

Pet Talk Tuesdays – 7/7/2020

Nick Rusch:

93.7 FM, AM 1170, 103.3 FM The Source, time for Tuesday's Pet Talk. And joining us via the telephone this morning from Veterinary Village in Lomira, our friend, Dr. Marty Greer. Dr. Greer, how are you doing?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm doing great.

Nick Rusch:

Good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thank you.

Nick Rusch:

Super. Nice of you to be here again. And it seems like every time of year has its own challenges for our pets. And you and I were just chatting off the air a little bit. And we talk about this one quite a bit, I think, once in a while. But it is such a concern. And it's that time of year where people are still shooting off fireworks.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They are. And you would think by now it was over, but really it's not. I think there's a lot of pent up stay at homeness and a lot of activities, lot of leftover fireworks. So, yeah. People are still sending them off. And a lot of those are very upsetting to our pets. And, of course, the 4th of July has passed, but the number one day for pets to run away from home is July 4th because of the fireworks. And I think there's probably associated thunderstorms and a lot of other craziness that goes on in their lives. So, we need to be really astute and really attentive to what's going on with our dogs during this time period.

Nick Rusch:

And I think too, when they do run away, they don't know where to go. I mean, it really is... I don't know if people understand, this really is panicked behavior because they're out of their comfort zone. They're not doing what they normally do. And it seems like logic and reason for them is kind of thrown out the window.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And it really is panic, these anxiety kind of things that happen. It truly is an anxious time period. And they lose their mind, just like we do when we're in a panic situation. So, it's really upsetting to them. So, we need to be just really careful with how we manage them at doorways. And there are lots of really appropriate and really good medications that can help them with anxiety, none of which include Benadryl or acepromazine, by the way. So, just to be clear.

Nick Rusch:

How did that one get out there? Because I've heard that myself and I'm not even a pet owner. But I have heard that myself. I've heard people talk about Benadryl and it's a misnomer.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is. It makes them sleepy, but they're no less anxious. So, instead of being able to get up and hide in the closet or the bathtub during an anxiety attack, they're just frozen in place. So, your perception is that they're calm because they're not moving. The reality is what's going on in their head is still pretty scary. So, we just really need to be careful with that. And your veterinarians, we're more than happy to help people with appropriate medications.

There's basically two categories of anxiety medications, one that you've used for episodes like thunderstorms, fireworks, trips to the vet trips, to the groomer, graduation party at your house where your dog is just totally overwhelmed by number of people that are there. Or then there's the one for generalized anxiety where they take it on a daily basis for long-term use. And sometimes we layer those two together, depending on the dog's level of anxiety. But Benadryl and acepromazine, acepromazine is what a lot of veterinarians will prescribe. Neither of those are going to reduce anxiety. They're just going to paralyze the dog. And it's just not helping them in their head. So, we have lots of good choices for dogs with this kind of situation.

Nick Rusch:

As you and I have chatted over the last couple of years, and I know that this happens not just in your profession, but also in medicine for human beings as well, because of the incredible advances in medication for dogs, you guys are pretty much able to kind of fine tune things. Whereas, in the past, maybe some of those alternatives weren't available to you. But you guys have got a lot more tools at your disposal now.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And we're getting better and better at understanding them. We've got dog only anxiety drugs. We have human anxiety drugs that we modify for dog and cat use. So, yes. We have lots of good choices. And it's just a matter of figuring out which one is best for your dog, because not every dog responds to the same medication any more than every human does. It's not unusual, for instance, if you have allergies, for your allergy doctor to send you home with a bag full of samples and say, try these. See which one gives you the best outcome and the least side effects for drowsiness, or dryness in your mouth, or whatever the side effects happen to be. So, we can really manipulate these.

And, with a little bit of advanced planning... I mean, the time to call for anxiety medication isn't in the middle of a crisis. It's, you know your dog has the tendency to do that. Get in touch with your veterinarian. Make an appointment. Go in. Speak to them. Take video. This is a great chance to pull your cell phone out of your pocket, take video of what your dog's behavior looks like. And it's allowing veterinarians to have a much better handle on what's going on. We even do telemedicine consults now where the client may not necessarily have to come in with the dog at all, but we can do video chat through some of the cell phone apps that we have for veterinary use. And, for a small fee, we can do telemedicine consults with you. We can see the dog in your home in the setting in which they are dealing with whatever circumstances it happens to be.

So, things are really advancing and it's very cool. My daughter told me over the weekend that, although this has existed for dogs and for humans for quite some time, to use telemedicine, she said the biggest hang up in that human side is getting insurance to pay for it. Well, we don't have to worry about that on the veterinary side. So, we have many, many cell phone apps that can be very successfully used for this. It's very cool.

Nick Rusch:

And I'm guessing that works out well, not only for the patient and the client, but for you as well, because maybe, with the trip into the vet, maybe on the way there the dog stops exhibiting the symptoms that he's exhibiting at home or he is going to act differently because it's a different setting. So, like you say, in their home setting and being able to see that and what they're doing, it probably gives you a better handle on diagnosing what's going on with the dog.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely. So, if it's something you don't think you can replicate, grab your phone, take some video, bring it with you when you come to the appointment. If it's something that you can replicate, then we can set up a video conference time when we can make that all work. So, yes. Please, please use all the tools that we have because it's really pretty cool the choices that we have now. So, don't overlook any technology. All you need is a semi smartphone and you can make this all work.

Nick Rusch:

Are there things... and I know you've been involved in the industry for many, many years, doctor. Are there tendencies of dog behavior or cat behavior that you're seeing more of as time goes by? Or it pretty much an even plain? How is that playing itself out?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, I'm going to try not to take offense to the implication that I'm old.

Nick Rusch:

No, no, no. That's not what I meant. You're not old. You're experienced.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Okay. I'm definitely experienced.

Nick Rusch:

Hey, pal, you're younger than me, so.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So, I'm not sure about that. Yes. We are definitely seeing more anxiety. And maybe we're better at recognizing it. But I think there's also a component of, we are seeing more dogs with anxiety. We're seeing different sources of dogs now than we used to. There used to be more people who could purchase dogs from breeders.

And now, breeders are getting fewer and more sparse. And so, there are fewer litters and an increasing demand for quality dogs. So, people are turning to rescue and shelter organizations in ways that we didn't before. And frankly, dog shelters, like the Fond du Lac Humane Society and rescue organizations used to have surpluses of dogs. And dogs that had issues with anxiety, or with aggression, or with fearfulness, with all the different unfortunate behaviors those used to be not placed in homes. They'd keep them for a while in a shelter, assess them. And, if they didn't start to improve, they would euthanize dogs. Well, we are no longer seeing euthanasia in any significant number for dogs. Now, cats are a whole different discussion. So, you can't even compare cats in a shelter to dogs. So, please don't imply that that's what I'm saying.

But, in dogs, we no longer have the luxury of having surplus dogs. So, dogs that ordinarily or in the past would have been euthanized are now being placed in a home, putting a burden on people to rehabilitate some of these dogs. Now, sometimes it works really well and people are really interested in doing those things. But sometimes it's not a good situation. Sometimes the anxiety can be so severe that they can cause destruction. Sometimes the fearfulness or aggression can be so severe that they can cause injuries to humans. So, we have to be really cognizant of that as well and recognize that safety for humans comes well above any kind of efforts that we have to save dogs. And, although I am a veterinarian and I am a dog advocate, I still think we need to be very, very aware that human health and safety comes first.

We're also seeing dogs being imported into the United States in record numbers, that are illegally imported. They come across the borders without health papers. They come in potentially with zoonotic diseases. We've had multiple cases of rabies in the United States from imported dogs. There's other diseases as well, screwworm, and leishmaniasis, and babesia, and a number of other diseases that used to be considered rare in the U.S., now we're starting to see them pop up in some of these dogs that are being smuggled across borders. So, we have to be aware of that.

And it's not just coming by car from Mexico. Canada is not much of a problem, but dogs get flown to Canada and then brought across borders. That's, in fact where canine brucellosis came from in March of last year, March of 2019. A group of dogs came from South Korea into Canada and then into Wisconsin. And we ended up with two dogs in that group of 26 with canine brucellosis, which people think is a rare disease in the U.S. So, we have to be really aware. Private pilots are flying dogs in. They'll want to get their flight hours in. So, they'll volunteer to go fly to some Caribbean Island or some other remote location to pick up dogs. So, it's really problematic and we really need to be aware of this because we don't have adequate legislation and enforcement to manage this.

Nick Rusch:

It's really odd, isn't it? I mean, and I know it's true and we've heard about this, and we've also heard about the huge influx of dogs from the Southern part of the nation making their way up here. But, in many cases, the animal may be cute and may seem fine, but you don't know what you've got.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And frequently either they're young and they haven't exhibited some of the behaviors or problems yet, or most dogs for the first 90 days or so they're in your home are pretty well behaved. They're sort of like a new employee that doesn't show up to work late, and doesn't take a long lunch break, and doesn't smoke in the bathroom. They're pretty well behaved for the first 90 days. But they get 90 days in and they start to relax a little bit. And some of these dogs then will start to exhibit behaviors that we previously didn't see. And that's when we can see aggression and some of these other scary behaviors. So, we need to be aware of that. And veterinarians need to support clients that find themselves in difficult situations with appropriate medications or appropriate solutions that, unfortunately, may include a euthanasia.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. That's really too bad, but what can you do? Like we say, it's a different world. It's really become a different world in the way dogs even get to where we're at. I mean, you're talking a few moments ago about dogs being in Korea, then being flown to Canada, and coming down to the U.S. That sounds like a movie. That doesn't even sound like the real world.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I know.

Nick Rusch:

And the unfortunate thing is, it is the real world. That's how things work now.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is. And in no way do I want to say anything negative about shelters or rescues, because they're very important organizations that work very hard at saving pets. But sometimes we have to use our heads and use some logic and make sure that we're keeping everyone safe health wise and not with behavioral issues. So, we kind of got off the summer topic, but I think it's an important one.

Nick Rusch:

That's okay. That's all right. Let's talk about some basic summer things, I mean, the things we may forget about this time of year. Certainly, with the heat wave we're experiencing now in Wisconsin, which by the way, I love. Everybody complains about the heat, but I'm enjoying this. But got to make sure that the animals are hydrated. And let's talk about... you've mentioned this before. Let's talk about maybe overexercise a little bit too, at this time of year. You've got to make sure you get the dog some proper exercise, but you got to kind of watch it with the heat we're having.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And the obvious solution to that is to go out for walks early morning and late evening. But that's also when the mosquitoes are out. So, if you are going to do those activities in those hours of the day, make sure that you're wearing appropriate mosquito repellent for yourself. And the topical flea and tick medications that we use for dogs, most of them have a repellency effect as well. Like Vectra-3D will help to repel mosquitoes. So, we'll have fewer biting mosquitoes, flies, all the other little critters that tend to be pesky this time of year in the evening, and then the morning hours.

So, have a wading pool for the dog. Run out to the store, pick up a wading pool before they're all sold out because it's getting pretty close to that time of year that supplies will be down. Have a sprinkler hose, if the dog likes to play in the water. There's lots of fun things that you can do that are not especially difficult or expensive. Of course, you want to dump the wading pool so that it doesn't become a mosquito breeding ground in your yard. So, don't leave standing water in the pool. And make sure that it's fresh because most dogs would go stand in the wading pool and then proceed to drink it. So, you don't want to have that green slime of algae.

That's the other thing we need to be aware of is, when we get into this really hot weather, we do see blue green algae growing in the lakes. Usually it's August when we see the most of it. But, with weather like we're having right now, it

could potentially move that calendar up. So, if you see your dog exposed to blue green algae in a wading pool, in a pond, in anything like that, please get them out and get them washed.

And the recommendation for washing is Dawn dish soap. Good old the blue Dawn dish soap. I know it sounds a little crazy, but those commercials with the little ducks where they degrease them, Dawn works for that. Dawn works really well for decontaminating any kind of surface exposure that your dog might have. And it is safe for them except around their eyes. So, have a bottle of Dawn, and have a nice wading pool, and have fun with the dog. Just let them go out and lay in the wading pool if they want. Just have a nice dry spot for them to come in and not plop down in the middle of your new white carpet when they come back in dripping wet.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. Because there's nothing quite like the wet dog, is there? Nothing quite like the joys of wet dog?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Yeah. The smell is spectacular. Yeah. It's great.

Nick Rusch:

Anything else we should be looking out for this time of year?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, I think everybody knows not to leave the dog in the car. But sometimes accidents happen. You run into the house to get the grocery list, or you think you're going to run into the store just for a second, and you run into somebody or your phone rings and you forget the dog is in the car. So, I recommend that, once you load your dog into the vehicle, particularly if they're in a crate, which is where they should ride to be safe, that you take their leash and drape it across your shoulders so that you have that constant reminder that the dog is in the car. The dog is in the car. The dog is in the car. And you don't get distracted by the multitude of things that can happen. Same with your kids. Don't leave the kids in the car. So, make sure that you're really safe, even in temperate weather. And this is not temperate. This is really hot. Only a few minutes in the car with the windows up can be dangerous.

Then the flip side of that is, when we travel, we put a sign on the window because we often have crates in our car, with our phone number on it. So that, if someone perceives that our dogs are in trouble in our vehicle, they can call that number and get ahold of us by cell phone and not by breaking a window and then finding out that the dogs were safe or there weren't dogs in the car at all. In fact, my husband will take the crate doors off of the crates so that, if somebody walks past the car, they won't believe that there might be a dog hunkered down in the back of the crate in some kind of danger. I've been at the Walmart store in Fond du Lac and had my license plate number paged over the PA system because they've seen a dog in my car. Now this was in December so they were in no danger of overheating.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And they had a nice fuzzy blanket. They were in no danger of being too cold either, but put your phone number on the dashboard.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. That's a great idea. I hadn't thought of that, but that is a great idea. And you make such an astute point too with, not only dogs, but kids too. I'm always shocked by these stories.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

And the folks of the weather channel do a really good job at driving this home by showing you how quickly your car can heat up and the temperatures that it can rise to. You would think that, as a society, as a civilization, at this point, we would understand some of these things, but apparently not so much.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. In fact, the police dogs that are highly trained, they're worth 50 or \$60,000. Every year, there's a few of those that die in overheated vehicles, even though they have an alarm system on the vehicle in a way that they should be notified. But, if they're at a crime scene or something else happens to the officer and someone isn't aware, like if there's an officer down and they're worried about taking care of other situations, we don't always have great outcomes.

So, even with all the most sophisticated alarm systems on the vehicle, we still have a few dogs every year that perish in the heat. So, you just want to be extremely careful. And, if it's warm, just leave the dog at home. They don't need to drive to the lumberyard with you and hang out in the car.

Nick Rusch:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They really are safer off in the house with the air conditioning on and where they can relax and you don't have to worry about the extra five minutes it took you to get through the checkout.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah. And they'll be thrilled when you get back.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah.

Nick Rusch:

They'll be thrilled to see you.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Especially if you bring them something yummy. Yeah. Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Nick Rusch:

They'll be thrilled to see you. Doctor, always-

Dr. Marty Greer:

So, possibilities-

Nick Rusch:

Always great information. And let's give everybody the... I know you guys have been busy as heck and that's how we like it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We are.

Nick Rusch:

Because that way you're not in trouble.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

Let's give everybody the contact information.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sure. So, we're at the corner of Highway 41 and 49, just South of Fond du Lac across from Quad Graphics. Our website is smallanimalclinic.com. Our phone number is (920) 269-4000. And you can email us at VV for veterinary village. So, vv@k9stork.com. We'd be happy to talk to you. We are busier than a one armed paper hanger, but we will still be happy to talk to you and help you out with any of your pet's needs.

Nick Rusch:

That's outstanding. Doctor, it's always a pleasure. You know that. And we wish you nothing but the best. We'll talk to you soon.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thank you.

Nick Rusch:

All right. Dr. Marty Greer, everybody, Veterinary Village, our Pet Talk Tuesday.