

PET TALK TUESDAYS – 1/7/2020

Nick Rusch:

Time now for Pet Talk Tuesday with Dr. Marty Greer from Veterinary Village in Lomira. Doc, how are you? It's good to see you again.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm doing great.

Nick Rusch:

Happy New Year.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thanks. Same to you. We had great holidays. I hope you did too.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah, we did. Everything went very well. No gunplay at the table, so that's always a positive.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, there's a plus.

Nick Rusch:

My standard line I come back to. I have a couple of others, too, but we won't go into that. We've got too much other things to cover.

Let's talk about winter preparations for our pets. It's wintertime.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is.

Nick Rusch:

I know this is ... Although our winter has been remarkably mild so far, which we didn't expect based on what fall was.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. It's still tougher. It's tougher to get outside and do everything. It's tougher to get outside and exercise. It's tougher to get outside with the dogs, with the cats. It's funny, because I have been a pet owner in my life, although I'm not currently. You always look at pets outside, and you think, "Okay, he wants to go back in."

Dr. Marty Greer:

Some do, and actually some don't. It depends a little bit.

Mostly today I want to talk about the pets that live outside, not the ones that live in our houses and that we take outside for quick trips.

Nick Rusch:

Perfect.

Dr. Marty Greer:

A lot of people do have outdoor pets. They may be cats, they may be dogs. I think it's really important that we discuss some of the things that we can do to keep them safe and comfortable during the winter, because you're right. It's been very mild, we've been a little complacent. Now we're going to run into some really cold weather. They're predicting really cold weather for the next couple of days on and off. Then, we know we're going to get some below-zero weather. It's just going to happen.

Nick Rusch:

At some point, yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. We've just been really lucky this year. I think keeping them warm, keeping them watered, keeping them fed, those are the three really important things. Food, water, and shelter are really key.

I want to start with water, because a lot of people forget that, when the temperatures get below zero, way below zero, the water freezes really fast. So fast that, sometimes, they can't get enough access to water. It's really important that we keep fresh water carried for their pets, whether they're dogs, whether they're cats.

There's also some really great water bowls that are heated, made by K&H pet supplies. Actually you can buy a lot of them at Fleet Farm. You can buy them online.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But, K&H is a Wisconsin-based company, which, I think, it's really cool.

Nick Rusch:

Didn't realize that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. They're based out of Wisconsin. I didn't know either until I went to Las Vegas and found that out. It's a long trip to find out that there's someone in your backyard.

Nick Rusch:

Isn't that something?

Dr. Marty Greer:

They make heated bowls, and they make heated beds, and they make a heated enclosures for pets. You can use the heated beds in the house, but-

Nick Rusch:

Are these plug in, battery operated?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Plug in.

Nick Rusch:

They are? Okay.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. They're plug in. They're made to be durable. They're made to be outdoors. If you read the label, some of them are indoor, some are outdoor, so make sure you get the outdoor style. They have little tent kind of things for cats that they can get into and stay warm. The cord is heavily wrapped with-

Nick Rusch:

Insulated? Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. It's wrapped with a wire coil so that they're not going to chew through it, and it's not going to get damaged outside.

Nick Rusch:

Very cool. Yeah. Very smart.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is. They even make stuff for chickens now. I think we should address chickens today, because we haven't really talked about those.

Nick Rusch:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

There's a huge number of people ... Even if you drive through town, you'll see signs now for eggs for sale. A lot of people even in town are starting to have chickens. They have heated waterers and heated enclosures for chickens, too, so don't forget your chickens.

I know. It's hard to believe.

Nick Rusch:

No, you don't know. I mean, I love you, but I grew up on a farm. We raised chickens. I can't imagine anyone doing it voluntarily. Being a farm kid that has to do it? I get that, because dad says, "By the way, we're butchering a hundred this Saturday." That's one thing, but voluntarily saying, "You know what we're going to get? Chickens." I'm lost.

Dr. Marty Greer:

My first pet was a chicken, just so you know.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah? I showed them at the fair, but my enthusiasm, even to eat chicken, is very, very, very low.

Dr. Marty Greer:

A hundred chickens on a butchering day is understandable.

Nick Rusch:

It's ambitious.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. It's the way my husband grew up, too, so I get that.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. No, but I do get it. I get why people want the fresh eggs, and in some cases the fresh meat. I understand that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And the chickens are kind of interactive, interesting, novel pets. People are into it.

If our pets don't have access to water, they're going to start looking for water sources elsewhere. One of the really dangerous things that happens is they'll find antifreeze to drink.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We don't see many cases of this anymore, but it still can occur. There are pet-safe antifreezes, but most people don't use them. They use, just, good old, regular cheap antifreeze. If you've got some of it sitting around in the garage, or some of it spilled onto the garage floor, it doesn't freeze. Because it's sweet, pets will go over, cats and dogs will go over, and lick it up. If they even ingest just a small quantity, it causes kidney failure, and it's irreversible. It's a really nasty disease.

Nick Rusch:

It is nasty stuff, antifreeze is, just in general. It's just nasty stuff. As you say, you may have a car that's a little older that may leak a little bit, or whatever. Before you know it, there it is.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right, and treatment is very costly. We used to have a really nice antidote, but that's no longer on the market. The treatment is IV ethanol, so we have to go to the pharmacy and buy 190-proof alcohol and give it intravenously to keep the patient, basically, inebriated for about four days on IV fluids. It's very expensive. It's very hard on the pet. But, it's a competitive product that keeps the antifreeze from causing precipitation of crystals in the kidneys. That's how we save the dog or cat's life.

But, you have to catch it very, very early. It's expensive, and it's a pain, and I haven't done it for decades. I have, in the past, treated these guys. It's not fun. Just be aware that the antifreeze is something that's appealing to them. You wouldn't think that they'd go over and drink it, but they will, and we do see cases of it, yeah.

Nick Rusch:

They will. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's very unfortunate.

We've talked about keeping them warm. It's important to keep them in a shelter that's small if you're not going to keep them in the house. My rule of thumb is, if you feel it's so cold that you call the veterinary clinic to say, "Is it too cold for my dog to be outside tonight?" The answer is, it's too cold.

Nick Rusch:

The answer is yeah. Yeah. Of course.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Bring them in, put them someplace that's warm. But, sometimes the garage is not even as warm as where they were. You need to think about the enclosure size that you're keeping your pet in. If the garage is heated, that's great. If the garage is unheated, then sometimes they're better in just a really small enclosure that's got a break from the wind that they can keep warm with their own body heat. They can't keep the whole garage warm, but if they have a little dog

house or a little barrel, or one of the heated K&H enclosures, there's a lot of ways to keep them warm without having to intervene.

Nick Rusch:

Do we throw a blanket in there? What do we do? Give them something to help warm them, or what do we do?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, if they won't eat the blanket, that's good. A lot of people use marsh hay. There's a lot of different products that people use. I can always tell who's on marsh hay because they smell like marsh hay when they come into the practice.

Nick Rusch:

Of course they do. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But there's certainly things you can do to keep them safe. Some people take old freezers, take the lid off of it, or old refrigerators, take the door off, and then put up a break so that the wind doesn't blow into it. There's a lot of novel and creative ways you can do it, or you can just bring them in the house and put them in the basement. Like I said, if it's so cold that you think you need to call, then it's too cold. Just bring them in.

But, you can prepare in advance. Go to Fleet, go to Amazon, get your K&H beds, get your K&H enclosures, get your water bowl heaters. Be prepared. Don't wait until the last minute and then run out, because it's just like when you try to buy a generator the day of a flood, they're out.

Nick Rusch:

They're gone. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Plan a little bit ahead. We know it's going to be cold.

Then, also, make sure that you increase the amount of food that the pets have access to. They are going to eat two to three times the amount of food that they eat during nice weather to keep their body temperatures up and to keep them warm.

Nick Rusch:

Two to three times?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Two to three times. It is a huge amount more. Sometimes it's less expensive just to bring the dog into the house, because by the time you buy three times as much dog food, you might've been better off just to bring them in.

Nick Rusch:

It's an economical move. I understand now.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It can be. Yeah, it can. They shiver. They need that extra body heat.

The sled dogs, when the Iditarod and the other sled dog type of events are run, those dogs eat massive amounts of calories.

Nick Rusch:

Sure. They burn it all off right away. Between the cold and the activity, they burn it right off.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. They can't even make dog food that sits in a bag for those dogs. It's so high in fat that it has to be packaged in a bucket, because the oil, the grease, the fat in the food just erodes right through the bags.

Nick Rusch:

Guess I never thought of that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

And I had huskies.

Dr. Marty Greer:

There's a whole logistics to this.

Then we want to make sure that, also, if you are using anything on the sidewalks, whether it's your house dog or your outdoor pet, that you're using something that's safe on their feet. Sidewalk salt, they do make a pet-safe version. We buy that for our practice. You can buy it at Northwoods, you can buy it a lot of different places. It's not hard to find.

Nick Rusch:

I've actually found that at the home-improvement stores, as well.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Not hard to find.

Nick Rusch:

There was a time I needed some and, not being a pet owner, I really didn't consider whether I was buying that or not. But, I needed some and they had some, and that's what I bought.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. Because even if it's not your pet, it may be your neighbor's pets.

Nick Rusch:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Be aware of that. You can buy the safe ones. Or, what a lot of people use is cat litter. It gives good traction. It tracks a little bit into the house, but it gives good traction. You can always throw that extra bag in the trunk of your car so that, A, you have the weight in the back of your car when you're driving up a slippery driveway, and B, you've got cat litter to throw onto your wheels when you get into trouble. Cat litter has some really nice purposes, but it does track into the house. But, so does the sidewalk salt.

Nick Rusch:

Sure. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

One way or another, if you're outside and tracking things in, you're going to end up having to clean up your floor.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Those are basically the things we need to do, is keep them warm, keep them fed, keep them watered. Like I said, the water freezes remarkably fast, so you might want to take warm water out. You may want to keep a water heater out there and have multiple sources.

Think about your barn cats. Think about the other cats. We kind of laugh at the practice because we'll have people that come in with a cat that's sick or injured, and they'll say, "But it's really not my cat. It's not my cat. It's my neighbor's cat," or ... But they feel responsible for bringing it in, and so we remind them again that, if you brought it in, if you're feeding it, if you're putting food out for that cat ...

Nick Rusch:

It's your cat.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's your cat. Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's your cat.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. That's interesting.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

If you decide to feed the birds in the winter, which a lot of people do ... We're going to talk about all the animals today. You're going to feed birds outside at your bird feeders, don't stop feeding just because the weather gets cold and you don't want to trudge out to the bird feeder.

Nick Rusch:

No, they're counting on it now.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They're counting on it. They've moved in to your yard. They've decided that they're not migrating. Be sure that you continue feeding them. Suet is great. I used to have a log with holes in it, and I would mix peanut butter with bacon fat and some bird seed into it and stuff it into the log, with a little stick sticking out of it.

Nick Rusch:

Sounds delicious, by the way.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It was great. It was wonderful. I don't think you'd want to spread it on bread, but okay. Once you make that commitment, whether you're feeding-

Nick Rusch:

No, you have to keep doing it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. If you're feeding an outdoor cat, you're feeding the outdoor birds, you need to continue because they count on you. In wintertime, their caloric needs increase exponentially. Don't fail them when they need you most.

Nick Rusch:

Okay. Do you have any pull? Can you get Sarah McLachlan to stop singing that song and get the sad dogs off the air?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I wish I had pull with her.

Nick Rusch:

Because it kills me every time.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I know.

Nick Rusch:

I read something about her. You will find this interesting. I love Sarah McLachlan, by the way. She's wonderfully talented. I read a thing with her where she was recording the ad for the ASPCA, and they said, "Can you sing it a little sadder?" The guy in the booth, he wanted it just a little ... She's like, "This is about as sad as this one gets."

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sadder than it is?

Nick Rusch:

Are you kidding me?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

There are some organizations that can definitely benefit from donations.

Nick Rusch:

Right. This time of year, or any time of year.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yes. ASPCA and HSUS have some political agendas, but your local humane society, Fond du Lac Humane Society, Dodge County, whatever area you're in, they really do need funding. They need help. I know you have an ad on once a week for them, for their pets that they need to place. They need paper towels, and trash bags, and cat litter, and dog food, and cat food, and money. Don't forget to help support the local shelters, because this time of year, they do need extra help.

Nick Rusch:

It's unending, really.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is.

Nick Rusch:

It's unending, but this time of year particularly, when you get into these winter months.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

I hate to put you on the spot. Any interesting cases you can tell us about, here, over the last few weeks?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Let's see. Last night was the dog that ate raisins.

Nick Rusch:

Those are no good, as we know.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. They're toxic.

Nick Rusch:

Those are no good for dogs.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We have to be careful with those. We've had one dog that ate two socks in a six-day period of time, so had multiple surgeries.

Nick Rusch:

Was it a matching pair?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm not really sure. Foreign bodies are really common. Socks, toys, all those little things.

Nick Rusch:

Sometimes they'll eat anything, too. As I've already mentioned, if they can get at it, they'll ...

Dr. Marty Greer:

The smellier the better. Socks and underwear are popular items.

Nick Rusch:

That's true. I don't know who draws it, but there's the comic strip with the dog and the cat. Satchel. The dog is always eating everything.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. It's true.

Nick Rusch:

Get Fuzzy.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. It's completely true.

Nick Rusch:

The dog is always eating everything, and it's just ridiculous.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Right.

We no longer want to use hydrogen peroxide to make dogs vomit, because it can cause some significant ulceration of their stomach. We've had one dog that ended up in the hospital with an air embolism from the peroxide. Please, if your pet does eat something that it shouldn't have, give us a call, see if vomiting is indicated. If so, please come in for an apomorphine injection. We can give that, and very reliably, within about four to seven minutes, we've got really productive vomiting. We're pros at it. We have a nice garage at our practice, so in the winter when it's cold and dark-

Nick Rusch:

I'm guessing with a hose.

Dr. Marty Greer:

With a hose.

Nick Rusch:

Yes. I'm going to go out on a limb and say there's a ... Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. It's lit, it's warm, it's not windy, and we can see what's being vomited up because it's not in the grass. We have a system down. Yes, if your pet does ingest something that's inappropriate, please don't reach for the peroxide. I know it says that you can do it online, but we've seen too many complications with it. There are better choices.

Of course, our usual increased number of wonderful puppies being born by C-section. We have a lot of great breeders in our practice. We always have lots of newborns and young puppies in our practice. That makes our life really fun.

Nick Rusch:

That's almost too much fun.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is.

Nick Rusch:

That's a lot of fun.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is. It's a great thing. If you have an interest in finding a new pet, please call your veterinarian. Call us and say, "Can you help me select the breed of dog that I should get," or, "the breed of cat I should get?" And, "Can you help me select someone that's a reliable breeder that we can get that pet from?" Don't just go out there on your own. The Humane Society is a great source, but we also have great intentionally bred dogs.

Nick Rusch:

I'm glad you brought that up, because that's something that never would have occurred to me.

Dr. Marty Greer:

To call your vet?

Nick Rusch:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

When you're a new owner. It occurs to me to call the vet, certainly, if you purchase an animal, to have a relationship with a veterinarian. That certainly would occur to me, because the whole time we were in production agriculture and pet owners, we always had a veterinarian that we knew very well and we could get ahold of. But, prior to selecting the dog or the breed of dog, or prior to selecting the breeder, that would not have occurred to me.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. We do it quite a bit. I actually had a client that lost her pet a couple of weeks ago, and she called me yesterday. She used to be one of my grooming assistants. She called and said, "I need a smaller dog. I want one that doesn't shed. I'm looking for these criteria." It helps to know a lot about those breeds, their behaviors, because they aren't always what you think they are.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sometimes those really cute little dogs are like little land sharks. You want a really sweet, wonderful little pet that's going to sit on your lap and hang out with you. Then you give me the rest of the criteria, and I can help you figure out what breeds would be appropriate.

Oshkosh Dog Show is this coming weekend.

Nick Rusch:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

If you want to go look at a whole array of different breeds of dogs, it's a great place to go. Meet the breeders, see the pets, see what size the dogs are, how they look, how they groom, what kind of shedding they do, what their behaviors are. It's a wonderful resource, and those people are more than happy to talk to you. But, don't pet their dog just before they walk in the ring, because they've got them groomed and all poofed up.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. You don't want to do that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No.

Nick Rusch:

You mess things up.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. My daughter used to work for a poodle handler. Don't crush the poodle.

Nick Rusch:

Oh, my gosh.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You'd be in big trouble.

Nick Rusch:

Don't even look at them.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No.

Nick Rusch:

You're better off to turn away. Turn away just a little bit.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. These people are wonderful resources, and they're more than happy. The Oshkosh Dog Show is free to get into. It's a great place to go. It's a nice place to be for the weekend. If you want to go take the kids, please go and enjoy the dog show, and see the dogs.

Nick Rusch:

That's a great idea, too, to use you as a resource for that, because you see them all.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We do.

Nick Rusch:

You see them all, so you have an idea of what you're dealing with.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Good and bad, we see them all.

Nick Rusch:

They're mostly good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Mostly. Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. You know?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, but we know which ones are going to be the problem pets. There's no reason to walk into a predictably unfortunate situation. You want a dog that fits your lifestyle, fits your family, fits your needs, so please contact your veterinarian in advance because we are great resources. We know where all the good dogs are, where they come from. Give us a call. We're happy to help you find a great pet.

Nick Rusch:

Don't you find that, typically, a pet's personality is often reflective of its owners? How you try to treat the dog is generally how the dog is going to act, or ...

Dr. Marty Greer:

A lot of times, yeah. It's interesting. If we see a problem behavior dog, we'll tend to see the same behavior problems dog, after dog, after dog in the same family. I think that's fascinating. I'm not quite sure what that study in human behavior means, if that means that you select dogs that are challenging to own, or if you're a challenging person to live with.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm not quite sure.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. Now, there's a study. Let's get that funded.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm not sure how we're going to come up with the money to fund it.

Nick Rusch:

That's one I'd be interested in. I'd be interested to find that out. You know?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. But it really is true. I haven't figured it out yet. I've been doing this 38 years. I'm still seeking that answer. It's fascinating to me that it's the same pattern of behaviors.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. I've noticed that too, over the years.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. For sure.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. Give us your information, doc, because you ... Here's the thing. I love it when you come in, because we learn so much and we chat about interesting things. But, I think the main thing you got to keep in mind is, this woman is a resource that you can go to with your pets and with your pet issues. They're going to help you. Let's give them the contact information.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. We do behavioral work, as well, so if anybody's running into a problem ... You can find us at Highway 41 and 49 at the Brownsville exit. We technically have a Lomira address, but we're at the Brownsville exit across from Quad Graphics. Our phone number is (920)269-4000. Our website is, yes indeed, smallanimalclinic.com. Easy to find. If you blow that it's smallanimalclinic.net, and if you still can't get it, it's Veterinary Village. We're open seven days a week.

Nick Rusch:

Veterinary Village in Lomira. Dr. Marty Greer, always a pleasure. Pet Talk Tuesday, on The Source.