



Newsletter

Montgomery County's Newest Animal Welfare Group

Volume 1, Issue 7

September 2006

**Animal Welfare League of
Montgomery County**
P.O. Box 7041
Gaithersburg, MD 20898
Telephone: (301) 740-2511
website: www.awlmc.org

Calendar of Events

Upcoming Adoption Events

Kentlands Petsmart Saturday Adoption Events

- Oct 7
- Oct 14
- Oct 21
- Oct 28

White Flint Petsmart Sunday Adoption Events

- Oct 14 (Saturday)
- Oct 29

Upcoming Fund raising events

Oktoberfest Celebrations

- Germantown Oct 7
- Kentlands Oct 8

ANY ARTICLE IDEAS? PLEASE E-MAIL ROGER
OR JONATHAN WITH THEM. GUEST WRITERS
ARE MOST WELCOME! THANK YOU LAURIE,
KACEY, NONA, AMY AND MARY ELLEN WHO
CONTRIBUTED TO THIS MONTHS NEWSLETTER.

JONATHAN & ROGER

P.S. THANKS ALSO TO PAT "FLASH" GAGNE
FOR THE PICTURES

Message from the President



Laurie Graham

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the AWLMC, I want to thank you for your continued support. I know that we all hoped that we would have a shelter facility at this point in time. The Board has been working hard since their election to find a space. I think that we have looked at every available commercial space in Montgomery County! We are currently attempting to obtain an occupancy permit on a place in Montgomery Village. Fingers crossed...

In the mean time, our other committees continue to work hard and make progress. The fundraising committee has a number of fundraisers scheduled in October, including Oktoberfest celebrations in Germantown and Kentlands and a mail campaign. Sher Polvinale, who has been acting as the volunteer coordinator, has done a fabulous job getting the volunteer program organized and recruiting volunteers for our various events. Our adoption program has had over 150 adoptions, a good portion of which saved the lives of cats that would otherwise have been euthanized at the county shelter. Our foster parents continue to provide great homes for our cats and to donate their Saturdays to showing their foster cats at adoption events. In addition, we have completed the training and paperwork for the AWLMC to be listed with the County as a non-profit looking for volunteers. We also have completed the process with the US Post Office to be recognized as a non-profit eligible for reduced bulk mailing rates. Things are moving along nicely thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers. Stay tuned for news of an upcoming All Hands meeting.

Feline Breast Cancer

Jonathan Allen

Introduction

One of the worst scourges of modern human health, breast cancer is a vicious disease that forever alters the lives of those whom it touches, whether in small or large measure. This affliction does not limit its touch to the human population, either; though far less prevalent in feline populations than human or even canine populations, it is still common enough to affect thousands of cat owners a year. These owners soon find that the disease is no less devastating, difficult to treat, or fatal than in any other population; in fact, feline breast cancer often proves to be more aggressive and deadly than in human and other animal populations.

Frequency

Feline breast cancer is the third most common cancer in cats, trailing behind leukemia and skin tumors. It occurs much less frequently in cats than in dogs; incidences of breast cancer in cats strike at about a 1 in 4,000 rate, while dogs develop the disease at about twice that rate. Unfortunately, the rarity of the disease means nothing when speaking of the prognosis of such a disease, as it is far more likely to be fatal to a cat than a dog.

Breast cancer is far more common in female cats than in males, but prior use of Ovaban Rx (sometimes used for skin ailments) in a male cat has been found to increase the risk of breast cancer in male cats. Studies have also found a strong correlation between early spaying and a reduced incidence of the disease.

Types

Studies have found that 80 to 85% of feline breast tumors are malignant, infiltrating duct cell adenocarcinomas, which are very aggressive, and often spread (metastasize) to other body parts. Common metastasizing sites include the skin, opposite breast, lymph nodes, bones, lungs, liver, and brain; the most common of these is bone, which presents in more than 50% of patients. Benign tumors do exist, but are

very infrequent; to err on the side of caution, vets assume that any tumor is malignant until removal and biopsy prove otherwise.

Risk Factors

Veterinary medicine still does not know all of the risk factors for feline breast cancer, but some have become evident: the average age of occurrence is usually 10-14 years of age, though there are, as always exceptions; it has occurred as early as 9 months of age and as late as 23 years old. Siamese cats show a genetic predisposition for the disease and are twice as likely to develop it as other breeds. They also tend to manifest the disease at a much younger age than other breeds (the afore-mentioned 9-month old was a Siamese).

Unspayed females are at a much greater risk, along with female cats who were spayed after having one to several heat cycles. Having kittens does not seem to impact this risk one way or the other.

Vets also suspect that hormones may influence the development of tumors. Studies have found some indicators that progesterone, testosterone, and estrogen play a role in feline breast cancer. Low levels of progesterone receptors have been found in some feline mammary tumors; there is also a strong link between the use of progesterone-like drugs (such as Ovaban and Depo-Provera) and the development of benign or malignant mammary masses in cats. Studies have also found that late menopause and an early first period also increase the odds of a tumor.

There also seems to be a genetic tendency, as daughters of cats with breast cancer are more likely to develop the disease. Other factors include fat intake, obesity, body size, radiation exposure, and socioeconomic influences.

Prevention

While feline breast cancer is not completely preventable, owners can take several precautions to decrease the likelihood of an occurrence: Ensure that cats are spayed before their first heat.

Avoid the use of progesterone-like drugs. Vets still occasionally use these drugs to treat dermatitis and behavior disorders, but owners need to be aware of the risk and weigh it against the possible benefits of such drugs.

Be sure that cats get regular, thorough veterinary checkups. Owners can perform their own mini checkups by feeling for any lumps or bumps, particularly in the mammary area. Early detection is key; feline mammary tumors are often presented to the veterinarian five months after they are initially noted, meaning that they are usually in an advanced state of development, decreasing the chances of survival. Earlier detection and action means earlier treatment, which lessens the chance of metastasis.

Symptoms

Tumors often appear as firm nodules that are moveable or attached to the skin and/or underlying muscle. They are more common on the first front sets of mammary glands, and in half of studied cases, tumors are present in more than one gland. The involved nipples may also be red and swollen. Swelling, pain, infection, and fever may also be present, though less prevalent. If the cancer has already spread, lung involvement may be extensive, causing heavy, labored breathing.

Prognosis

Feline mammary tumors are malignant approximately 90% of the time. While initial treatment is often successful, the long-term outcome for a cat with breast cancer is guarded, at best; up to 65% of surgically removed tumors reoccur within a year, and most cats survive less than a year after initial diagnosis.

More precise prognoses usually vary based on the tumor's size when it is removed. The prognosis is best for tumors that are less than two centimeters in diameter; average post-surgery survival time for such a tumor is three years. Tumors between two and three centimeters usually lead to a two-year survival time, with less than a year for tumors that are greater than three centimeters.

It should be noted that some veterinary oncologists consider these averages misleading, because very few

studies have factored in the significance of a tumor spreading to the lymph nodes and the effect of such a metastasis on survivability rates. More data is needed before further assumptions can be made.

Treatment

Treatment often begins with X-rays of the chest and examination of any fluid found in the chest to determine whether the cancer has spread. Treatment protocols may differ if the cancer has spread, but the most common treatment is surgical removal of the tumor and surrounding mammary gland. This surgery may also include the removal of regional lymph nodes, if they show signs of invasion.

Some vets believe that radical, unilateral mastectomy (which involves a great deal more risk and pain) is a better solution than simple tumor removal. One study did show that a radical mastectomy would reduce the development of local recurrence but did not increase the overall survival time, but there are very few other studies to confirm or disprove this, leading most veterinarians to stick with tumor removal.

Most vets will only perform a mastectomy if multiple tumors are present in multiple mammary glands. If tumors are present in the other mammary gland line, it may be possible to remove the mammary glands on both sides at the same time, but it is usually necessary to remove the most severely affected side and wait three to four weeks for that side to heal before removing the mammary glands on the other side.

A pathologist will examine the removed tumor(s) via biopsy to determine if the tumor is malignant. The pathologist may also give an indication that the tumor appears to be aggressive, in which case chemotherapy may be recommended.

As with survival rates, chemotherapy's effectiveness seems to be related to the tumor's size. Surgery is usually all that is needed with tumors that are less than two centimeters in diameter, while studies have been inconclusive in proving the effectiveness of chemotherapy on tumors that range between two and three centimeters. Chemotherapy is most effective for tumors that are greater than three centimeters in diameter, benefiting about 50% of cats, but the survival

range for such a tumor is already limited enough that any change is a drastic improvement.

Most vets recommend a consultation with a boarded veterinary oncologist, who will examine the pathologists' findings as well as the X-rays, explain the odds of increasing the survivability rate, and the course of treatment that he or she would recommend, which often includes chemotherapy. As time goes on, the oncologist will aid in concerns such as appetite maintenance, pain relief, and complications of chemotherapy.

If a particular situation affords no hope of further treatment, the vet will recommend a course of action to ease the pain and improve the quality of life of the cat's last days.

Conclusion

Breast cancer may not be the most common disease or even the most common cancer in cats, but it can and will strike without warning. It is essential that cat owners take their pets for regular checkups and monitor their cats for lumps. Early detection can make a huge difference in a cat's quality of life for years to come. ∞∞∞

References

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=1&cat=1376&artideid=220>

<http://www.vetinfo.com/cmammary.html>

http://maxshouse.com/feline_mammary_tumors.htm

Volunteer Profile: Nona Silver

Jonathan Allen

One of the founding AWL members, Nona Silver originally hails from the greater Los Angeles area in California, but also spent two years of her time in Tokyo, Japan with her husband Fred. The two came to the area in 1973 after Fred was offered a job opportunity in Maryland. Nona has been in the title research business since 1976, and currently owns her own company, located in Rockville.

She and Fred have two dogs and three cats and are also currently taking care of two additional cats for

their son. Nona loves to read, particularly mysteries, and also enjoys sports, including football, baseball, and basketball. She also likes to sew in her spare time, and is currently focusing on sewing baby comforters.



Nona with Lamp Shade – Fred, is this typical?

Her greatest hope is that the AWLMC finds a shelter, where “we can all share the comings and goings of our cat population”. She also hopes that AWL continues to thrive and be successful, “an organization that we can all be proud of”. Her numerous fundraising efforts and tireless energy are helping every day to make this a reality.

**note: Nona Silver was selected by listserv members as this month's featured volunteer; Nona received the most nominations of any AWL volunteer. The two runners-up will be featured in the next two newsletters. ∞∞∞*

Kensington Labor Day Fundraiser

Nona Silver & Amy Jaslow

AWLMC had a booth at the 39th annual Kensington Labor Day Parade event on September 4 from 10 AM to 2 PM to raise money for the no kill shelter. The fundraiser event was very successful with lots of interest shown by the crowd. We hopefully may even have managed to pick up a few new volunteers for our organization.

Amy Jaslow reported that, in the mere 4 hours, \$366.53 was raised (plus a few more dollars which stayed in the cash box for the next event)! Awesome job for just 4 hours and selling Lemon Squeezes (a big hit), those adorable cat

& dog caps, face painting, toss-the-bean-bag into the scarecrow mouth, other miscellaneous items for sale, plus people putting in donations into our donation jar. The proceeds raised the AWLMC balance in the bank, as of September 5th, to \$12,191.70.

Nona Silver, on behalf of the fund raising committee, gives a big giant thank you to those who worked so hard to make this event so successful. Thanks so much to (in no particular order) Linda Buel, Janne Cummings, Francine Pivinski, Maureen Pleet, Laurie Graham, Wendy Silver, Amy Jaslow, Fred Silver and Debby Shore. In particular, Nona expresses a special thanks to Greg Grewe for making the bean bag toss scarecrow. ∞∞∞

Things We Can Learn from Dogs

Mary Ellen McGlone

Here's an interesting reflection on what we can learn from dogs. I have it posted above my desk at work, where it often comes in as comforting on "bad" days. I saw this originally in one of the many newsletters real estate folk put out, maybe from Mary Chartres who works the Kentlands area. I think that it was published without attribution. Unfortunately, I've never quite thought of a similarly comforting list of what we can learn from cats!

"Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joy ride. Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy. When loved ones come home, always run to greet them. When it's in your best interest, practice obedience. Let others know when they've invaded your territory. Take naps and always stretch before rising. Run, romp and play daily. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Be loyal. Never pretend to be something you're not. If you want what lies buried, dig until you find it. When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle them gently. Delight in the simple joy of a long walk. Thrive on attention and let people touch you. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do. On hot days drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree. When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body. No matter how often you are criticized, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout....run right back and make friends." ∞∞∞

Cat vs. Cat: Keeping Peace When You Have More Than One Cat by Pam Johnson-Bennett

A Book Review by Kacey Nolle

Cat vs. Cat, by feline behaviorist Pam Johnson-Bennett, is a guide that's sure to be very useful for anyone with a multi-cat household. From introducing a new cat into your home through dealing with changes in how your cats relate to each other as they grow older, *Cat vs. Cat* gives practical advice on keeping all of your kitties happy. What really puts this book a step above other cat care guides is that Johnson-Bennett explains everything not only from a cat owner's perspective but also from a cat's perspective. This insight into how the feline mind works allows cat owners a better understanding of why cats do what they do, and of how to best meet their cats' needs. Johnson-Bennett clarifies the motivations for many feline behaviors that people have made erroneous assumptions about. For example, if a cat startles herself by accidentally falling off the bed, she usually walks away and grooms herself; most of us assume that she's embarrassed and is trying to pretend like she didn't make a mistake. But Johnson-Bennett says that cats don't get embarrassed, and the reason a kitty will groom herself after a fall is to calm herself down and get her bearings.

The following are more examples of helpful information from *Cat vs. Cat*.

- Cats feel like they have more territory to share when there are multiple vertical levels in their shared spaces. So, two cats who wouldn't feel comfortable sitting next to each other on a couch might be fine if one of them is on the arm of the couch and the other is on the couch seat. This would be true even if the distance between them is no greater than it would be with both of them on the seat. For this reason, multi-level cat trees are a perfect addition to multi-cat households.
- Unlike humans, cats don't feel the need for privacy. While most of us assume that a covered litter box is more desirable, cats actually prefer open litter boxes. When a cat is using the litter box, she feels vulnerable to attack from other cats. An uncovered box affords her more escape routes than a covered box.

- All cats instinctually follow the same basic schedule: hunt, feast, groom, sleep. Each cat cycles through this pattern multiple times each day. So if you want your cat to be ready for bed at the same time you are, be sure to have a play session [allowing him to “hunt”] when there’s enough time for him to eat dinner and then clean himself before bedtime.
- Each kitty has their own unique preference for what to scratch on. If your cat scratches the rug, give her a scratching post that has a horizontal carpet-covered part that she can sink her claws into. If another cat likes to stand up and scratch the side of your armchair, he needs a vertical scratching post made out of material similar to the chair. And don’t assume that more expensive scratching posts are better; lots of cats love corrugated cardboard scratching pads – although these do have to be replaced regularly, they’re quite cheap.

Cat vs. Cat includes an appendix of veterinary and rescue organizations, as well as contact information and websites for products that Johnson-Bennett recommends.

While all cat owners will benefit from reading this book, *Cat vs. Cat* should prove especially valuable to those of us who foster (and are therefore continually integrating new kitties into our homes) and anyone who is dealing with litter box issues.

Cat vs. Cat is available in paperback from Penguin books for \$15 and is sold at Borders, Barnes & Noble, and PetSmart. It can also be purchased online for \$10.20 at Amazon.com. ∞∞∞

Help Wanted!

AWLMC needs volunteers to fill three needs

- **Corresponding Secretary**
- **PR/Marketing person**
- **Help with thank you notes in response to large mailing campaign**

For more information, please e-mail Laurie Graham at graham18365@yahoo.com

King Farm Yard Sale Adventure

Roger Gagne

Here it is a little after 700 am (on a chilly Saturday morning I may add) as Pat and I leave our Germantown residence for the King Farm Yard sale. It appears the weather will be cool but dry for the event (**so the weather persons say**). Just as well since Pat feels like she is coming down with a cold and is a little bit under the weather. Nevertheless, she is a trooper and elects to go. Our reliable old mini van is pretty full of items we are donating to AWLMC to be sold to make money for the shelter. Pat takes these events quite seriously and I accuse her (only half tongue and cheek) of disposing of any thing that did not move. As a precaution, I do make sure that all 3 cats are accounted for as we leave the house.

The directions provided by Janet Culp to the group appear straightforward. Take Route 355 South, turn right onto Redland Blvd and turn onto Grand Champion Drive. Oops! Janet didn’t indicate whether to go right or left onto Grand Champion Drive which appears on the Map to cover the total width of King Farm. My guess is turn left as the map indicates one unmarked area which appears to be park sized and shaped. As we drive with our mini van relatively full, I think of Posey Fox who has volunteered her garage to those who could not bring things to the yard sale early Saturday morning. She may need a trailer truck or more likely have to make lots of trips.

Alas, we go right by Grand Champion Drive so we meander around a bit and finally somehow arrive at the park and immediately recognize it from last year’s event. Unfortunately, other than a few people walking dogs, there is no one around or any sign of activity remotely resembling a yard sale. After sitting a couple of minutes, we decide to go to Janet’s residence which is nearby to inquire as to where we went wrong. Luckily, Janet was there and just leaving so we were able to follow her to the location of the yard sale which turned out to be on the opposite side of the Park from where we had been previously.

Our good luck appeared to be holding as a parking spot opened up about two car lengths from the AWLMC yard sale location as we arrived. I was particularly concerned

as one of the items in the mini van was a very large and heavy television set. We had planned to take a dolly with us but forgot it. I have a bad left shoulder and needed help to get it to the AWLMC spot. As I was off loading some other items, I noticed an older (older than me) gentleman taking it out of the mini van and transporting it to the AWLMC location. Sir, my hat is off to you. I was very much humbled as it took my 2 sons to get it into the mini van. I felt a little better later when the (much younger) man who ultimately purchased the television set also had great difficulty handling it.

September 30 King Farm Yard Sale Activity



The AWLMC Volunteers were very enthusiastic and did an excellent job of organizing and packaging the items for sale especially considering the variety as well as the number of sale items. Coming up with prices seems to be a skill acquired by a number of the volunteers (not me). It was very obvious that most of the volunteers were quite experienced at doing this sort of thing. The group had a lot of fun. O'Shea Watson prepared a delicious bundt cake which was enjoyed by many including some of the shoppers. The volunteers working the event included: Nona Silver, Linda Buel, Janet Culp, Mary Culp, Janne Cummings, Nathalie Curry, Sandie Dunham, Posey Fox, Pat Gagne, Roger Gagne, Laurie Graham, Deb Kirby, Sonia Ledesma, and O'Shea Watson.

Activity seemed to be pretty brisk as shoppers looked for bargains. However, we had a small sprinkle at about 9:30

am and the skies became more threatening and the temperature more chilly. With Pat feeling a bit more under the weather (no pun intended), we left the yard sale at about 10:00 am. It appeared then that the very light rain was tapering off and we were hopeful that any significant rainfall would hold off for a couple of hours. As luck would have it, it started raining harder on our way home **(You just can't trust those weather people)**.

I checked with Nona and learned that the rain also did intensify at the King Farm location forcing AWLMC to close up shop at about 10:30 am. Three carloads of the remaining items were subsequently donated to local organizations including Goodwill and Life for Animals. Despite the abbreviated time frame for selling, the event was very successful raising \$300 and some change for AWLMC. Kudos to all who participated! ∞∞∞

Reminder – AWLMC Oktoberfest Events

24th Annual Germantown Oktoberfest

Saturday October 7th, 9 AM to 8 PM

Ridge Road Park Germantown

AWL Booth - fun & food

15th Annual Oktoberfest at the Kentlands

Sunday October 8th Noon to 4 PM

320 Kent Square Road

AWL Booth - food & fun

Please don't forget to donate to AWLMC:

http://awlmc.org/awlmc_donate.html

Or, please send a check to:

P.O. Box 7041

Gaithersburg, MD 20898