

# Guide to Arizona Veterinarians & healthy pets

## *12 months of healthy pet tips*

A yearly checkup is the best way to keep your pet as healthy as possible – because it's much easier to prevent disease than to treat it. With regular checkups, your veterinarian can spot problems at their earliest stages, when issues can often be addressed simply and cost-effectively. So, whether your dog frolics at the park with all the neighborhood pups, or the closest your cat gets to the great outdoors is a sunny windowsill, every pet needs to see their veterinarian – at least once a year.

Pets age faster than we do, so missing even one annual checkup can be like us not visiting a doctor for more than five years. That's why the Arizona Veterinary Medical Association has teamed up with Partners for Healthy Pets to provide 12 months of pet health tips. Keeping your pets healthy can keep you healthy, too.

Spending time with a pet can help you shake (or even avoid) depression. Unconditional love keeps people positive, and just looking at your pet increases the amount of oxytocin – a “feel good” chemical – in your brain. The simple act of petting your dog or cat can lower your heart rate and blood pressure. And some studies have shown that pet owners have slightly lower cholesterol and are more likely to survive a heart attack. People with dogs tend to get more exercise – and meet more neighbors – than folks without a furry friend. Exercise and social interaction are both great ways to reduce stress and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.





### Is that a skin tag, a tick, a tumor or a toenail?

October is the month for witches, pumpkins and things that go bump in the night. But what if your pet has a bump... on its skin? Your pet may have bumps, lumps, missing fur, a black spot, a funny-looking toenail. Are these things nothing to worry about, or something of concern? For even the most observant owners, it's tough to know what skin issues are OK and what needs further evaluation. Yes, your pet may have skin disease and you may not even realize it. For example, your pet's missing fur may be a bald spot from a fungus – eeew! – or just a simple fall. Your veterinarian can run a routine lab test to figure out which one it is.

And if your pet has a little bump, it may be cancer. If it's left unchecked, the bump may become larger and harder to remove, which may put your pet's health at risk. But if your veterinarian takes a look early enough, it may be able to be removed with a big sigh of relief.

And finally, that black "spot" you thought was a freckle on your pet, may be a tick. If your veterinarian removes it within a certain amount of time, your pet will likely not be infected by a tick-borne disease. Phew!



### Are you thankful for your furry friend?

Show your pet how much you care. What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving? Your furry companions? You bet!

You may not know that a pet's annual checkup is essential to its health and well-being. It's as important as feeding them daily and loving them forever. It's the best way to keep your pet healthier, longer.



### Begging for a Bite of Holiday Dinner?

Before the holiday pounds sneak up on your pet, schedule your pet's yearly checkup today.

Holiday season is upon us – a busy time of year for festivities, socializing and, of course, lots of eating. Gaining those "holiday pounds" is not just a problem for humans, but also for our four-legged friends. In fact, research shows that pets are more likely to gain unwanted pounds during this holiday period than any other time of year. What pet can resist juicy ham, yummy cookies or a perfectly cooked roast? And what about the fruitcake? (Well, maybe they'd pass on that.)

But you say, "I just give him a bite or two." The problem is that one or two bites from each meal, every day, seven days a week can really add up the calories. Obesity is the leading medical problem in pets. When pets are too chubby, not only can they lack energy and mobility, but they also can develop arthritis, diabetes, cancer, skin issues, urinary tract problems and heart disease. Studies have even proven that pets who are overweight may have a shortened life span. All of these problems are caused by extra, unnecessary fat.



### Happy New Year!

Find out how your pet's health affects you.

Daily interactions with your pet can be one of the best parts of life. Your dog sleeps with you. Your cat licks you. You go on walks in the woods together.

The human-animal bond is a strong one. For many owners, a pet is considered a family member. So we feel it's important to give you the facts about a group of illnesses that are passed from animals to people (called zoonotic diseases or

zoonoses) that may cause health concerns for you and your pet. You may have heard of some of them: Lyme disease, cat-scratch disease, ringworm, giardiasis (stomach illness), tapeworm and heartworm infections.

These illnesses are passed from pets to people in a variety of ways:

- Contact with the infected pet themselves
- Contact with urine, feces or respiratory droplets of an infected pet
- Contact with items in the pet's environment
- Scratches or bites by a pet
- Scratches or bites by an insect (such as the Lyme-disease tick) that carries the infection from pets to people
- Contact with infected wildlife that pass the disease to pets and then to people

Even the most observant pet owners may not realize their pet has a zoonotic disease. They can be tough to spot. Your pet may look absolutely fine but be carrying an infection that can spread to you and the rest of your family.







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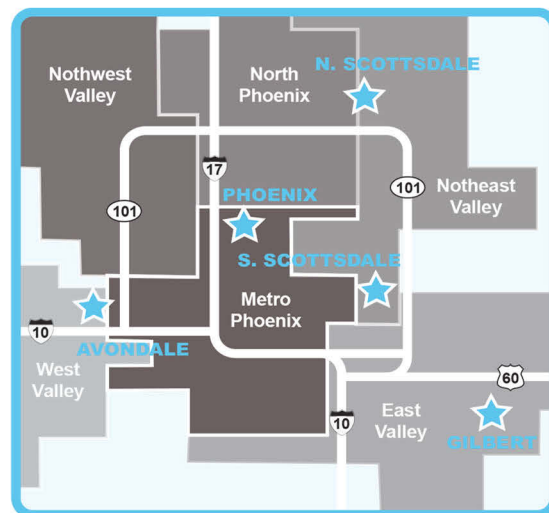
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#### It's the month of love, hugs and kisses!

It's that time of year again – a month about love, hugs, kisses and chocolate. And when it comes to your pet, three out of four of those come out way on top! (Chocolate is a no-no, but you already knew that.)

What if your pet's bad breath makes it positively unmissable? Bad breath may mean there is an issue with your pet's teeth and gums. But it also may be a sign of a more serious medical condition. Either way, if dental conditions are left untreated, you may put your pet at risk for problems in its mouth (periodontitis) or with internal organs (heart disease). The challenge most pet owners face is that even if a pet's breath smells fine, some dental conditions are hard to spot.

Keeping your pet healthy from toe to tooth shows the world how much you love them.



#### It's Almost Spring!

Time to check for  
heartworm disease.

It's March – springtime is around the corner. Worms in your garden... and worms in your pet? Eeew! Hold on, let's explain...

The worms you find in your garden mulch are not the same worms that cause heartworm disease in pets. Mosquitos carry heartworms. And all it takes is one mosquito to bite your pet to become infected.

Here's the good news about heartworm disease. It's an illness that is easy and affordable to prevent. The bad news is, if you don't prevent it the right way, your pet is at high risk of getting sick. Heart-



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worm disease is dangerous to your pet and some signs of the illness are tough to spot. Your pet may be acting fine, but it may have so many heartworms inside its body that it can become life-threatening. You may be thinking, “My pet stays indoors, so there’s no need for heartworm prevention.” But, heartworms are carried by mosquitoes, which get into everyone’s home. One mosquito bite is all that’s needed to spread the disease to your furry friend.



### Itchy pet? Schedule your pet’s annual **checkup today.**

What bothers you most? When your pet scratches so much his rattling tags keep you up all night? Is it the “thump, thump, thump” of her back leg on the floor that makes sleep impossible for you both? Or maybe it’s just knowing that your best friend is miserable because he can’t get comfortable?

The majority of pets don’t have fleas – but many have been bitten because fleas are everywhere. Fleas live outdoors in warm weather. They can live indoors too – even in really clean homes – year-round in any climate. Fleas will gladly hitch a ride on your pet into your house. And all it takes is one fleabite (specifically the flea’s saliva), to set off a full-blown skin allergy. A pet may scratch its sides and neck, or even lick its paws until they are red and painful.

**If a flea has bitten your pet and it’s not treated, you’ll have two problems on your hands:**

1. A little itch can develop into a full-blown skin infection, making life for your pet miserable.
2. Fleas may infest your house. Remember, fleas just take a quick “blood meal” when they bite your pet. The rest of their lives are spent in your house – and flea eggs can lay dormant in carpets, on floors or in the sofa for months to years. Eeeew!



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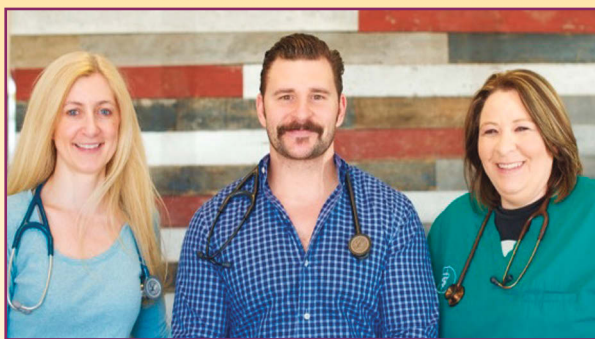
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### Your pet can have a tick-related disease...

Is your dog tired or achy after a walk? Is your cat eating less than usual? These seemingly minor changes may indicate your pet has a tick-related disease.

Ticks are tricky. Even when you check your pet for ticks regularly, they can be tough to find because they're small and hide well in dark fur. But it's crucial to find ticks and remove them quickly. Why? Some ticks carry bacteria that cause disease (such as Lyme disease, but there are many others). And it just takes one undetected tick bite for your pet to become infected. Left untreated, your pet can become very sick and develop kidney damage. At times, these diseases can be fatal.



### Your pet's nutritional needs change throughout a lifetime.

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The signs of nutritional imbalances may be obvious on the "outside" when you look at your pet – a dull coat or dry skin. Your pet may be overweight or have less energy. But it's hard to know if your pet's nutritional needs are being met – on the "inside!" It's important to find out because good nutrition is vital to your pet's health. The right food keeps pets in tiptop shape – healthy, active and happy both inside and out.

An appropriate pet food is important to your pet's well-being because:

- It provides optimal nutrients, such as calcium and energy, for puppies and kittens to grow healthy and strong.
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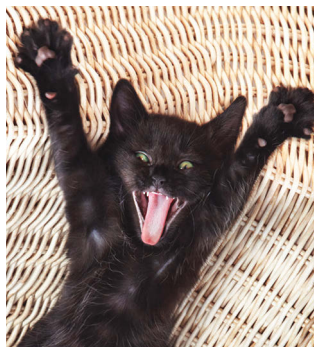
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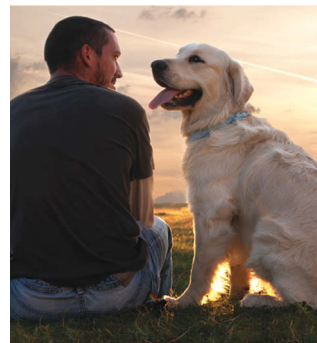
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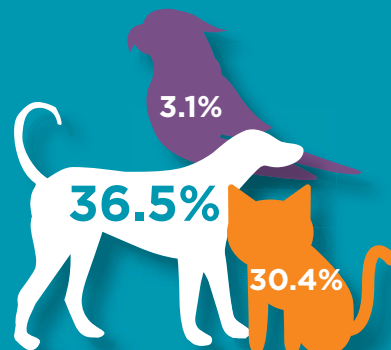
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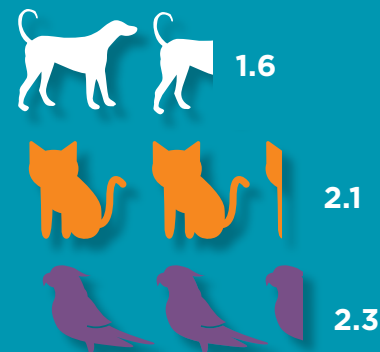


# Did You Know?

% of Households owning:



Average # owned per household:



# Households (in 1,000s) owning:



\*AVMA Sourcebook  
Source: 2012 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook



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**VET TIP:** "Many foods we eat are toxic to our pets. The following is a short list of foods that should never be fed to your pet: chocolate, onions, onion powder, raisins, grapes, walnuts, macadamia nuts and xylitol (artificial sweetener)."

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### Some of your pet's behaviors may be related to a hidden illness.

Nipping. Scratching. Litter box issues. Leash pulling. Meowing at night. Urinating on the floor. Chewing shoes. Are these behaviors just part of being a "normal" dog or cat, or not?

Actually, some common behavior issues are due to underlying medical problems. And these illnesses are tough to recognize even for the most observant owners.

For example, your dog may urinate on the floor. It may be from excitement, but it also can be from a urinary tract infection. Your cat may stop jumping on your lap – not because she's being unfriendly, but because she has arthritis, and jumping is too painful to her joints.

If these behaviors are left unchecked, it's a triple issue. The behavior may worsen, the underlying illness may progress (which puts your pet's health at risk), and most importantly, your pet's quality of life as part of your family is compromised.



### What's the best way to prevent bone, muscle and joint disease in your pet?

Musculoskeletal disease (disease that affects your pet's bones, muscles and joints) can affect pets of all ages. They can have aches and pains just like we do. But, because of their survival instincts, they try to hide it. And in the early stages of this disease, it's hard to spot because your pet may look and act absolutely fine "on the outside."

But what your pet looks like "on the inside" may be very different. Arthritis, toxins, hormonal abnormalities, infections, blood and blood vessel disorders or inappropriate nutrition can all affect the way your pet walks, plays and moves.



### Is your pet's heart healthy, or not?

You can tell a lot about your pet by looking at it. But one thing you can't see is its heart. Is it healthy, or not? A pet may have heart disease and even the most observant owners may not realize it.

Heart disease affects pets of all ages. For example, certain breeds of dogs and cats are at a higher risk of heart disease at a young age. In contrast, some pets develop heart disease later in life, concurrent with another illness. And then there are those pets who randomly develop heart disease at any age without any noticeable signs to the owner.

If your pet's heart is not checked regularly, your pet may be at risk for heart disease and in some cases, a shortened lifespan. The good news is, if caught early, most illnesses can be treated or managed successfully for years. And if your pet already has moderate heart disease but is regularly monitored by your veterinarian, its progression often can be slowed.

- Content provided by Partners for Healthy Pets

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