

# Kitten Season a Constant in Lamorinda

*Need for quality homes continues year-round*

By Julie Schmoll

Kitten season is upon us once again, bringing an abundance of wiggly kittens vying for new homes. Sounds great, right? What could be so bad about kittens?

Maybe more than most of us realize.

Due to Lamorinda's mild climate, kittens are born year-round and an un-spayed cat may have up to four litters of kittens a year, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (ASPCA) website. The organization estimates the number of kittens an un-spayed cat and her offspring could produce in seven years could reach more than 91 million.

Local rescue groups such as Community Concern for Cats (CC4C) focus on adoption and trap-neuter-return programs for feral cats to keep the population down. "Lamorinda is a dangerous place for kittens in the wild. Coyotes, hawks, owls and raccoons all prey upon them day and night," says Moraga resident Candace Olsen, long time CC4C volunteer.

CC4C sometimes get dozens of calls to their hotline each week, says CC4C Board of Directors member Jennie Richards. "We usually get between three to ten calls a day. We

never want to turn away cats in need, but we just don't have enough people available to foster."

Overcrowding in shelters sometimes results in adoptable pets being euthanized, but like many rescue foundations, CC4C never euthanizes animals, except in extreme medical situations, says Richards. "When the cat is suffering and dying, there's no question that it is the best thing to do."

When kittens flood the shelters, older cats are overlooked in favor of the new kittens. "We are able to adopt out one adult cat a week," says Richards. "Families just like to start new with kittens."

Richards recommends becoming a foster family, or adopting a pet. "It's a great way to help out if you aren't ready or willing to make a 20-year commitment to a pet. It's fun for the family to have a kitten or two in the home and it allows the cat to grow before being adopted. We try to pair people with a cat that fits their household's needs. People with young children should get a slightly older kitten because they are less vulnerable and fragile," Richards added.

"Many Lamorindans have adopted these homeless little ones,"

says Olsen. "It's fun to drive around Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette and remember: 'An adopted cat lives there' or 'I placed two kittens in that home.' It's a great feeling to know I've helped turn around the lives of these animals and added a loving presence in these homes."

The main way people can help is to spay and neuter their pets, says Richards.

Olsen says a situation in Orinda got out of control because one female cat was left un-spayed. "When we were called to help the yard was overrun with that female's offspring: three adult females and ten kittens," she says. "Community Concern for Cats trapped and fixed the adults and found homes for all the kittens."

If you're interested in adopting a cat or kitten, the rescue holds adoptions in three locations every Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. at Petfood Express in Lafayette and Pleasant Hill, and at Petco in Walnut Creek, or you can contact the organization directly.

"I personally don't mind people coming to visit a cat in my home," says Richards. "Our number one goal is to find every cat a loving home."



An adult cat waits for a new family at a recent adoption event



A kitten awaits adoption

Photos Julie Schmoll

## Heatstroke in Dogs

By Mona Miller, DVM



Mona Miller's one-year-old Labrador, Luca, stays cool in the pool on a hot day. Photo provided

Heatstroke, or hyperthermia, occurs when there is an increase in body temperature from the environment. Dogs and cats have a higher body temperature than humans, at 100.5 - 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. An emergency arises when their body temperature reaches 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Prolonged hyperthermia can affect every organ system in the body, and consequences can be severe, even fatal. Initial symptoms include panting, acting distressed or restless, drooling or weakness. Progression of heatstroke will show as change in mucous membranes (gum color) to blue or bright red, collapse, then death.

The most common causes of environmental hyperthermia in dogs include exercise in hot and/or humid weather, being left outdoors without shade and water, and being confined to a car. Most everyone knows to not confine your dog in the car on a very hot day, even if the windows are left open a bit. Information from San Francisco State University Department of Geosciences shows that on an 80-degree day, it takes only 20 minutes for car temperature to reach 109 degrees. A related study from Stanford University Medical Center showed that car temperature raises 40 degrees within an hour, no matter what the outside temperature is. It is inadequate to leave the windows open a few inches, especially for a full-coated large dog, overweight or older dogs, or a short nosed dog who is unable to pant enough heat off to maintain his/her internal temperature. This latter category includes breeds such as Pugs, Boston Terriers, Shih-Tzus, and Lhasa Apsos. A dog's cooling mechanisms are much less efficient than humans, relying primarily on respiratory increase and effort (panting) as opposed to sweating out the excess heat.

Since 2006, California Penal

Code 597.7 PC makes it illegal to leave an animal in an unattended vehicle if by doing so, the health or well-being of the animal is endangered. This includes conditions such as weather, inadequate ventilation or any other circumstance that could reasonably be expected to cause suffering, disability or death to the animal. If a pet suffers great bodily injury, first-time offenders can be penalized \$500 and six months in jail.

If you suspect your dog is suffering from heatstroke, the best thing to do is seek immediate veterinary care. First aid at home can include getting a rectal temperature, draping your pet with luke-cold wet towels and/or directing a fan to cool those towel-draped areas. Contrary to initial inclination, using cold or ice water (or ice packs) is not advised. Cold will cause vasoconstriction of surface layer blood vessels, creating an insulated cold layer on the surface of the body, trapping the heat of internal organs inside. Veterinary care is recommended to address the issues of internal organ dysfunction.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son, two cats and Luka a new puppy. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.



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