

Pet Talk Tuesdays – 8/4/2020

Nick Rusch:

Time for pet talk Tuesday. Joining us in the studio, Dr. Marty Greer from Veterinary Village in Lomira. Doc, how are you doing?

Dr. Marty Greer:

We're doing great, thank you.

Nick Rusch:

Good, good. And we're going to talk about a few things today with regard to your pet, your pet's health; mental and physical. We try and cover both of them usually.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. I think we need to.

Nick Rusch:

Because we can get some mental health for us now we'd have something. Greg just had a story on the air in the news a little bit about crowding at the shelter. Let's address that a little bit.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. I think we need to, because I think that's a regional issue and not necessarily one that reflects what's going on in Wisconsin. On my way here I talked to one of my very dear friends and business partners who is affiliated with a shelter, not in Fond du Lac but a local shelter. And indeed they are not having a pet overpopulation. Even their cat population is down. So I think it tends to be a regional issue and it's not necessarily one that's ubiquitous and I think we need to really be aware of the differences. But currently, most of the shelters have an under population, not an overpopulation, because so many people that are home right now from school and from work during the pandemic have decided that being home by themselves, this is a good opportunity. Either they're lonely or they've got the time to take on a pet that perhaps they felt that they didn't want to make that obligation before. So we've seen pet adoptions rise considerably, and I'll tell you most veterinary practices that I've talked to are incredibly busy. So it's a big difference.

Nick Rusch:

I think that that's the nationwide trend we've actually seen. I know people are shocked that we actually write these shows, but we go through a lot of show prep and that is a trend that I think that I ran across in my show prep. That more and more people... But there's a danger here too, because at some point you're going to go back.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, some people are and some people aren't.

Nick Rusch:

Some people won't, right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Some people are retiring. Some people have permanently lost their jobs. Some people are permanently working at home. Some people are going to work at home and have a hybrid job, so there'll be at home a couple days a week and in the office a couple. So there's so many different models of what's going on that it's pretty difficult to make a generalized statement about-

Nick Rusch:

But whatever your situation is, you need to consider the pets wellbeing.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. Because what you're doing right now may not be what you're doing in three months, or a year, or three years. So when you make a pet ownership commitment, it's a 15 year commitment. So you really need to take a good, hard look at your lifestyle and the pet and their needs before you jump in and make a commitment to taking them in. So one of the things that we'd been doing at our practice, I've actually started to rewrite our puppy materials because I realized I had some extra time. I'm not traveling as much as usual, so I had a little extra time. So I thought, "Well, just rewrite a few things," which then turned into a book, because why not?

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. That's how that works. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. You have extra time-

Nick Rusch:

You're on a roll.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You might as well just do it. So we're going to actually publish a book called The Pandemic Puppy and that's going to be coming out... It's not set ready for publication yet, but it'll be coming out this fall yet. So we've been working on it because we have not only the veterinary care, but like you've said at the beginning, the emotional and behavioral care of our pets. And I think that we need to really address that because your lifestyle right now may not be what it is three months from now. So if you have a young dog or a new dog, and you're home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you may not be using your crate. You may not be teaching the puppy how to soothe themselves. You may not be teaching them to be alone.

And it's really important that the puppy learns that, or the kitten for that matter. Don't want to leave cats out of the conversation because well, they're aloof but not that aloof.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They still like their people. So I think it's important that we go through the steps of training, not just the training like house breaking and how to walk on a leash, but how to be alone, how to manage themselves, how to entertain themselves. What to do when you're gone. So you need to start practicing putting them in a crate. Practice with stuffed toys and puzzles, dog toy puzzles, and cat toy puzzles and things that they can start using their brains and learning to soothe themselves when you're not with them.

Nick Rusch:

Otherwise, when you are gone, you will come home to things you would much rather not have to come home to.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah. Yeah. You'll have a dog that's maladjusted to a crate. And crates, I think if they're used well can be used very, very well. They're really a safe way to keep a puppy. You wouldn't leave a two year old loose in your house if you even ran to the mailbox. You wouldn't leave your two year old in the house. And it's the same with a puppy because they

always stay too. They can get into so many things that you don't really want them to. It's not just they chewed up the remote or your shoes, it's that they can actually do damage to themselves as well. So they can hurt themselves trying to get out of a crate. They can chew through electric cords. We've had electrocutions, we've had lots and lots of toxicities. The first two weeks, when all the college students came home from school, we had two marijuana toxicities because I think the kids didn't realize that the dog was going to be ramming around in their room. And of course the parents didn't really appreciate the lifestyle that their student had been living when they were away from home. Shall we say.

Nick Rusch:

Little surprise for everybody.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. A little bit, but it was an expensive surprise because you didn't really know that that's what the dog had gotten into because who's going to say, "Oh sure. My kid does that." So there's toxicities. We see xylitol, which is sugarless gum and candy. We see, like I said, marijuana. We see chocolate, we see ibuprofen. So there's lots and lots of things that the dogs can get into when you turn your back even just for a second, not even for an eight hour work shift.

Nick Rusch:

Well you ever... And you're so right and you brought up it is a 15 year commitment. People often say to me, because I love dogs and I grew up on a farm with dogs and cats and I love animals. And people often say to me, "Why do you not have one?" And the answer is simple. I have a public appearance. I have a remote. I have this place to be, I have that place to be. I'm going to be riding the bike 35 miles a day. And I don't know how to explain to the dog, "You know what? I got to go do this now. I got to go do that now." And the lifestyle just doesn't work. I would love to have... Heck I'd like to have two or three, but I can't do it. So, knowing that I'm not going to put myself or the animal through it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely. And the other thing people need to think about is, if you're 40 and you get a dog from the shelter and you don't know what size it's going to be, it's probably okay if it turns into a bigger dog than you expected. But if you're 70 and you go to the shelter and you get a dog that looks like it's going to be a cute little sweet thing. And it turns out to be 120 pounds, by the time you're 85 picking that dog up and getting it into the car at the age of 15, when it's debilitated and now needs to go to the veterinary clinic and you can't do it. You need to really think carefully about what you're getting.

So one of the advantages of purchasing a purpose bred dog, which would be a dog from a breeder, whether it's a purebred or a mixed breed dog. And we see a lot of people that are breeding mixed breed dogs now deliberately in their purpose bred dogs. And they're well genetically screened and they're healthy and they've got good temperaments and all the right things, but they're still purpose bred dogs. If you do that, you have a much better idea of predictability of behavior, size, coat character activity level, a lot of different aspects of what you're going to expect, what you're jumping into. And so I see a lot more of my older clients purchasing a dog that's purpose bred than the younger ones. Now this isn't all and none. I mean, I still see rescue dogs coming into homes with older people and younger people purchasing purebred and purpose bred dogs. But I see a trend that the older people in their 70's and maybe even into their 80's, are looking at dogs that they know exactly what they're going to end up with.

Nick Rusch:

And maybe the key is to go ahead and take that initiative and do a little more research. I mean, maybe there's a dog you're looking at at the shelter. Try and find out what breed it is, try and find out what's typical for that breed, what that dog might grow into. Or if you're looking at a purpose bred dog, as you say, chances are you're going to have a little more expense upfront, but it might be worth it in the long run. If you realize what your life is going to be and what the animal's life is going to be.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And the other advantage is the health screenings. Most of the purpose bred dogs have health screenings done. So you're going to end up likely to have a dog that isn't so prone to allergies or hip dysplasia or some of the other disorders that we can really deliberately breed away from. So I think that's another important thing is, it's not just how much it costs at the front end of purchasing the dog, but it's what their lifetime expense looks like. And we see a lot of dogs that come in, and I don't want to over-generalize and sound like I'm being derogatory or negative toward rescue dogs, because there's a lot of great rescue dogs out there. But I will tell you that all the trainers that I talked to and all the people that really are in the know of this, we're seeing a higher incidence of behavioral issues in the dogs that are rescues than the dogs that are purpose bred.

And I think there's a couple of reasons for it. One is they're tossed around a lot when they're very young and so they don't have a consistent, happy household that they're growing up in. And two is genetically we're not really screening for their behavior. They were randomly bred. Mother was from a good home and dad was a traveling man. We don't really know what their genetics are. So we do tend to see an increased risk of separation anxiety. Anxiety as a generalized characteristic. Sometimes aggression, sometimes fearfulness. So be aware that if you take in one of the dogs that we don't really know their genetic or their breed background, that you may be more likely to have those issues. And unfortunately, it's not something that I would like to say is happening, but it really is true that the behavioral issues we see with fearfulness at the veterinary clinic and anxiety tend to be a greater risk in the rescue dogs.

Nick Rusch:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So it's a commitment. It's a behavioral thing that you have to work through. It means you may have more destruction or more concerns in your home. You may be more likely to have that dog on medication to help them through their behavioral issues so that they can learn how to deal with their anxiety. So there's a lot of aspects to it that people need to be aware of.

Nick Rusch:

I know you guys have been incredibly busy and as you mentioned, most veterinary practices right now have been. Is there a consistency of what you're seeing? Are you seeing the typical summer things? Are there other things we should be looking out for?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah. We're still seeing summer things. I pulled ticks off of eyelids last week. That was my special. I had one on a rabbit and one on a dog. The dog belonged to a parasitologist. The rabbit was a little white rabbit that they found in the woods. Clearly not a wild rabbit, but clearly one that had been domesticated and released. But fortunately it ended up in a great place.

Nick Rusch:

Oh, that's good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So we've seen the usual ticks. The usual staph infections on the skin, the hotspots, the allergies, all those things. And allergies tend to get worse in August and September so we're seeing those coming up. Fleas and ticks of course are a big concern and mosquitoes are coming out in full fledge now. So we're going to see an increased risk of allergic reactions from those types of things. And then the usual dog park. The dog that got a little overzealous at the dog park and had a little accident with another dog, those typical kinds of things.

Nick Rusch:

It happens.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And then of course this time of year, August, is when we really have to watch the lakes and ponds for blue-green algae. So you want to be very careful that you assess the water before you send your dog out. And if you do end up with your dog in an area that is not appropriate because of the blue-green algae, get them out of the water, make sure they don't consume too much water and get them bathed with, yes believe it or not, Dawn dish soap. So a good bath in Dawn dish soap, good rinse off and generally they're okay. But be aware that this is blue-green algae season.

Nick Rusch:

And we did, I think last year, you and I did a whole show on blue-green algae and it's very dangerous and not good for the doggy.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No. So make sure your flea and tick preventives are being given. Make sure your heartworm preventatives are being given. If you are going to be traveling, make sure your vaccinations are up to date. And most veterinary clinics are scheduling out several more weeks than they're used to. Most of the time people can call and get in in fairly short order to get vaccinations, but if you're going to be traveling and your dog needs boosters before they go to the boarding kennel, make sure that you get them vaccinated ahead of time so that there's not that last minute emergency vaccination. So it's just a really busy time at the veterinary clinics, I think partly because people are home and they've got some time that they can get their pets in for care. And the other is they're staring at their dogs and their cats all day. And so they're picking up on some small things that previously they didn't. They're like, "Oh, she's having four stools a day, or she's limping when I go on the 16th walk today." So we're seeing more of those types of things as well.

Nick Rusch:

And in a way, maybe that's a good thing because-

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's a great thing.

Nick Rusch:

Maybe things are getting seen to and noticed and diagnosed a little quicker than they would have in the past.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And people's work schedules are often a little more flexible so that they can get in for things that ordinarily they would have let slide. So I think it's a great thing. I'm not at all complaining about it, I just want people to be braced for the fact that if you call your vet clinic, don't be surprised that they can't get you immediately in for something unless it's quite urgent. Or urgent enough that you feel like you need to have an emergency visit.

Nick Rusch:

In my experience in the last several weeks for human health care, it's the same thing.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You're right. And the other thing is it's slowed down a little bit to get into the veterinary clinic. We're still letting one client at a time into the building. They must wear a mask and we're only letting one person in, but a lot of veterinary clinics are still doing curbside only service. So that makes the appointments take a longer time. And so they have a staff member that comes up to the vehicle, brings your pet in. Then you talk to the doctor on the phone or you FaceTime, or

you use Zoom or some other interaction during the veterinary visit. So things are taking longer. So an office visit, we may be able to do one less office visit an hour, which is also going to impact the number of appointments that we can see.

So people have to realize that they need to be a little bit patient, but if you have an urgent concern, of course, express that it's urgent so that you can get an appointment promptly. Even the emergency clinics are running sometimes four and five hour waits to get in. If you get there and they've just got such a backlog of cases, they're working through them as fast as they can. So be patient, be nice to your veterinary staff because they're really, really working hard. But there's a limit to how much physically we can manage.

Nick Rusch:

Right, right. As we get back into... And I don't know if there's... As you mentioned, there's so many different options and we don't know what normal's ever going to be. But what do we need to watch and how can we prepare those animals for when people go back to work? In addition to, you mentioned earlier, getting them used to the crate. What else can we do?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Crate training. Getting them on a schedule that's going to resemble what your schedule is going to look like when you go back to work or school. So if you know that you're going to be at work every morning at seven in the morning, start getting your pet used to getting up, going outside, taking care of whatever duties they need to in the morning. Put them onto that schedule that you're going to anticipate is going to happen. Make sure you're not changing up their food, changing up other things that are going to throw them off for how their body functions all work. So just try to prepare them a little bit for the eventuality of coming back to work. If you're going to have a neighbor take the dog out at lunchtime for you, start now. Start having the neighbor come over and meet with the dog. If you've got a neighborhood child or teenager that's going to be helping out, maybe a next door neighbor that's a little bit older and doesn't have a job and they want to co-parent your dog.

There's things that you can do to start getting the dog accustomed to that new routine. So start thinking about what that's going to look like so that the day before you go back to work, you're not in this mad scramble to get things lined up. Care.com has a lot of good caretakers as well. So if you have a new dog and you don't have someone in the neighborhood and you want that dog to have a mid day walk or a midday snack or some attention, some playtime, start doing those things. If you're going to go to doggy daycare one or two days a week because you go back to work, get the dog in doggy daycare now so that when it comes to the point that they have to go, that it's not something unfamiliar and they're going to be stressed by that.

Nick Rusch:

And not only will they be stressed, but you'll be stressed.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Nick Rusch:

Then there'll be something for you to deal with. And they love routine.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They do. They do they set their little watch to the time you leave, the time you come home, what time you're supposed to be feeding them, what time the walks happen. They have a little built in doggy watch. It's not just that they heard your car come around the corner. They have a pretty good idea what time of the day it is. So to try to get them onto a routine. Our lifestyle, we don't have a routine at our house. So my dogs have never been accustomed to that. But most dogs do appreciate a routine.

Nick Rusch:

Well, you can't be though, because you're constantly on call or you're constantly... Right?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Life is... Yeah. Bumpy.

Nick Rusch:

That's the way it works for you.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. We threw two extra C-sections into the schedule yesterday, that throws a monkey wrench into your whole day. So-

Nick Rusch:

And that can't be quick, is it?

Dr. Marty Greer:

No, it's not, but it's a blast and it's really fun and it's wonderful. And we have lots of great breeder clients that are selling puppies like crazy. So we've got to help them out. But it does change your schedule a little bit when you have an extra three or four hours of a workday. So my dogs are accustomed to a flexible schedule, but many dogs are not. So if your dog is one of those creatures of habit, respect that and start to help them out with that routine.

Nick Rusch:

Right. I always think that when I... And I'll hear people say about their pets, "Well he's always so glad to see you. He called the cops at eight o'clock."

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Nick Rusch:

"He put out an APB. He's been wondering where the heck you are."

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And they're very stuck on that. And they sit and stare out the window and they know what the routine needs to be.

Nick Rusch:

I think I read something where there's a lot of people that will actually call the house and leave a message so the dog or cat can hear it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well there are now-

Nick Rusch:

Is that helpful or not?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I don't know. There are now cameras that you can interact with your dog with. There's a Furbo, there's a couple of others. So the dog can hear your voice and you can call the dog, give him a command and then it will dispense a treat to the dog. So remotely, you can start interacting with your dog. Of course, that's not as important if you're working from home and they're at your feet all day, but if you want to start adjusting them to some new routine, when you go back to work get your Furbo camera set up now. You can get them on Amazon. They're not expensive. It really is Furbo and start

getting your little dog used to the routine of, "Okay, this is what we're going to do today." And literally you can toss your dog, a treat from your desk at your workplace.

Nick Rusch:

I think we need one of those for the staff here at the radio station. Get us a Furbo, that's what we need. Probably help a lot of our people. As always Doc, give us the contact information.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sure. We're at Veterinary Village. We're at Columbia drive. So it's the corner of 41 and 49, just across from Quad Graphics and the Equity Sale Barn. Our phone number is 920-269-4000. Our website is veterinaryvillage.com and our phone is 920 269 4000. We are open seven days a week. So we are not 24 hours, but we are seven days a week. So if you need something, give us a call or send us an email, or send us a text and we'll help you out.

Nick Rusch:

Always helpful information. Really appreciate it. And we we're just trying to keep your dog and your cat, all of your pets, happy and healthy. Both, as we mentioned at the top of the show, mentally and physically.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thank you.

Nick Rusch:

Now, if we can work on me then we'll have something.