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Features

Pets on meds

Pet medications fraught with safety fears

WAYNE COUNTY, N.C. (AP) — With aging, it's become a routine faithfully endured by the Guffords. Each day starts with a blood sugar check and a shot of insulin. Then a couple of pills, maybe mashed into a bowl of tuna and canned carrots. Mixed with dry chow.

All for their 12-year-old dog. Brownie takes more drugs than his human companions put together. He has been medicated in recent months for diabetes, infections, high blood pressure and his finicky gut that rebels at red meat. Since 2005, he has taken drugs for everything from anemia to a spider bite.

"He's our baby, he's a family member, I would want somebody to do that for me," explains Ann Gufford.

She estimates spending \$5,000 over the last two years on medicine for her baby, a mixed beagle-cocker spaniel. He has lost a couple of steps on the squirrels outside their little home near Goldsboro. His hearing is failing. Still, without some of the drugs, he'd probably be gone.

"You cannot put a price on that," Mrs. Gufford says.

"And I don't want to," adds her husband, Ben.

Americans have begun to medicate their dogs, cats and sometimes other pets much as they medicate themselves.

They routinely treat their pets for arthritis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, allergies, dementia, and soon maybe even obesity. They pick from an expanding menu of mostly human pharmaceuticals like steroids for inflammation, antibiotics for infection, anti-clotting agents for heart ailments, Prozac or Valium for anxiety,



Oncology technician Nancy Thompson, left, and technician Tiffany Formica administer chemotherapy to Buddy at the Foster Hospital for Small Animals at Tufts Veterinary School in Grafton, Mass. Buddy has lymphoma.

even the impotence drug Viagra for a lung condition in dogs.

Increasingly, they buy at people pharmacies or online and sometimes pay with health insurance.

Until recent decades, American veterinarians still concentrated on care that reflected the country's agrarian roots: keeping farm animals healthy to protect the human food supply. Instead of being medicated, a very sick animal was quickly sacrificed to save the herd. Pets were typically kept outside with the cows, chick-

ens and pigs. A dog was lucky for a dry place in a crude shelter; a cat, for a warm spot in the barn.

Within the last five years, pets have finally overtaken farm animals in the pharmaceutical marketplace, claiming 54 percent of spending for animal drugs, according to the trade group Animal Health Institute.

Keeping more than 130 million dogs and cats alone, Americans bought \$2.9 billion worth of pet drugs in 2005. Though equal to only 1 percent of human drug sales, the



Brownie, a 12-year-old dog owned by Ben and Ann Gufford, sits in the sun at their home in Goldsboro, N.C. Brownie takes more drugs than his owners.

AP

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The Herald

Sharon, Pennsylvania

BridalC-3
TravelC-10

If a proper name can't be chanted, good luck at trying to spell it

DID your teachers make you learn how to spell Mississippi when you were in grade school?

All those "s's" and "p's"? In my school, we were encouraged to chant it out loud. That made it easy to remember.

It went something like this: "mi-ss-i-ss-i-pp-i," with stresses on the "s's" and "p's." Those of us who could chant always got that one right on a spelling quiz.

There didn't seem to be much urgency, though, about learning how to spell Massachusetts. Maybe it's because you can't chant it. (I had to look it up for this column.)

Both of these place names have Native American origins. A Massachusetts, for instance, was a member of a tribe that lived around the area we call today Massachusetts Bay. The tribe spoke the Algonquian language.

Native Americans could not tell us how to spell their words. They didn't have a written alphabet, so alphabetical spellings had to be invented. This was a problem. Spellings didn't always agree. For instance, today we have the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania, Allegany County in Maryland, the city of Alleghany in Colorado and the Alleghany State Park in New York State.

Many American place names were transliterated from several other languages that had no written alphabet, and spellings changed over time. The problem was serious enough to attract the attention of professor Thomas C. Mendenhall, superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Office. The year was 1890. He brought it to the attention of President Benjamin Harrison. Harrison appointed a commission, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. (Apparently there was no grave concern back then about the proliferation of questionable federal bureaucracies!)

In its first 10 years of tenure, the board decided 4,157 cases, including, in 1911, settling a wrangle over putting the "h" at the end of Pittsburgh, and approved spellings of all 2,803 counties then in existence in the United States.

One of the most vexing problems was deciding what to do about Wisconsin. For 211 years, from the time French explorers first visited the area, until the House of Representatives passed a resolution on the issue, various spellings had been contended. They were *Ouisconsin*, *Wiskonsin* and *Wisconsin*. Needless to say, we know what they decided.

In some cases, place names have been changed from simple names or spellings to more complicated ones. In Butler County, there was a town once called Petersville, from the name of its earliest settler, my fourth great-grandfather, Peter McKinney. Today this town is called Connoquenessing. (Whatever happened to our need for simplicity?)

Even more complicated was the name change of Lake Webster in Massachusetts. Today it is Lake Chabunagungamaug. It seems the good citizens there wanted the name to revert to the old Native American name. Don't you feel sorry for the poor kids

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Courtney L. Anderson/Herald

Veterinarian Dr. Gerald Frye and veterinary technician Lorraine Brasso prepare Sharon police dog Yelle for an MRI recently at PetsDx in Pittsburgh. The clinic offers the diagnostic technology specifically for animals.

SHARON

K-9 dog awaits surgery to repair injured spine

By Courtney L. Anderson
Herald Staff Writer

When it comes to medical treatment for animals, one of the trickiest challenges is that they can't say where or how much they hurt.

Pets are important parts of some people's families and it's hard for owners to make decisions without as much information as possible.

Partly for that reason Currie Crookston got on board with PetsDX Veterinary Imaging outside Pittsburgh.

Crookston helped to develop magnetic resonance imaging technology for use on animals.

Evaluating symptoms can be a bit of a guessing game for veterinarians but improved technology is making diagnosis of animal injuries much easier.

For K-9 police dog Yelle, who has worked with Sharon Police Department for about five years, medical images helped his vet determine whether he needed surgery for back injuries he got off the job recently.

PetsDx did an MRI on Yelle free of charge. Crookston said they've done so for a few police dogs.

"We have a particular soft spot in our hearts for working dogs," Crookston said. "We

feel that they're helping our community and if we can do something to help them, that's a good thing."

"These dogs work hard," he said. "I'm glad they're on my side."

Yelle is scheduled for surgery March 22 at Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital in Akron, said Sharon Police Chief Mike Menster.

Veterinary surgeons will remove a section of vertebrae from Yelle's spinal column in an attempt to relieve pressure on the spinal cord, Menster said. Police won't know until after the surgery whether the dog will be able to go back on duty.

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