbalize our health problems and our aches and pains.

Before vaccines are administered to a pet, he or she should receive a systematic examination. The ears should be examined with a special scope to examine the ear canal and eardrum for abnormalities. The eyes and inside the eyes should be examined with a special lamp for the same purpose. The throat and tonsils should be checked for masses, and teeth checked for dental problems. The heart and lungs should be listened to with a stethoscope to detect problems such as heart murmurs, abnormal rhythms and abnormal breath sounds. The abdomen is palpated to detect changes in the size of its contents, i.e. the liver, spleen, kidney, intestines and urinary bladder. This can identify areas of discomfort for your pet that you as the owner could otherwise be unaware of. The skeleton - neck, back, tail and legs should all be palpated for abnormalities. As you can imagine, all of these procedures allow us to find abnormalities that your pet can not tell you about.

I also believe that our pets have a much higher tolerance to pain than we do, so it is really up to us to find the problems. So often I examine a pet's mouth to find a broken tooth or abscessed tooth root, the pet never having exhibited discomfort. If we had such problems we would all rush to the dentist as quickly as we could

To quote a cliché, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If we can detect problems before they amount to serious illness then we can maximize the potential for a longer and healthier life.