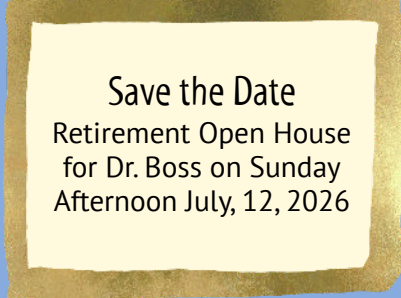




We have a new doctor!  
Meet Dr. Hannah  
Listopad on page 9



Spring 2026

## Dear Clients & Friends...

Something is always changing here at Best Friends. We pride ourselves in continually moving forward, always striving to incorporate new medications, treatments and strategies into our daily practice. Our latest change involves our medical record keeping. We are now using a program called ScribeNote to enter our medical notes into our practice software. It records everything that happens during an exam or procedure, using our phones, and then transcribes it, using AI, into the medical record.

The system is so smart, it knows what is chit-chat and what is medical-related. Non-essential stuff is weeded out and only the medical notes are transcribed. We can then drag and drop those notes into our medical records. The notes are comprehensive and accurate – sometimes hours later I don't remember a pet's heart rate, which side of the body the lump was on, or the details of a behavior discussion. This will also save us hours and hours and hours of typing in our notes. Maybe we doctors can leave work at 7:30 p.m. instead of 8:30 p.m. after a busy day. Amazing!

Our current system is templated, so some of what we record is choosing from dropdown menus or fill-in-the-blank, but much of what we need to enter is just typed in. Now we can verbalize exam findings and treatment plans, record phone conversations, and review what was said or done at a later date. The assistants and technicians can get their histories done faster, we can record exams on hospitalized patients, dictate surgery findings, and even review presentations and discussions happening in exam rooms for training purposes.

We are counting on all of you to give us permission to use the ScribeNote system with you. Rest assured, nothing you tell us that's not related to your pets will end up in the medical record. Using ScribeNote, we can spend more time thinking about cases and less time being typists. Welcome to the future!

Dr. Nan Boss, DVM

## Gut Microbiome May Influence Dogs' Odds of Surviving Cancer

A study published in the journal Veterinary Oncology found a link between 11 gut microbes and the odds that dogs with cancer will survive. The study involved 51 dogs receiving a cancer immunotherapy and is "a first step toward using the gut microbiome as a tool to develop prognoses and to manipulate cancer, not just in dogs, but potentially as a model for human treatments as well," said researcher Natalia Shulzhenko.

According to Oregon State University, in Corvallis, Oregon, the survival of dogs with cancer may be linked to the microorganisms in their gut. This finding emerged from a clinical trial involving a new form of immunotherapy. Prior to treatment, researchers collected rectal swabs to analyze the dogs' microbiomes.




The research found 11 types of bacteria linked to the dogs' survival rates. Some bacteria were associated with longer survival, while others indicated shorter survival. "In the future, an analysis of a microbiome swab could help predict how well a dog might respond to a cancer treatment," said Shulzhenko. This could lead to more informed decisions about pet care.

Shulzhenko said, "Our study is a first step toward using the gut microbiome as a tool to develop prognoses and to manipulate cancer, not just in dogs, but potentially as a model for human treatments as well."

Funding for the study came from the National Cancer Institute, the Canine Cancer Alliance, and OSU's Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine. The collaboration included scientists from various institutions, including Yale University and the Bridge Animal Referral Center.

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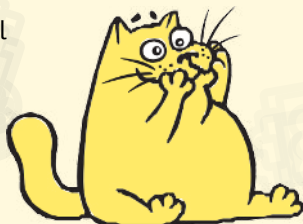
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# Is Your Pet's Medication Contaminated or Counterfeit?

Billions of dollars are made each year by people selling counterfeit, contaminated or mislabeled products. This applies to both humans and animals. A couple of recent stories in the news highlight this problem.

From the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel came this story about What's Really in WI Hemp Products. The paper had 30 different hemp products tested by



an independent laboratory. 18 of the 30 contained illegal amounts of delta-9 THC, the compound in marijuana that makes people feel high and pets ill. Two products contained well over 200 times the legal limit! Half the products tested positive for THCP, HHC, delta-8 and/or delta-10. These are all found in trace amounts in marijuana but are chemically made in bulk and added to hemp products. The chemical manufacture can involve potentially toxic solvents and by-products that are not approved in the manufacture of food or medication.

Some companies, 19 of them in this study, have done voluntary testing at third-party labs. Thirteen of those test results differed from what the laboratory the Journal Sentinel used got for results.

There is a lot of variation from batch to batch of hemp and marijuana plants themselves, and nothing to stop companies from altering their ingredients or processes.

Things could have changed between when the manufacturer tested their products and when the Journal Sentinel did. However, the test results showed that most labels far understated the amount of Delta-9 THC present in the products. Chances are good the lab certificates these manufacturers are showing on their websites are not truthful. Molds, pesticides and solvents also were found in various products, especially hemp flower products.

Another recent news story involved unlicensed, illegal online pharmacies. This one was reported in the weekly online newsletter published by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

## Operation Meltdown Shuts Down Hundreds of Illegal Online Pharmacies

On February 4, 2026, the DEA announced the seizure of more than 200 website domains tied to an India-based transnational criminal organization working within the United States and allegedly responsible for at least six fatal and four non-fatal overdoses.



DEA arrested four individuals, issued five Immediate Suspension Orders, as well as one Order to Show Cause, both of which are administrative actions taken against DEA registrants to protect the public from dangers to public health or safety. The U.S. government shut down more than 200 online pharmacies accused of filling hundreds of thousands of orders of diverted pharmaceuticals and counterfeit pills without valid prescriptions.

It's not just human pharmacy websites that sell counterfeit medication.



Billions of dollars-worth of counterfeit pet medications are sold to unsuspecting dog owners every year as well, especially heartworm preventives.

This is why we recommend purchasing these products from us or from our own online pharmacy. We get our products directly from the manufacturer, so we know the product is real, and that it's been stored and shipped properly. This last bit is important. If the vaccine you purchased hadn't been stored in the refrigerator, it's no good. If the topical flea preventive you bought sat in a hot warehouse or trailer truck, it may not work anymore. How would you ever know the difference?

## Counterfeit Medications for Dogs

According to a recent report by Veterinary Information Network (VIN), "anti-itch" drugs purchased from allegedly deceptive websites have sent several pets into veterinary clinics with serious health complications.

The website "WagLabs" purported to sell the powerful immunosuppressant cyclosporine, which typically can only be obtained through a veterinary prescription. One pet owner reported giving the WagLabs medication to his dog; soon after, his pet became lethargic and developed extreme thirst, a ravenous appetite, and increased urination. Upon further inspection, bloodwork showed an alarming elevation of liver enzymes, indicating possible liver damage. Testimonies on the website Trustpilot, a review platform, further allege that several dogs experienced "terrible side effects" after taking the WagLabs capsules, with one going into "major organ failure" and needing to be euthanized. Due to the extreme side effects, there is reason to doubt the product was actually—or only—cyclosporine.

VIN News further reports another website called Millionaire Mutt is suspected to be run by the same entity behind WagLabs. Millionaire Mutt sold "ocloclatinib chewable tablets," a product mimicking another strong immunosuppressant that can only be obtained via veterinarian. The websites seem to have reached some buyers by running targeted advertisements on Facebook offering allergy relief for dogs.

The American College of Veterinary Dermatology filed a complaint against WagLabs with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; about a month later, the supposed "cyclosporine" product has been removed from the website. The "ocloclatinib chewable tablets" no longer exist on Millionaire Mutt, either.

If you are a pet owner searching for allergy relief for your dog, please do not start your pet on any medications or supplements without consulting your veterinarian first. Do not automatically trust that the products you see online will be safe for your pet to consume and purchase medications only through verified pharmacies.

## Supplements are not Regulated or Tested

The supplement industry is also pretty sketchy. Analysis of pet supplements in one study showed almost half the products tested did not contain what was stated on the label. Some products had less of the active ingredients than were listed on the label, and some had none.

Many manufacturers of high-quality veterinary products try to ensure the drugs and supplements they produce don't end up in places they don't control.

**For example, Purina doesn't sell its FortiFlora probiotic to Amazon. If you see FortiFlora for sale on Amazon, it is either counterfeit or it was diverted to Amazon illegally.**

Many supplements contain large amounts of heavy metals and other toxic substances. Some contain entirely the wrong plants or ones that make people sick. They aren't helping the people or pets who took them, and in fact may cause other toxicity. Some contaminants, such as lead, stay in the body for years or decades.

Don't give your pets products not suggested by or purchased from us or our online store. You just don't know what you are going to get. Our online store can be reached via our website; just click the link. If we put a product in your basket or cart at the store site, you are sent a link to purchase it. So much safer for your furry family members!

Visit our online store at:  
[shop.bestfriendsvet.com/pet/](http://shop.bestfriendsvet.com/pet/)



### Support Our Pet Fund

The Best Friends Veterinary Center Pet Fund is running low. We use our fund to help clients afford treatments for their sick or injured pets. Sometimes, our fund is all that stands between a pet and euthanasia.

Please donate next time you visit the clinic. We appreciate any and all contributions!



We will always endeavor to treat our patients both  
**COMPASSIONATELY and LOGICALLY**

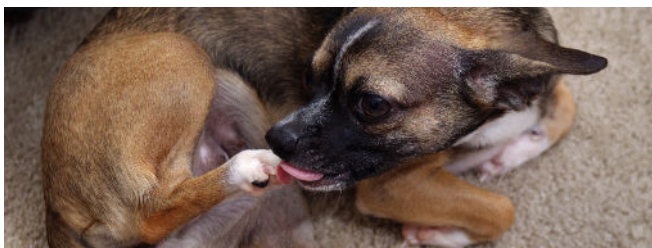
# Beware Social Media's Vet 'Experts'

The Facebook message is dire. “First they eat grass. Then they lick their paws. Then they slow down. Then the lumps appear. It’s not four separate problems – it’s one immune system screaming for help,” a Facebook post by [The Dog Parent’s Guide](#) reads. Variations of this post have been circulating on social media since December 2025, on accounts with names like “Healthy Dog Insiders,” “Furry Family Wellness” and “Saving Pets One Pet @ A Time (THE ORIGINAL).”

The post made its way to Utah State University Extension Veterinarian Chloe Stenkamp-Strahm by way of one of her clients. They wondered if they should take its advice.

According to the post, dogs crave what their wolf ancestors eat, and wolves eat mushrooms to boost their immune systems. Our pet dog’s diets are missing this crucial nutrient and suffering for it, according to the Facebook post, causing premature death.

Stenkamp-Strahm immediately noticed red flags. First, most dogs eat grass, and it’s not considered a symptom of any disease problem. “We still do not know why dogs eat grass, and although historically we have tried to link this to GI illness, we really don’t have true evidence of that. So unless grass-eating is associated with vomiting or other clinical symptoms, or it becomes obsessive/compulsive in the dog, we tend to just monitor,” says Stenkamp-Strahm, adding, “it’s probably best to keep your dogs from eating grass or lawns that have been treated with different chemicals.”



Paw licking often indicates allergies. We don’t have any evidence to show that mushrooms do anything to help pets with allergic dermatitis.

Next, Stenkamp-Strahm says, any lump or bump on a dog that persists for more than a month should be assessed by a veterinarian. “If lumps or bumps are actively growing or changing or painful, having them assessed earlier in the course of noticing is ideal. “Vets will use their judgement, but typically do an aspirate of each mass, which allows them to look at the cells the mass is composed of under a microscope, to determine whether it warrants further care.”

Though Stenkamp-Strahm is not an expert in wild dogs, she did a quick scan of research on wolves and coyotes and did not find anything to suggest that they consume mushrooms as a food source. Rather, they may consume mushrooms when more common food sources become scarce. “In any event, mushrooms do not seem to be a dietary staple (of wild dogs),” Stenkamp-Strahm says. Then there’s the Penn State study referenced in the Facebook post:

“Then I found it,” the post reads. “University of Pennsylvania, 2012. Dogs with cancer who received Turkey Tail lived 199 days longer– Not because it attacked tumors, but because it restored immune function.” Stenkamp-Strahm looked for this 2012 study and found a research article from that year titled, “Single Agent Polysaccharopeptide Delays Metastases and Improves Survival in Naturally Occurring Hemangiosarcoma.”

This pilot study tested the active ingredient in *Coriolus versicolor*, or turkey tail mushrooms, in 15 dogs with a cancer called splenic hemangiosarcoma, who had had their spleens removed. This aggressive disease will typically lead to death within three months of splenectomy (spleen removal). The study’s findings showed a cohort of the 15 dogs treated with the mushroom ingredient lived 113 days longer than their historically untreated counterparts. These results, the article says, merit further “proof-of-concept studies for therapies that have some evidence for antitumor effects.”

Remember, the Facebook post wasn’t about dogs with cancer of the spleen who had undergone splenectomies. It was about dogs who eat grass, lick their paws, and display lumps or bumps. The Facebook post nonetheless concludes with a link to a “Turkey Tail +” mushroom supplement sold by PuppyLabCo. Following the link takes you, again, to “Dr. Sarah Martinez, DVM.” This time, there’s a photo accompanying the byline. Running the photo through Google’s reverse-image search turns up a LinkedIn profile for a different veterinarian: Dr. Lien d’Hespeel, with Animal Oasis Veterinary Hospital in Naples, Florida.

*(continued on next page)*



Dr. D'Hespeel says she was recently alerted to the use of her photo when someone forwarded a similar link to her clinic. She relayed the matter to her clinic's legal department, who have reached out to the site to demand the picture be removed. "Needless to say, I'm very frustrated that my image is being used to promote a product I do not endorse and that, in my professional opinion, offers no meaningful benefit to pets," d'Hespeel wrote in an email. "Unfortunately, misleading veterinary information and marketing like this is increasingly common online, and it's discouraging to see how easily pet owners can be persuaded away from evidence-based care and guidance from licensed veterinarians."

Attempts to contact the email registered with the domain – asking about Dr. Sarah Martinez and explaining writers' difficulty verifying her credentials as a veterinarian who attended Cornell and completed a residency at UC Davis – received no response by the time of this article's publication.

**Please be careful and don't fall for ads, gimmicks and testimonials.**

Rely on your veterinarian(s) for information, medication and supplements. You can relax, knowing your pet is getting what you paid for, and you'll be supporting a local business, instead of a giant corporation.



## Tidbits...

Avian influenza primarily affects wild aquatic birds and domestic poultry, but backyard flocks and even pets may be at risk. To help veterinarians and the public, the AVMA has developed guidance on identifying, treating and preventing bird flu in pets and backyard poultry. Early detection is critical, so owners are encouraged to monitor their animals closely for signs of illness and consult their veterinarian if concerns arise.



[Visit AVMA's "Avian influenza in pets and backyard flocks" webpage for more information.](#)

Deer populations have increased in suburban areas of the US, causing traffic accidents, crop damage, and tick-borne disease. Hunting is becoming less feasible as a management tool. Researchers at Tufts University are studying the effects of a vaccine called porcine zona pellucida-22 as a contraceptive to manage deer populations. A study published last year in the journal *Human-Wildlife Interactions* found the vaccine can prevent pregnancy for up to four years in deer.

Research published in the *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* found overweight and obese dogs had significantly higher intraocular pressure than lean dogs. Because elevated intraocular pressure is a key risk factor for glaucoma, these findings show that excess body fat may directly influence ocular health and represent a modifiable factor in protecting canine vision.



The Dog Communication Project involves 10,000 dogs and 700 cats using button soundboards to communicate with humans. Early results suggest some dogs understand the meaning behind the buttons they use, with at least 65 dogs regularly using 100 or more buttons and more than 150 stringing together buttons, in sequences that make sense, such as "squeaker" and "car" for a passing ambulance, and "water" and "bone" for ice. "A dog is a dog, not a child. But that doesn't mean that they might not have cognitive abilities resembling the cognitive abilities of a young child," says cognitive science professor Federico Rossano, the project's leader.

Published in *Science*, a new study targeting sequencing of 493 feline tumor and healthy tissue sample pairs representing 13 tumor types showed the same genetic mutations involved in analogous tumor types in humans also are present in feline cancers. This suggests specific anticancer drugs targeting specific types of genetic mutations would also be useful for cats. Right now, we don't do genetic testing of tumors in veterinary medicine, but most human advances trickle down to pets sooner or later. This may become a new avenue of treatment for cats in the future.



To investigate the biological roots of canine temperament, scientists examined the DNA of 1,300 golden retrievers and compared it with each dog's behavioral profile. Owners provided detailed survey responses describing their pets' habits and reactions. This analysis uncovered specific genes associated with traits such as trainability, activity level, fear of unfamiliar people, and aggression toward other dogs.

When the team compared these results with human genetic studies, they found twelve of the genes linked to behavior in golden retrievers are also tied to emotional traits and behavior in people.

**NEAT!**

# Helping Your Cat Cope With Veterinary Visits

*Medication May Be Right for Your Cat*



*Article written by Colette Kase and published by the American Animal Hospital Association, Feb. 27th 2026.*

For so many cats, visiting the veterinary clinic is incredibly stressful. It starts with being put into a carrier, then carried and transported, all the while experiencing unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells. Then there is being handled by strangers and whatever procedure may be necessary. The entire process can be overwhelming for a species that values predictability, control, and environmental familiarity.

For pet parents, seeing their cats so upset is distressing and, unfortunately, can lead to delayed or avoided veterinary visits. Regular veterinary care is essential for all cats, so while fear is actually a natural and normal response, there are ways to reduce unnecessary stress and improve a cat's ability to cope.

Veterinary behavior experts emphasize preparation and training at home, thoughtful handling, and proactive communication with the veterinary team are the best ways to improve the experience for you, your cat, and the veterinarian.

## Why veterinary visits are particularly difficult for cats

Cats and dogs see trips to the veterinary clinic very differently. As Sarah Heath, BVSc, DipECAWBM (BM), PGCert, Vet Ed FHEA, FRCVS, explains, "Leaving the home or the location where you feel safe is not a normal thing for a cat. So yes, it is reasonable for them to feel that being extracted from their safe place is potentially threatening." [To translate some of those initials after her name: BVSc is bachelors in Veterinary Science, DipECAWBM is diplomate, meaning she passed an exam after additional post-graduate studies, of the European College of Animal Wellness and Behavioral Medicine. FRCVS is Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the equivalent of a DVM degree in the US.]

Cats do not normally associate being taken away from their home with positive experiences, unlike their canine counterparts. "If you contrast it with taking a dog to the vet, dogs have their leads, their harnesses put on, on a regular basis. They're not as bonded to the house.



They're more worried as a species about who they're with than where they are," Heath said. "Also, the things that are put on them, like the lead and the harness, are also associated with leaving the house on multiple occasions for really pleasant outcomes, like going for a walk or visiting people."

Just the carrier itself is often a powerful trigger for fear. Because of this, Heath points out that for cats, the stress often begins long before the cat arrives at the veterinary clinic.

## Why the cat carrier is so important

Carrier training must be a priority for all cat parents. Ilona Rodan, DVM, DABVP (Feline Practice), Cert FB, emphasizes this. "The number one thing is carrier training. A lot of clients, unfortunately, think that it's better not to take their cat to the veterinary hospital. But preventive care is so critically important to recognize early diseases, to prevent certain diseases."

When carriers only appear just before a veterinary visit, cats learn to associate them with scary things like

confinement and loss of control. Heath explains that this reaction is normal feline behavior because cats rely on choice and environmental control to feel safe. Being placed into a carrier removes that sense of autonomy, and when cats feel they have no control over what is happening to them, their fear naturally escalates, making the experience far more distressing than it needs to be.



## It is never too early (or too late) to start cat carrier training

Carrier training is easiest when it begins in kittenhood. However, older cats can still learn to feel safe in a carrier. Rodan reassures cat parents who worry that it is too late for their older cat, noting from personal experience, "I trained my first cat when he was 12 years of age." While progress may take more time with adult or senior cats, the effort is worth it. Success depends on patience, consistency, and allowing the cat to engage with the carrier on their own terms, never through force. This reduces stress for everyone involved, including the cat, the caregiver, and the veterinary team.

## Choosing the right cat carrier

Before training begins, it is important to select an appropriate carrier.

A good carrier should:

- Allow your cat to stand, turn around, sit, and lie down comfortably
- Be well ventilated
- Be easy to clean
- Have a front door for voluntary entry
- Have an easily removable top or top-opening design allowing for easy veterinary access

Carriers that can be converted into cat beds, such as the Sleepypod, may help reduce fear by integrating the carrier into your cat's normal environment. If there is more than one cat in the household, each cat should have their own carrier.

## Making your cat carrier a permanent safe space

Each cat's carrier should be a permanent and familiar feature in the home instead of only appearing before veterinary visits. Rodan recommends keeping the carrier accessible in a location your cat already enjoys and pairing it with positive experiences such as treats or gentle affection.



This will help your cat learn to view it as a safe and comfortable resting place instead of a signal that something stressful is about to happen.

### Practical ways to introduce carriers:

- Make the carrier part of the furniture.
- Keep it in an area your cat already uses and feels safe in.
- Place it at a height your cat prefers.
- Add soft, comfortable bedding.
- Place treats or toys inside and give your cat the kind of attention they enjoy while in the carrier.

Cover part of the carrier if it helps your cat feel more secure.

## How to help cats who already fear the carrier

For cats who already fear the carrier, retraining takes time and must move at the cat's pace. Rodan cautions against feeding regular meals in the carrier, as this can create negative associations with their own food if your cat is already anxious. Instead, she recommends focusing on comfort, scent, and gradual choice-based exposure.

For cats who are already scared of the carrier:

1. Make the carrier feel welcoming by placing a soft, padded blanket inside. Many cats prefer warmth, so ensuring the bedding is comfortably warm can help increase acceptance.
2. Rodan and Heath both recommend using the synthetic feline pheromone spray, Feliway, to help reduce anxiety. Spray the bedding as well as the interior of the carrier and allow time for the alcohol scent to fully dissipate before your cat has access.
3. Partially or completely cover the carrier, depending on your cat's preference, which can help them feel more secure—although some may not feel safe with any type of covering.
4. Do not start training by placing treats inside the carrier. Begin by tossing high-value treats, such as bits of chicken meat, near the carrier, then just inside the entrance, and then gradually further inside, allowing your cat to choose their own pace and comfort zones.
5. Never force your cat into the carrier. Progress should be slow, voluntary, and reward-based. Forcing a cat into a carrier even one time can undo weeks or months of careful training.

## Making your cat carrier a permanent safe space

Many pet parents do not realize that how the carrier is handled can have a big impact on a cat's stress level. Rodan described how a cat may perceive being trapped inside a carrier, already stressed, and then find themselves swinging from one side to the other, even bumping into things. So, she advises, "Don't carry it by the handle. Use two arms to snug it against you[r body], or whatever way is going to work best so that the carrier is not moving around a lot."

### Best practices include:

- Elevate the carrier.
- Hold the carrier close to the body.
- Do not swing or jolt the carrier while walking.
- Cover the carrier (allowing for ventilation).
- Use Feliway spray in the car prior to transport.
- Put the carrier on the floor or secure it well during transportation.
- Drive smoothly and keep the environment calm and quiet.



# How to help your cat at the veterinary clinic

Once at the clinic:

- Wait in the car until your appointment if possible.
- Leave your cat in the carrier until the veterinarian is ready.
- Do not tip or drag your cat out of the carrier.
- Allow your cat to exit voluntarily whenever possible.
- Use top-opening or removable-top carriers to reduce handling stress.

Heath cautions against rushing, particularly with young cats. “I know I hear from vets when I’m teaching that they say, especially new graduates, bless them, that they feel pressured by the caregiver to get the cat out of the basket immediately.” This may be because of anxiety about taking up too much of the veterinarian’s time. So, Heath says, “Let that kitten have time, so you just open the door and while you’re talking and giving a history or explaining while you’re there, let the kitten come out of their own free will.” This will give your cat a better experience and make it easier for the veterinarian.



## Medication may be right for your cat

Even with training, some cats require additional support to cope with veterinary visits. Rodan advises open communication with the veterinary team if a cat is fearful or anxious, ideally before the appointment. This allows the clinic to plan ahead and consider strategies to reduce stress, including medication when appropriate.

Rodan recommends advocating for your cat and asking the veterinarian in advance, “Can I get a drug, a medication to relieve the anxiety so that we can have a much happier visit?” The veterinarian may not always be aware that your cat is anxious unless they are informed.



It can be easy to think because a cat is quiet that they are okay, but cats often mask fear. Rodan believes even cats that do not seem unusually distressed may still need medical support. “The cat caregiver knows their cat better than anyone. And even if the cat’s carrier trained, the cat still may be highly fearful in the car or whatever vehicle. And they may get motion sick in the car, with vomiting or drooling.” She explains these are all signs that you need to speak to the veterinary clinic and ask for help.

Some pet parents may feel hesitant about using medication. Rodan understands these concerns, but emphasizes that unmanaged fear is a welfare issue: “Fear and anxiety are terrible things for a cat to have to experience.” When indicated, short-acting anti-anxiety medications are used to reduce distress during the visit, do not cause long-term behavioral change, and can help cats form more neutral or positive associations with veterinary care.



## Pain can add to your cat’s stress

Pain is often overlooked as a cause of fear during veterinary visits. Heath stresses how common pain is in older cats: “Once cats are over 12 evidence is very, very strong that 96 to 97 percent of cats have got osteoarthritis (OA) when they’re that age. So, make absolutely sure that your animal is being treated appropriately for any painful conditions.”

She cautions that resistance to handling or transport may be due to pain rather than fear alone, noting a cat who protests being handled or placed in a carrier may do so because “it’s actually really uncomfortable to do that.” If you believe pain may be affecting your cat, be sure to talk to your veterinarian about options to provide relief.

The recognition of chronic arthritic pain is a major challenge since most cats will not exhibit lameness. The main features of feline OA are changes in behavior and lifestyle, which develop gradually and which owners tend to interpret as simply being the effects of old age.

## Working together to help your cat cope

Heath emphasizes the importance of having realistic expectations about fear during veterinary visits. Removing fear entirely isn't realistic. Instead, the goal is to recognize when a cat is fearful, consider whether that fear is a reasonable response to the situation, and identify ways to reduce unnecessary stressors to help your cat cope more effectively.

Some pet parents may consider in-home veterinary visits, but Rodan says this option is not suitable for every cat. "House calls are really good for some cats. It depends on the cat," she says, noting that cats who are uncomfortable with unfamiliar people, procedures, or smells may actually feel more threatened when these occur in their home environment than in a veterinary clinic. Mobile clinics are another option to consider, but these still require your cat to be confined to a carrier and removed from their home environment, so carrier training remains a priority.

By understanding your cat's individual needs and working collaboratively with the veterinary team, you can make veterinary visits safer, calmer, and more humane.

If you believe pain may be affecting your cat, be sure to talk to your veterinarian about options to provide relief.



## Welcome our New Vet

Hello! My name is Dr. Hannah Listopad but most people just call me Dr. Hannah. I am very excited and looking forward to my new adventure as one of the new veterinarians at Best Friends Veterinary Center. I am originally from northern Virginia, where I grew up in a suburb of Washington DC. I started working with animals at a young age where I worked as a neighborhood pet sitter and volunteered with the local therapeutic horseback riding program. My interest in veterinary medicine continued to grow through college. I attended Roanoke college, a small school in southwest Virginia, where I earned my bachelor's degree in biology. After college, I attended Iowa State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. During my time in Iowa, not only did I develop a deeper love of veterinary medicine and all it has to offer, but I met my future husband, Kyle, as well. After I graduated from veterinary school in 2022, I took a job as a mixed animal veterinarian in central Pennsylvania. I got the opportunity to work with many different species, from dogs and cats to cattle and pigs. My interests in small animal dentistry, preventative medicine and oncology grew considerably during my time in Pennsylvania. After 4 years in that position, my husband and I decided we wanted to return to the Midwest and Wisconsin had everything we were looking for.

When I am not working, I enjoy reading, watching sports, going out and trying new restaurants, and going on long walks or hikes with my dog Cy. I will take any chance I can to be outside enjoying nature.

I am very excited to be a part of a team that offers such a high level of care and compassion to you and your pets. My goal is to work with you and together we will come up with prevention and treatment plans that work for both you and your pet to help keep them as happy and healthy as possible. I strive to create a comfortable, supportive, and judgement-free environment for my clients as I want to ensure open communication when it comes to your pets' health. I am very much looking forward to meeting you all and your pets.



### Note from Nicole

Heartworm season is underway and it's time to start your cats on monthly preventive medication! All the rain we've had will encourage the mosquitoes that are the carriers of the heartworm parasite. Dogs are the natural host species for heartworms. In cats, the last larval stage of the worms makes it to the lungs and dies there. These larvae are 4-5" long, so they can cause a lot of damage, as well as possible sudden death from pulmonary embolisms – blood clots in the lungs.

Prevention is easy! Just a chewable pill or a little bit of topical medication once a month is all it takes to save your cat from chronic respiratory disease or even death. Call us now at 262-375-0130 to get started!



# Rescuing Baby Birds

The vast majority of baby birds people encounter on the ground are weeks-old fledglings, not newly born nestlings. This distinction is critical, because most fledglings don't need to be rescued; they need to be taken back. Every spring and summer, well-meaning people bring baby birds in to us. Many times, they fall into the fledgling category, and we ask that the finders return them to the area where they were found if at all possible. If injured, we will assess the bird for survivability before figuring out a place for it to go, usually Wisconsin Humane Society if it is a songbird. Raptors go to Pine View Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and water birds go to Wanakia Wildlife.

Wandering from the nest is exactly what fledglings are supposed to do when learning to fly. It's a normal part of a bird's development. Though these chicks might appear abandoned, they're likely under surveillance by their parents nearby. Of course, there is a chance they could be injured, sick, or in danger, so there are some cases where a fledgling might require assistance.

Nestlings, on the other hand, are almost always in need of rescue. Whether they fell or got pushed from their nest, they're not ready to go off into the world. How to help them, though, can vary. To know when you should intervene—and how you can help if needed—ask yourself the questions below.

## Is the bird a nestling or fledgling?

While fledglings are larger and covered almost completely in down and feathers, nestlings are small and typically naked—or with just a few fluffs. You can also distinguish age by movement: fledglings can hop, whereas nestlings might simply drag themselves on the ground by their bare wings.

**Nestling**



**Fledgling**



## If you've found a healthy fledgling, walk away

Rescuing healthy fledglings is not only unnecessary, but it can be detrimental to their development. If it is being stalked by your neighbor's cat, you may need to rescue it, but otherwise, leave it alone. Rescue in these situations means finding a nearby spot in a shrub or tree that is out of reach.

## If you've found a healthy fledgling, walk away

First, look for the baby's nest in the nearby bushes or trees; if you find it, simply put the chick back and the parents will resume care. Don't worry about touching the bird: The idea that once you've touched a baby bird it will be rejected is not true. Birds have a sense of smell, but it's not very well developed. They won't abandon their chick.

If the nest is nowhere to be found, or simply out of reach, just craft one yourself. Find a container, like a small cardboard box, and load it with a scrap of fabric, paper towel or some straw—anything soft and dry will do. Gently place the baby bird inside, and affix the artificial nest in a tree close to where the bird was found. A nail through the cardboard box and into the tree trunk works well. Place it as high up as possible.

Once you've returned the bird to a nest—whether real or homemade—keep an eye out for the parents. If they don't return within an hour, [call a wildlife rehabilitation center](#). Wisconsin Humane Society's downtown location is usually your best bet if you are in Milwaukee or Ozaukee County. Their wildlife number is 414-431-6204.



## Is the bird sick, wounded, or at risk?

Whether you come across a fledgling or nestling, it's important to assess whether the bird needs medical help or is in danger. Often, it's clear when the bird is in need of urgent care—if the cat dragged it in, that's a sure sign. Other times the signals are more subtle: Can it stand or hop normally? The feathers might be wet though it's not raining, indicating discharge or an illness that inhibits the production of preening oils. Or maybe it's surrounded by flies, which might signal an open wound.

During hot summer months, dehydration is common. Their belly may look like a prune; wrinkled, shriveled and sucked in.

**Call a wildlife rehabilitation service if possible, or us if they are closed.**

If it's after hours, take the baby to a safe and warm location, such as a closed box with air holes and a heating pad beneath it. Don't feed the baby. The wrong food can do more harm than good or the chick can aspirate the food you are trying to feed into their lungs, which will be fatal. If the chick is just kept in a dark place, its metabolism will slow down, leaving time for professional rehabbers to swoop in for a rescue.

After all this, if you're still not sure if the bird needs help or what to do, before doing anything, call your local wildlife rehabilitation center. Helping animals—and preventing fledgling kidnappings—is what they do.



## Wisconsin Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

Wisconsin Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center provides care for roughly 5,000 injured, sick, and orphaned wild animals of over 150 different species annually. Their goal is to rescue, rehabilitate and return them to the wild. They provide service to Milwaukee County, and occasionally surrounding counties, referring callers to their closest wildlife rehabilitation resource. They also offer advice from their wildlife reception desk to people who have concerns about injured, sick, or orphaned wild animals throughout our state and even outside of Wisconsin!

**For more information or assistance call: 414-431-6204**