

## An ounce of prevention

Many pet owners assume that if their pet is free of symptoms, it must be healthy and what they're feeding is supporting its health. They see no reason to spend money on a more expensive "premium" food or add superfoods and other supplements to their pet's diet. Then a year or 5 or 10 years down the road, their pet gets cancer or kidney disease or diabetes or some other degenerative disease. Now they are searching for answers and are willing to spend whatever it takes to get their beloved companion well. Unfortunately, sometimes it is "too little, too late" at this point. Their pet's body has been so damaged that they cannot be cured. The best that can be done is to improve the quality of life remaining. How can you prevent this unfortunate occurrence in your pet's life? As the saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". Taking steps now to keep your pet healthy will help prevent expensive problems later as your pet ages.

According to holistic vets, cancer and other degenerative diseases are increasing in our pets. Cancer has become epidemic in pets, with 63% of Golden Retrievers dying of it. What can we do to prevent these problems in our pets? We are told by animal health experts that "preventive care" for our pets consists of taking them yearly to the vet for checkups and annual vaccines and feeding them an AAFCO-approved balanced commercial pet food. Holistic vets would disagree with these vaccine and dietary recommendations. If you ask holistic vets what is causing the current epidemic of degenerative diseases in our pets, they would include the following: over-vaccination, poor diet, environmental toxins, stress and poor breeding.

Giving our pets "annual vaccinations" is something that we have been told is a cornerstone of good health care, to prevent them dying from infectious disease. However, according to current research and the recommendations now coming out of all the U.S. veterinary schools, annual re-vaccinations are unnecessary. The current recommendations are every 3 years for most vaccines, though it is thought that many vaccines last much longer than that. The premier vaccine researcher in the country, Dr. Ronald Schultz, DVM, Professor and Chair, Department of Pathobiological Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison, states that once the maternal immunity has worn off, vaccines given to puppies will protect them for life. What is wrong with vaccinating yearly "just to be sure" our pets are protected? Many holistic vets state that while initial vaccinations are important, that re-vaccinating yearly after that is harmful, damaging the immune system and contributing to degenerative diseases later in life. Dr. Martin Goldstein, DVM, feels that the current epidemic of cancer in pets is due in large part to over-vaccination. While we would not suggest you go against your vet's advice regarding vaccinations, we do suggest that you educate yourself on this topic and work with a vet who is aware of the current vaccination protocols.

What role does diet play in your pet's health? If your pet is young and healthy and appears to be thriving on an AAFCO-approved dry kibble food, isn't that adequate? Well, that's what we used to think. Our first few pets were fed commercial pet food and vaccinated annually. They died at the ages of 11 to 17 and we were told that was "normal". How long could these animals have lived if they had an optimal diet their entire life and minimal vaccines? Our current cat is 20-21 years old, has had minimal vaccines and was switched from dry kibble to a canned and raw diet four years ago. At her advanced age now, her only serious health problem is arthritis, caused by her obesity when we used to feed her kibble. Most holistic vets recommend a home-cooked or raw diet of meat, bones and organs for both dogs and cats, which is what nature designed them to eat. Numerous brands of pre-made, balanced frozen raw diets are now available at natural pet stores. If feeding raw food is not possible, there are now some very good super premium pet foods on the market, available at natural pet stores.

Our environment is full of toxins now and our pets are exposed to higher levels of toxins than us, since they walk and lie on the ground and then lick themselves. Some vets feel environmental toxins are a major factor

contributing to cancer in our pets. To minimize toxins, use natural cleaning products, don't put pesticides on your lawn and give your pets filtered or bottled water rather than tap.

You might think our pets' lives are stress-free because they don't have to go to work and they get to lounge at home all day. However, for dogs in particular, being home alone is very stressful for a pack animal. They are not designed to stay by themselves for long periods of time but are often forced to, because their owners must go to work. Even cats can get lonely and depressed when left alone. Also, our pets often don't get sufficient daily exercise, which is stressful and health-depleting. Part of the "ounce of prevention" for our pets includes providing adequate exercise and socialization for our pets. This also helps them fight obesity, a growing problem in our pets that can lead to many health issues.

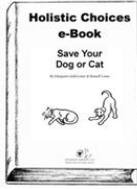
What can you do about the poor breeding that contributes to our pets' poor health? The number one thing is don't buy your pets at a pet store! The vast majority of these animals come from puppy mills where the dogs are bred with no regard for health or genetic issues, are raised in filthy conditions and are not adequately socialized. You are just setting yourself up for an animal with lifelong behavioral and health problems if you get an animal at a store. If you want a healthy purebred animal, go to a breeder who breeds responsibly. Although it costs more initially to buy an animal from a responsible breeder, it will usually save you in health care costs later. If you do get your pet from somewhere else (such as an animal shelter or rescue group), then providing your pet with an optimal diet from the beginning, even if they are young and seem perfectly healthy, is critical to maintaining their health as they age, as well as helping to resolve and prevent behavioral problems.

*Margaret Auld-Louie and Russell Louie have over 90 years of combined holistic experience. They use their scientific degrees to research manufacturers' holistic claims and cut through their marketing hype to educate you on your optimum holistic choices. For holistic pet resources and FREE e-newsletter go to [www.OptimumChoices.com](http://www.OptimumChoices.com) or contact them at 303-271-1649 or [info@OptimumChoices.com](mailto:info@OptimumChoices.com).*

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