

Published January 1st, 2014

New Year's Resolutions for Your Pet

By Mona Miller, DVM



Photo Mona Miller

It is the season of appreciation and reflection, a time to consider what changes to make for the next year that will enrich our lives. Perhaps we should take a few minutes to extend the same resolutions to our pets - what can we do in the new year to enhance their health and enrich their lives? This might be the year to update health/veterinary care, enrich your cat's home environment, or explore new activities with your dog. Some of these resolutions might affect your budget and some might affect your time schedule, much as our own personal resolutions tend to do.

During the down economy over the past few years, most Lamorinda veterinarians noticed a decrease in preventive health care measures taken for pets. Some vaccines were delayed, blood test screenings put off, small lumps left alone. Now that the economy is swinging back up, this might be the year to reconsider some of these expenditures. Just as with any elective item (new TV, couch, etc.), it is wise to get the information ahead of time and incorporate it into your budget. Your next veterinary visit might be a good opportunity to ask for cost estimates for dentistry or geriatric blood and urine tests. Other preventive

health measures include committing to brushing your dog or cat's teeth four times weekly, adjusting food calories for the overweight pet, or maintaining a daily walk schedule.

Environmental enrichment can be achieved with any pet, whether it's a dog, cat, rabbit, bird or turtle. You can rotate toys - pick up the ones laying around for the past year or so, and introduce new toys every few months. Cats that enjoy catnip might need a refill or a refresher to the stuffed mouse from past holidays. Caged birds enjoy bells, colored ropes and food treat toys. It might be time to redecorate the cage with new items, and you can save the old ones to bring back in four to six months. My son's idea for this article is to make turtle and tortoise terrariums look as much like their natural environment as possible.

We are fortunate to live in the Bay Area, which is consistently rated by various groups as a dog-friendly place. This might be the year to explore some of the areas around that earn these ratings. A September 2013 Huffington Post article listed San Francisco as "a dog friendly city" - one the reasons why people who live there are "so happy and healthy." Likewise, Estatefy ranked San Francisco fifth in their list of "17 Best U.S. Cities for Dogs." While these highlight San Francisco, the truth is that the East Bay has many places that are dog-friendly: downtown Lafayette, 4th Street Berkeley, and Point Isabel dog park, for example. You can find East Bay "Splash Spots" (such as in Benicia), Oakland brew pubs that welcome your well-behaved pooch, and of course the numerous regional parks that allow you to hike with your dog. Field trips with your dog help strengthen your bond with him, allow for different socialization experiences than the home setting and provide some interesting new sights for both of you. An excellent resource is "The Dog Lover's Companion to the San Francisco Bay Area." My own 2014 new year's resolution for my dog is to take him on more hikes, and for my cats is to brush their teeth more consistently.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and Luka, a yellow Labrador. She has worked in the Lamorinda area since moving here in 2001. She attended U.C. Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reach via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA