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“It’s an old wives tale,” said Middle Keys veterinarian Dr. Doug Mader.
Mader said he first heard of the coral dust “allergy” when he moved to the Keys about 15 years ago.
“People were telling me that their dog was allergic to coral dust, but I quickly realized there was something else going on,” he said. That something else turned out to be run-of-the-mill allergies. Veterinarian Kim Van Beuren, who works at Keys Animal Hospital in the Middle Keys, said about half their patients suffer from some type of allergy. The first sign of an allergy, Van Beuren said, is general itchiness. Left untreated, allergies can develop into a yeast infection that is red, swollen and extremely smelly. Ointment is not the solution, rather most vets suggest using a powder such as Gold Bond or a prescription variety to dry up the problem.
Mader suspects the Keys pervasive coral rock causes micro-abrasions on the toe pads. “These abrasions subsequently become infected and the infection then causes the pet to lick, making the feet wet between the toes. Then secondary bacteria and fungi (yeast) colonize, making things worse,” he wrote in a recent article to the Key West Citizen.
Regardless, the alkaline nature of a pea rock or coral rock environment requires rinsing. Sensitive dogs should have their feet rinsed every time they come inside. Ditto the saltwater swim. Van Beuren recommends regular dog washes with a gentle baby shampoo for allergy-prone canines.
The second question she asks is whether or not the animal has recently moved to southern climates. Animals in the north don’t have to deal with environmental allergies like year-round hay fever. Again, the symptoms are general itchiness.
“Florida is a hot spot for allergies. We have mold, mildew, pollens and the perfect environment for those things all year long,” she said. “Humans feel the environmental allergies in their sinuses, but dogs feel it on their skin.”

“They lick and they chew and they bite at their feet or skin,” she said. “The first thing I ask the pet owners is if they have a pea rock yard and if the animal spends a lot of time outside.”
Face:
Appearance: muzzle, chin & areas around eyes reddened with hair loss
Behavior: Scratching or rubbing face with paws or against furniture.

Skin:
Appearance: reddened; possible with crusts or scales, odor with secondary infections
Behavior: scratching & licking sides/belly, elbows, groin

Ears:
Appearance: waxy discharge; redness, odor
Behavior: scratching or rubbing ears with paws or against furniture.

Paws:
Appearance: inflammation, redness, odor, brown discoloration where licking has occurred.
Behavior: licking and chewing of feet/pads.
The mission statement of Monroe County Animal Control is “to promote responsible pet ownership, animal care, and community safety; increase adoptions, and reduce pet overpopulation. Animal Control strives to treat the symptoms of irresponsible pet ownership while seeking to eliminate the causes by compassionately using education and enforcement measures.” To accomplish this ambitious mission, Monroe County engages the services of independent contractors to provide services seven days a week.

From Key West to mile marker 16.7, animal control is managed by the Florida Keys SPCA

Mile marker 16.7 to 70 is managed by Safe Harbor Animal Rescue of the Florida Keys (SHARK)

Mile marker 70 through Key Largo is managed by Humane Animal Care Coalition.

These agencies provide animal shelter, control and licenses and offer pets for adoption during regular business hours.

Dogs, cats and ferrets must be licensed and properly vaccinated for rabies. The one-year license fee for a dog or cat that has been altered is $10, while an unaltered pet license costs $35. Three year licenses, available only for pets that have received the 3-year rabies vaccine, cost $25/$75. Discounts are available for microchipped pets. Ferret licenses are $6 per year. Litters of cats and dogs also need to be registered in Monroe County before birth. If your dog is found running “at large,” Animal Control may pick it up. Owners will have to pay a pick-up fee to retrieve their pet, and the fee escalates in cases when the animal is picked up repeatedly during a 12-month period. Additional fines or fees for owning an at-large animal will be assessed if the owner is unable to provide proof of rabies vaccine, and in cases when the animal is not altered.

A “nuisance animal” is poetically described in section 10-2 of the Key West Code as “an animal or poultry that howls, barks, meows, caws, crows, shrieks, squawks, or makes other bothersome noises, for continued duration, or upon three or more occasions during any nine-hour period from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., so as to disturb, across a residential or commercial property line, the reasonable peace and quietude of any person…” Using fewer florid terms, the Marathon Code expands the nuisance noise prohibition to “bothersome noises any time of the day or night.” Despite the free-running “gypsy chickens” found around town, the citizens of Key West are permitted to keep live poultry only in screened coops or pens. Livestock such as cows, goats or sheep are allowed in very limited zoning districts. Regulations county-wide prohibit owners from allowing their animals to defecate in areas such as school playgrounds and public parks, except in designated areas. Owners are always required to remove dog feces from public and private property. When a citizen wants to lodge an animal complaint, they can contact Animal Control, Code Compliance, or in emergencies the Monroe County Sheriff or Key West Police Department.

Dogs in outdoor restaurant areas are legal in some parts of the Florida Keys. This is because pursuant to the Florida Statutes “Dixie Cup Clary Local Control Act,” Marathon and Key West have elected an exemption from FDA regulations that prohibit dogs in food service establishments. Local restaurants that want to accommodate domestic pets and their owners must apply for a permit, and comply with stringent regulations including signage, location, hand washing and adequate insurance coverage.

In unincorporated areas of Monroe County, the number of dogs, cats and ferrets is unrestricted, so long as animals are “properly licensed, vaccinated, housed and cared for, do not cause a nuisance, and other housing or association rules are complied with.”

In Key West and Marathon, pet owners are limited to four domestic animals, unless operating a licensed kennel or pet shop. The Key West City Commission is authorized to make specific exemptions to the number of domestic pets allowed, upon a finding of “historical, social or tourism significance,” which is one reason why the Hemingway cats have thrived to this day.

Animal Control is a broad-ranging subject, and more information can be can be accessed online through the website: municode.com. Additional regulations regarding domestic animals are also found in State and Federal statutes.
RABBITS MAKE GREAT PETS

IN GENERAL, they are relatively easy to care for, but do require some special considerations beyond what is normal for dog and cats. There are dozens and dozens of rabbit breeds, but the most common pets are the New Zealand White, Dutch Belt, French Lop, Rex and Dwarf. The latter is one of the smallest pet breeds and is an easy keeper in a small home.

RABBITS BREED like, well, rabbits. They are incredibly prolific, so it’s a good idea to have them spayed or neutered when they reach puberty, which usually occurs at four to six months of age. In addition to preventing breeding, there are many reasons to have this done, but to discuss them all is beyond the limits of today’s column. Health concerns play a major role.

THE LIFESPAN of pet rabbits varies depending on the breed, but can range from five to nine years. I have seen older rabbits, but that is not common.

HOUSING PROVISIONS are readily met. Rabbits do great as indoor pets and are easily litter box trained like a cat. A regular cat litter box will work fine for a rabbit. I do recommend that they are placed in a cage while indoors when not supervised as they tend to roam around and chew on stuff, which can be serious if that stuff happens to be an electric cord plugged into a live socket. Severe injuries to the rabbit as well as risk of house fire are real.

RABBITS CAN be easily housed outdoors and can adapt to a wide range of ambient temperatures. During the summer, if protected from the direct sun, they can handle temperatures up to 85 degrees. That can be a problem here in the Keys. Above this temperature, artificial cooling should be supplied. Fans, evaporative coolers and overhead sprinklers are cost effective techniques. Rabbits are susceptible to heat stress.

THEY READILY eat commercial rabbit pellets and diets. These are a good staple, but should not be a sole calorie source. Rabbits have a fiber requirement of at least 18 percent, or gastrointestinal upsets in the forms of diarrhea and impactions may result.

RABBITS SHOULD be also be supplemented with Timothy or some other good quality grass hay (not alfalfa). In addition to the pellets and hay, rabbits need to have access to fresh food on a daily basis. Green leafy vegetables such as romaine lettuce and collard greens, green plant tops such as carrot tops, dandelion greens and other vegetables are all excellent supplements for a rabbit. Fruits and other sweet foods should only be offered as a treat as the rabbit can easily become spoiled. Fresh water should always be available.

RABBITS DO NOT need annual vaccinations, but I do recommend annual check-ups with a veterinarian who is familiar with rabbits. Go figure, rabbits make great pets, but do have different needs than dogs and cats.

Dr. Mader is an ABVP board certified veterinary specialist practicing in the Keys. Send your questions to drdoug@marathonvet.com.
Although summer can be a magnificent time for you and your dog, hot weather may be extremely dangerous for your furry friend. While all dogs can live in hot climates with proper care and prevention, some breeds handle temperature extremes better than others.

If you want a dog that enjoys summer, consider these 10 breeds that perform extremely well in hot weather:
Extremely energetic and acrobatic, the Border Collie is a medium-sized working dog. They are one of the most intelligent breeds and can easily be trained to a high degree. Collies dominate in dog activities and they will have no problem playing in the park in warm climates.

A courageous and tireless breed, the Australian Cattle Dog is a top herding dog that thrives on hard work. This breed requires an extremely dominant pack leader and a lot of mental and physical activity. They are an athletic breed, and are great for hiking and other dog activities, which they can enjoy in all climates. Finally, apart from being an excellent herding breed, the Australian Cattle Dog is a superior guard dog and can be trusted with children.

The largest of the terriers, the Airedale Terriers are very smart dogs that get bored easily. They need extensive exercise and love to be engaged in challenging activities. Courageous and protective dogs, they are easy to train if properly socialized. Airedale Terriers will get along great with kids. They are good companions that like to spend time in the water and engage in all kinds of dog-friendly activities. Airedale’s coats are easy to maintain in hot climates – strip their coat down in the summer and your dog will be able to endure very high temperatures and have fun in the sun.

Golden Retrievers are intelligent and playful dogs that get along well with everyone. Because of their loving nature, they are not good guardian dogs – but are excellent service dogs. Natural swimmers, Golden Retrievers have a water-resistant coat and webbed feet and love to be in the water, so you can take them with you to the seaside. Retrievers are prone to hip dysplasia. They also tend to gain weight easily so don’t give them too much to eat.
Another water-loving breed, the Chesapeake Bay Retriever tends to be more dominant than other retrievers. Although Chesapeake Bay Retrievers are obedient dogs, they may be slow learners. Chesapeake Bay Retrievers also need a lot of space to run around – it’s advisable to adopt this dog only if you have a yard. The breed enjoys all sorts of dog activities and will also have a blast at the beach. Last but not least, they are great with kids and extremely loyal.

The third retriever on our list, the Labrador Retriever is a playful and fun-loving breed that can thrive in both hot and cold climates. Once you take them to the beach, they will be able to spend hours in the water playing and they never get tired. Labrador Retrievers especially love to be engaged in any activity with their owner and are considered one of the best family dogs in the world.

Bred for retrieving, the German Shorthaired Pointer is an extremely energetic and athletic dog. They are eager to please their owner and can be trusted with kids and other animals. A hunting dog by nature, the German Shorthaired Pointer loves nothing more than to engage in a challenging activity with their owner. If they are under-exercised, they may become quite restless and destructive.

One of America’s few native breeds, the American Foxhound is a kind, loving and affectionate dog. This breed is primarily a hunter so be aware if you have a smaller pet. A very energetic breed, the American Foxhound is not recommended for apartment life – the dog needs a lot of space to run around. On the plus side, they will be more than happy to engage in any summer adventure with their owner. Finally, the American Foxhound tends to gain weight easily, so don’t overfeed them.
A very trainable breed, the American Water Spaniel is an excellent hunting dog as well as good guard dogs. The American Water Spaniel loves to spend time with kids and gets along great with non-canine animals. The dog doesn’t respond well to harsh discipline and since the American Water Spaniel is eager to please their master, heavy-handed training is not necessary. This breed can live comfortably in an apartment.

A giant, powerful dog, the Great Dane is charming, loving and affectionate – they don’t call them ‘gentle giants’ for nothing. Excellent with kids, Danes get along great with other dogs and pets. They are trustworthy, courageous and loyal and would do anything for their family, and are very good watchdogs. You have to teach them not to jump on other people as they might accidentally hurt someone due to their size. Great Danes will be perfectly comfortable in apartments.
Knowing how to keep your bird cool in hot weather is especially important during hot summer months. Here’s what you need to do:

**KEEP YOUR BIRD COOL**

While a slight increase in room temperature likely won’t prove problematic, a significant increase in temperature can spell trouble for your bird. Heat exhaustion is a dangerous condition that can develop when a bird is subjected to high temperatures, which is why you should never leave your bird inside a vehicle on a warm day or in a habitat that is placed in direct sun.

A bird suffering from heat exhaustion may become disoriented and exhibit signs such as panting and holding their wings away from their body. Treatment for heat exhaustion must be immediate, and can include lightly misting your bird with cool water or allowing them to stand in a shallow container of cool water; but always seek the advice of a veterinarian to establish an appropriate treatment plan.

**BEWARE OF ELECTRIC FANS**

Electric fans can be an effective way to cool the air in your bird’s environment, but always exercise caution. Keep your bird out of the direct path of a draft, and be particularly wary of ceiling fans. The exposed blades pose a particular danger to birds that are allowed to roam freely throughout a...
room, so never run a ceiling fan when your bird is near. Even with clipped wings, some birds can gain enough lift to reach a ceiling fan, which can cause devastating injuries. Always keep your bird safe in their habitat whenever fans are on in your home.

**KEEP YOUR BIRD HYDRATED**

Birds naturally increase their water intake during warm weather. Check your bird’s water supply several times a day and add fresh water when necessary. In warm weather, water becomes stale much faster and the water dish becomes dirty more frequently.

Clean and refresh your bird’s water more often than usual during periods of warm weather - especially if your bird uses their water container for bathing. Some pet parents provide water bottles in addition to dishes, the advantage being that your bird will have a water source that they cannot spill or contaminate.

**FEED YOUR BIRD A NUTRIENT-RICH DIET**

Take advantage of summer’s fresh, healthy foods to boost your bird’s diet during this time of year. Preparing fresh homemade treats can help deliver essential vitamins to your pet bird. Just make sure that as you add new foods, you maintain a balanced diet.

**KEEP YOUR HOUSE ESCAPE-PROOF**

Make sure that your screens are intact and installed properly on all of your windows, and then consider installing a screen door for your front and back doors. But even with the added precaution of screens, it’s possible for your bird to slip through an opening and escape. Watch your bird carefully whenever you open the door and caution family and friends to do the same. Another option: keep your bird in a room without direct outdoor access.

If you’re concerned that your bird will still try to make a break for it, you may wish to consider clipping your bird’s wings. This is a common procedure but should be performed by a veterinarian or other avian expert.

**KEEP TRAVEL TO A MINIMUM**

Avoid traveling with your bird during the summer months, even for short trips. On an 80-degree day, the temperature inside a closed vehicle can reach 109 degrees in only 20 minutes, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. If you travel with your bird, follow proper precautions to keep him cool, and never leave him in the car, not even for a minute.
Both types of aquariums have their rewards and challenges and both can be stunning pieces. There are, however, a number of aspects that differentiate the two. When it comes to choosing which system you want, it’s not all about aesthetics. Cost and maintenance are two major factors you need to consider as well.

Colorful and natural, freshwater tropical aquariums provide an impressive visual, they require less maintenance and lower operating costs. However, if you were to go for a heavily planted freshwater aquarium for example, special lighting, fertilizers and carbon dioxide will be required and the costs can add up fast. Freshwater inhabitants aren’t always as vibrantly colored as saltwater aquarium creatures, but can definitely come in an array of amazing patterns and uniquely fascinating shapes.

Basic components in a freshwater aquarium setup includes filtration, lighting, and heating. For freshwater aquariums without a heating mechanism, cold-water fish are most suitable. This includes goldfish among many other small river species.

Freshwater fish tend to be much harder and generally less expensive than saltwater species. If any problems ever were to occur in the maintenance of the aquarium environment, freshwater creatures are more forgiving and less fragile than saltwater. They are accepting of a wider range of water parameters as well. On the other hand, saltwater fish are generally more demanding of specific water parameters and required habitat.

As you’re probably aware, a saltwater aquarium, particularly a reef aquarium, is a wonderful recreation of the ocean. With that come the vibrant, colourful, delicate creatures, fascinating corals, reef fauna and live rock. Saltwater aquariums in particular can be more expensive and they are more difficult to maintain than freshwater aquariums.

Another type of marine tank setup is fish-only-with-live-rock saltwater aquariums. Live rocks, which are pieces of mature coral reefs, allows colonization of various marine life such as invertebrates and sponges. Since live rocks house an abundance of beneficial bacteria, it aids in filtration and maintaining desirable water parameters.

Whether it is a beautiful, tropical aquarium bursting with colour and vibrancy that you’re after, or an intriguing and sleek work of art filled with unusual, unique, fascinating creatures and a wide variety of gorgeous freshwater fauna, you will have an eclectic show piece.

FRESHWATER AQUARIUM:
- Tap water system
- 2-4 week maintenance
- Natural aesthetic
- Durable and colourful fish
- Cost effective visual impact

SALTWATER MARINE AQUARIUM
- Specialist salt and RO water production
- 1-2 week maintenance
- Live coral reef wow factor
- Colourful, exciting fish and corals
- Impressive visual impact
Bone Broth Popsicles

Summer Day Pet Treat

By

Dr. Karen Becker

From www.healthypets.com
Dogs enjoy a cool treat on a hot summer day just as much as we do, but resist the urge to let them lick a human popsicle or ice cream bar, which will be full of sugar, artificial colors, and other ingredients your pet is better off without. Instead, make her a batch of her own bone broth popsicles. Rich in minerals like calcium and phosphorus as well as collagen and bone marrow, bone broth has become the “it” superfood for humans... but it’s actually an old-time staple that pets will adore too.

BONE BROTH POPSICLES

INGREDIENTS:
• Healthy water
• Organic bones: consider chicken, lamb, bison, or beef
• Organic vinegar: Bragg Raw Apple Cider Vinegar (suggestion)

DIRECTIONS:
• Make bone broth in a stock pot (see bone broth recipe on next page)
• Separate broth from bones
• Grind bones in food processor until pulverized
• Mix pulverized bones with broth, pour into an ice cube tray, and freeze (note: if your dog is a gulper, freeze in a loaf pan to prevent him from inhaling the ice cubes)

Offer to your dog all summer long for a mineral rich, delicious treat that keeps him hydrated and happy.

WHY BONE BROTH MAKES AN EXCELLENT TREAT FOR YOUR PETS.

Bone broth is inexpensive to make, easy to prepare and, best of all, incredibly nutritious for pets. When you simmer bones in water overnight (or even longer), it allows all of their minerals and marrow to leach out into the water, providing your dog (or cat) with a variety of nutrients in an easily absorbable form.
It's not a balanced diet, but it works well for a snack or for pets who are refusing to eat. You can also add the broth to your pet’s regular meals for added flavor and nutrition. It will even help your pet to detox from the environmental pollutants she encounters on a daily basis.

As noted in Dogs Naturally magazine:

“The liver is the master organ of detoxification. The dog’s liver is under assault daily as the poor dog lies on carpets and floors treated with chemicals, walks on grass that’s been treated and sprayed with poisons, consumes foods with toxic and synthetic ingredients, and suffers through toxic dewormers, flea and tick preventives, drugs, antibiotics, vaccines, and more. The liver was never meant to suffer this onslaught and its capacity to detoxify is limited by the availability of the amino acid glycine. Guess what has tons of glycine? Bone broth!”

ARE YOU NEW TO MAKING BONE BROTH?

It’s easier to make bone broth than you might think. Start with the highest quality ingredients you can find, including organic, pastured chicken, beef, or bones. You can use a whole organic chicken (pets will enjoy the meat, too) or look for organic beef thigh bones (soup bones).

• Simply fill your pot with pure water, add your bones, and then add a splash of vinegar. Acetic acid (vinegar) helps leech the minerals from the bones into the stockpot water. Then let the mixture simmer for up to 4.5 hours.
• At this point, the meat will be falling off the bone and you can remove it (and any skin) from the pot. Return the broth to the stove, add another splash of vinegar, and continue simmering for another 24 hours to be sure all the nutrition is pulled from the bones.
• When the second round of broth is done, run it through a strainer to remove the cooked bones and bone fragments. You can either discard these or, as discussed in the recipe, run them through a food processor and then add them back into the broth.

With very little effort on your part, you’ll have a veritable superfood that your pet will crave and which will provide comfort and nutrition year-round (and as a bonus, you can eat it too)!
Want to enjoy the benefits of pet ownership without the commitment of owning a dog or cat? One of these seven small pets might be your best bet.

Pets can be great sources of companionship and comfort, and the health benefits of keeping a pet are well documented. Pet owners often experience increased self-esteem and reduced feelings of loneliness, and they may even gain physical health benefits such as lowered heart rate and blood pressure.

But maybe you aren’t up to the challenge and responsibility involved in owning a dog or cat. If that’s the case, don’t overlook the benefits of small pets! From pet birds, rabbits, ferrets and pet rodents, these guidelines can help you choose the best small pet based on personality and the level of care.

#1

IS A RABBIT RIGHT FOR YOU?

PROS: Rabbits are social and friendly animals, and adapt very well to human companionship. They have one of the longer life spans of small pets, living between 7 to 10 years. Their floppy ears, soft fur, and wriggly noses make them popular with kids.

CONS: Companionship rabbits should be kept in the home, rather than in an outside coop or in a basement or garage. Rabbits need daily handling and care to become socialized. You need to pet your rabbit regularly and let it out of its cage for at least an hour each day. Rabbits have a delicate digestive system and need a varied diet including fresh vegetables. Rabbits and small children do not go well together. Rabbits are skittish animals that need a quiet environment, and quick movements of excited children could startle and stress them.

#2

LET A BIRD BRIGHTEN YOUR LIFE

PROS: Pet birds are colorful additions to any home, and you may find their tweeting and chirping to be charming. Pet birds can be kept in a cage in one area of your home, eliminating the potential for mess elsewhere. Many types of birds, bred for domestic life include finches, cockatiels, canaries, parakeets, and lovebirds.

CONS: Many wild birds, such as toucans and parrots, belong in the wild and will not enjoy domestic life. They can be loud and destructive. Most birds are flock animals, so...
PET TIPS
for renters

BE RESPONSIBLE
If a landlord accepts your animal, it is up to you to make sure your pet follows the apartment’s rules. Do not allow your animal to scratch up walls, floors or doors, as this will surely cost you at least your deposit in the end. If your pet does cause damage, report it immediately. Offer to pay for all damage to stay in the good graces of your landlord.

KEEP IT DOWN
Nothing will put you in the doghouse quicker than a pooch that barks at all hours of the day and night. Try your best to keep your dog comfortable with plenty of food, water and attention to keep him from barking. Whether you’re housing a dog or a cat, keep him from roaming the halls and main areas of your complex. Find a back or side exit if you’re leaving with your pet.

Most rental applications are point blank about their pet policies. They either allow them or they don’t. Find out where your potential apartment stands before you engage the landlord about visiting the complex. Obviously, if you won’t be able to bring Fido, that might be a deal-breaker for you.

TAKING YOUR DOG OUTSIDE
Dogs require much more exercise than cats and obviously don’t come with the luxury of using a litter box. This means you will be hitting the streets with your pup, and with that comes much responsibility in its own right. Many cities and towns have enacted leash laws to protect both the pet and passers-by. Make sure you are in compliance. Also, no one wants to step around your dog’s mess. Be sure to bring plastic bags to clean up after your dog, and dispose of their waste appropriately. You’ll want to be up front with your landlord on the question of bringing a pet along to live with you. Honesty is the best policy, as your landlord will surely find out if you have a secret pet or if you are trying to sneak in more pets than allowed.
Many of us would do anything for our pets, even if that means spending large amounts of money at the veterinarian’s office. Medical procedures, such as radiation and MRIs have most recently become available for our furry family members; unfortunately these procedures can be incredibly expensive. In this case, it might be time to start investigating pet insurance. Pet insurance is very similar to our health insurance; policies have co-pays, deductibles, and annual spending limits. There are several pros and cons to weigh when deciding to invest in a plan. According to the American Veterinarian Association, the majority of dogs and cats in the United States are not insured. Instead of investing in a pet insurance policy, some pet owners may choose to place emergency money in a savings account in preparation for any unwarranted veterinarian bills. If you believe pet insurance could be the right option for you, it is important to pay careful attention when shopping for the best policy.

Shopping for insurance is not a walk through the park, but this investment may save your little friends. While looking for insurance there are a few things that you need to know. In Florida, the insurer must be registered with state regulators. Evaluate different plans before making your decision. You should select several plans and compare them. Annual deductibles, reimbursement levels, and maximum benefits may vary by provider and policy. Do not hesitate to ask questions directly to your future provider. It is essential to find out if claim payments are written according to the insurance companies benefit schedule or your veterinarian bill. Scrutinize the plan, does it cover chronic conditions? If you are considering different policies, assess if the plan covers pre-existing problems such as hip dysplasia. Additionally, many plans have premiums that will increase as your pet ages. Similarly to our health insurance policies, it is common for pet owners to choose to pay out of pocket for basic procedures and allow pet insurance to protect our wallets against emergencies. Various policies will not cover common procedures, as they are excluded from the plan. You can find plans that cover basic procedures, prescriptions, and dental.

If the insurance policy you choose does not cover common procedures or if insurance is not for you, remember there are always ways to care for your pet economically. You can ask your veterinarian for free samples during visits. Also you should look for discounted vaccinations or flea and tick treatment. Additionally, be sure to take advantage of pet voucher programs, especially when the time comes to spay or neuter your dogs and cats. In Monroe County you can receive assistance to spay or neuter your pet through the SNAP voucher program.
Keep your pets snug in a storm.
WHEN YOU'RE WEATHERING THE STORM

If you're staying home, make sure to keep your pets as calm as possible. Reassure them, pet them, and don't get skittish; domesticated animals often mimic their owner's behavior. Furthermore, animals, with their extra-keen senses, are often more adept at sensing when weather change is in the air. According to animal behaviorist John Bradshaw, a dog's olfactory cortex (the part of the brain that analyzes smells) is roughly 40 times bigger than a human's, which means that the slightest change in air quality can alert them of danger. Canines are also far more sensitive to shifts in barometric pressure. In short, your pet might experience storm-related anxiety long before the weather forecasters make their predictions.

To help ease your pet's nerves, University of Minnesota veterinarian Katherine Waters, DVM, suggests that you set up a "storm-safe zone" in your home. This could be as snug as a crate, or as spacious as small room toward the center of the house or in the basement (where storms are less noticeable). You'll want to distract your pet from the commotion — especially excitable animals, like dogs — by closing the drapes and turning the radio or TV to something soothing. Don't leave your pet all alone in his cell, though; make time to go in and play with him, feed him regularly, and reward him for calm behavior.

And keep this in mind: It's not helpful to punish bad behavior when your pet is nervous — they can't help being fearful and perhaps a little jumpy, and they certainly can't vocalize their fears.

OPERATION EVACUATION: WHEN YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF HARM'S WAY

If you've considered leaving your pooch and parakeet alone to fend for themselves, think again. The American Red Cross says that if it's not safe for you to stay home, then it's not safe for your pets either.

“A person who plans for disaster is going to be far more able to safeguard herself and her animal companions,” says Sara Varsa, director of operations for the Humane Society’s Animal Rescue Team. Specialized pet shelters, animal control centers, veterinary clinics, and friends' homes out of harm's way are all potential refuges for your pet during a weather disaster. If you do plan to relocate your animal to a shelter, call ahead and determine availability — most shelters fill up on a first-come, first-serve basis. To enter a pet shelter, you must come prepared with a whole heap of items: a proper identification collar and rabies tag, a carrier or cage, a leash, an ample supply of food, water, and food bowls, any necessary medications, specific care instructions, and newspapers or trash bags for clean-up.

The National Hurricane Center also advises you to make sure your pets are up-to-date on their vaccinations — some pet shelters require proof of immunization. Keep a current photograph of your pet with you at all times, and make sure that you have strong, secure collars and leashes — both equipped with identification tags.

You may also want to perform evacuation drills to help pets become familiar with traveling in their carriers. Usher your animal into his carrier, and
THE TOP 10 CAT HEALTH

Turns out, cats don’t really have nine lives, so be sure to take steps to prevent these common cat health problems now. Your kitty may look self-sufficient, but she depends on you to keep her in top cat health. That means scheduling regular check-ups and getting her the shots required to guard against cat illnesses. By learning about common ailments, from diarrhea in cats to urinary diseases and more, you’ll be able to spot early warning signs and get your little furball prompt treatment for any condition.

COMMON CAT ILLNESS

NO. 1: LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE. Feline lower urinary tract disease, or FLUTD, encompasses a number of different conditions that can affect a cat’s bladder and urethra. Symptoms include not using the litter box or straining without producing urine. Other symptoms of FLUTD include excessive licking of the genital area and blood in the urine. If you see these symptoms, and especially if your cat is straining to urinate, see your veterinarian immediately. It could be a sign of a urethral blockage, which can be fatal.

BY KATHERINE LEE
WWW.EVERYDAYHEALTH.COM
The first step in treating FLUTD is identifying the cause of the symptoms; culprits include bladder stones, infection, urinary tract blockage, and even cancer. Treatment may involve pain medication, antibiotics, and removing or pushing the blockage back into the bladder. Your vet may also suggest dietary changes or increased water intake to prevent future problems.

NO. 2: INFECTIOUS DISEASES
The most common infections in cats are respiratory in nature. Some can be prevented with vaccinations. Symptoms of upper respiratory infections in cats include runny nose, teary eyes, sneezing, cough, fever, or sores in the mouth. As for treatment, most upper respiratory infections are viral, so there isn’t much you can do. But it’s important to take your pet to the veterinarian for an evaluation since some upper respiratory infections can be fatal.

Another common infectious disease is feline panleukopenia, a highly contagious viral illness caused by the feline parvovirus. Symptoms can include fever, bloody diarrhea, loss of appetite, lethargy, and dehydration. There is no
medication that can kill the virus, so treatment usually consists of lots of fluids and watching over the cat's general health until he can fight off the infection on his own. Kittens under eight weeks of age have little likelihood of survival, so vaccination is crucial to preventing feline panleukopenia.

NO. 3: CANCER
Lymphosarcoma, a cancer of the lymph system that can be associated with the feline leukemia virus, is the most common type of cancer in cats. It can be intestinal or in the chest, says Beaver. Another common cancer found in cats, especially white ones, is squamous cell carcinoma. Symptoms of cancer in cats may include lumps, swelling, persistent skin infections or sores, lethargy, weight loss, sudden lameness, diarrhea or vomiting, and difficulty breathing, urinating, or defecating. Treatment options depend on the type and stage of cancer and may include chemotherapy, surgery (if the cancer is in an operable area), radiation, and immunotherapy. Decisions on cancer treatment for cats can be made with a vet who specializes in oncology.

NO. 4: HEARTWORM DISEASE
The cat is not a normal host for heartworm. Some cats might not show any symptoms, while others may have signs such as coughing, respiratory problems, and vomiting. Unfortunately, there is no effective and safe treatment for heartworm in cats — and it can be fatal. The good news, however, is that many cats are able to fight it off on their own. In severe cases, a veterinarian may recommend medication to reduce the inflammatory response or surgery to remove the heartworms, which is a very risky procedure. The key, as with dogs, is to regularly give preventive heartworm medication and schedule routine vet check-ups.

NO. 5: FLEAS
Fleas are parasites that feed on your pet’s blood. Some signs that a cat has fleas include scratching, hair loss, and bald patches where the cat licked excessively. You may also be able to see fleas, flea eggs, or flea excretions in your pet’s fur. Treatment involves applying a product designed to kill fleas and prevent egg development. Be sure to use only flea-control products designed for cats, never those for dogs — cats are very sensitive to insecticides and using the wrong product on a cat could have fatal consequences.

NO. 6: KIDNEY DISEASE
Kidney problems in cats reduce their ability to excrete waste into their urine, leading to a dangerous build-up of toxins in the bloodstream. Kidney disease can be caused by a number of factors including high blood pressure, exposure to
toxins, infection, kidney stones, and cancer. Age is another factor: Kidney disease is very common in older cats. Symptoms can include decreased appetite, weight loss, vomiting or diarrhea, and lethargy, but some cats do not have symptoms at all. Treatment often starts with pinpointing the cause of the kidney disease and then treating that condition. In severe cases, dialysis or a kidney transplant may be required.

**NO. 7: DENTAL DISEASE**  
Symptoms of dental disease in cats often involve difficulty eating, bad breath, and a change in chewing habits. Bad breath could indicate digestive problems or gingivitis (gum disease). Other signs of dental problems in your cat are discolored, red, or swollen gums, ulcers on the gums or tongue, loose teeth, excessive drooling, or constant pawing at the mouth area. If you suspect that your cat has dental problems, take her to a veterinarian dentist. For good oral hygiene, brush your cat’s teeth with a toothbrush and toothpaste specially-made for felines, and give her a chew toy to exercise her gums and remove tartar before it hardens.

**NO. 8: FRACTURES**  
Contrary to popular belief, cats can get hurt even when they fall from one- or two-story windows. This is because the short distance of the fall does not give them time to adjust their bodies so that they can fall correctly. Signs that your cat may have suffered a fracture include limping or not moving. If your cat falls from a window, rush her to the nearest animal hospital or veterinarian — cats have a high survivability rate if they are treated immediately.

**NO. 9: VOMITING AND DIARRHEA**  
Vomiting and diarrhea in cats is usually associated with something they ate. It could be from eating a food or plant that didn’t agree with them or eating too quickly, or it could be a sign of something more serious, such as an illness or an infection. An isolated episode of vomiting or diarrhea in cats is usually not a cause for concern. But if you see persistent vomiting, diarrhea with vomiting, diarrhea that lasts for more than a day, or diarrhea accompanied by bloody or black stools (which could indicate internal bleeding of the stomach or intestines), take your pet to the vet immediately. Treatment usually includes giving fluids and not feeding your cat for 12 to 24 hours, followed by a bland diet such as boiled potatoes, cooked rice, and boneless chicken. Your veterinarian may also recommend anti-vomiting medications.

**NO. 10: OBESITY**  
Obesity is a common cat health issue today, and it increases your cat’s risk for a number of ailments such as joint pain, diabetes, and liver problems. You should be able to feel the backbone and ribs without pressing too hard in cats that are at a healthy weight. From above, you should be able to see a discernible waist between his lower ribs and hips. And when viewing your cat from the side, you should be able to see a tuck in the tummy between the lower ribs and his hips. Being spayed or neutered will decrease caloric need by 30 percent for cats. Increase exercise as you cut the calories. One great way to get cats moving is to engage them with a toy on a string or another plaything that encourages active movement.
when purchasing certain species you really should get two in order for them to lead a happy life. A bird’s cage should be big enough for it to spread its wings fully and fly from one side to the other.

#3

KEEP A HAMSTER’S SCHEDULE IN MIND

PROS: Hamsters are a cuddly, friendly, and inquisitive type of pet rodent. Hamsters are relatively independent and self-entertaining and therefore don’t require the amount of attention that other small pets do. However, you will need to provide them with a variety of toys. Hamsters are solitary creatures, so you only need to buy one.

CONS: Hamsters are nocturnal and won’t be awake for much of the time you are. They may also make some noise rattling around at night while you sleep. Hamsters must be handled gently or they could bite. Children under 8 might not possess the motor skills needed to handle a hamster correctly. Hamsters carry diseases like salmonella, so be sure to wash your hands after handling them. Hamsters only live 2.5 to 3 years.

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#4

HAVE FUN WITH FERRETS

PROS: Ferrets are engaging pets with a playful attitude and boundless energy and enjoy a long life span of about 8 to 10 years. Ferrets can grow very cuddly as they get older, usually at 3 years of age or later.

CONS: You will need to “ferret-proof” your home and supervise them when they are out of their cage, because of their inquisitive nature. They need to be out spending time with you when you are home. Ferrets can be pretty smelly, as their fur contains a natural musky odor. Ferrets require gentle handling and can bite if threatened or harmed.

#5

TAKE A GANDER AT GUINEA PIGS

PROS: Guinea pigs are considered the sweetest and most social of the pet rodents and can live up to 7 years. Guinea pigs can be kept in an open-topped pen rather than a cage, as there’s less chance they will try to climb out and escape.

CONS: Guinea pigs have long hair that will require grooming. They are herd animals — you should get at least two guinea pigs so they will have companionship. You will need to clean your guinea pig’s pen regularly. Like hamsters, guinea pigs carry salmonella and other diseases.

#6

CHOOSE A CHINCHILLA

PROS: Chinchillas are adorable pet rodents with soft fur, large ears, and bushy tails. Chinchillas live between 5 to 10 years and tend to be solitary. They do not need a companion. They are usually clean and odorless, and friendly to humans.

CONS: Chinchillas can be easily startled and should be handled carefully. Also, patches of fur can come loose and slip off with rough handling. Chinchillas require dust baths once or twice weekly to maintain pet health. The dust, usually powdered volcanic ash, must be provided deep enough so your chinchilla can roll around in it. Chinchillas can be large and hard to handle.

#7

GET ACQUAINTED WITH GERBILS

PROS: Gerbils tend to be very clean pet rodents. Gerbils are independent and can keep themselves entertained for extended periods. Gerbils are not nocturnal, and will be up when you are.

CONS: Gerbils are smaller and can slip out of wire cages. You’ll need to purchase an aquarium in which to keep them. They can bite if not treated gently. You will need to clean your gerbil’s aquarium regularly. As desert animals, they tend to pass highly concentrated urine that can have a strong odor. They live for 3 to 4 years.
MARRVELOUS PET RESCUES & ADOPTIONS
Key Largo · 305-453-1315
Started in 2007 by resident Jo Martin, this organization typically has about 30 pets living with foster families while waiting for their “forever” homes. The organization needs volunteers, foster families and donations. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and volunteers.

UPPER KEYS HUMANE SOCIETY
Key Largo · 305-451-3848
The Upper Keys Humane Society is a no-kill facility that tries to find homes for abandoned cats and dogs. It also provides medical treatment for shelter animals. It has room for about 10 cats and 16 dogs. It needs a constant influx of donations such as bleach, old newspapers, old towels and monetary donations. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and volunteers.

KEY LARGO ANIMAL SHELTER
Key Largo · 305-451-0088
This shelter handles animal control for Mile Marker 70 to Mile Marker 113 and also Ocean Reef. It rescues animals, responds to citizen complaints and enforces animal law. It also helps find homes for animals. It’s primary focus is providing free spay and neuter clinics more than twice a month. Donations are always needed to fund that service. Volunteers needed.

FLORIDA KEYS WILD BIRD CENTER
Tavernier · 305-852-4486
This organization is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of native and migratory wild birds that have been harmed or displaced, to providing or locating a humane shelter for those birds that cannot be released, and to educating the public. It also operates a hospital for wildlife rehabilitators and volunteers to treat birds. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and volunteers.

ARK ANGELS WILDLIFE RESCUE
Upper Keys · 305-393-2615
This organization specializes in saving mammals, including raccoons. Donations are used to buy special formula ordered from the manufacturer. It also needs donations such as fleece blankets, toys, soft plastic baby bottles, fruit and puppy chow. It needs volunteers that are available to transport animals. It is self-funded and monetary donations can be made via Pay Pal on its website.

CARING FOR CATS
Islamorada · 305-664-5575
Caring for Cats runs a trap, neuter and release program. It also coordinates spay and neuter services for cats once or twice a month. Fees are charged on a sliding scale based on ability to pay. Cats that are adoptable are placed in foster homes. Feral cats are set free after being fixed. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and the revenues from three annual fishing tournaments and a gala event.

LEAH’S ARK
Key Largo · 305-619-5353
This organization accepts some animals for its educational outreach program and helps find permanent homes for other animals. It specializes in the difficult-to-place and exotic animals such as skunks, ferrets, peacocks, raccoons and turtles. It has a Class 3 wildlife license and also looks after orphaned animals. This organization is funded through donations and fees generated by the educational outreach program.

MARATHON WILD BIRD CENTER
Marathon · 305-743-8382
The Marathon Wild Bird Center is a wild bird rescue center that operates around the clock, 365 days of the year. It answers the community’s calls regarding injured, sick, displaced or orphaned birds and helps citizens determine whether the birds need human intervention. It operates from Mile Marker 36 to Mile Marker 70. The center is located in the Crane Point Museum and Nature Center in Marathon and has about 150 birds, 75 of which are on permanent display because they cannot be returned to the wild. The center is open year round except for the month of September. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and volunteers.

SAFE HARBOR ANIMAL RESCUE OF THE KEYS (S.H.A.R.K.)
Marathon · 305-743-4800
This organization handles animal control from Mile Marker 16.7 to Mile Marker 70. It rescues animals, responds to citizen complaints and enforces animal law. It handles pet adoptions and foster families for cats and dogs although it sometimes has the odd bunny or ferret. The center has about 14 kennels, but its unique setup allows for many of the animals to spend time in the large yard. It sponsors spay and neuter clinics several times a month for a low fee. Volunteers needed.

FORGOTTEN FELINES
Marathon · 305-743-2520
This is a trap, neuter and release program. It also coordinates spay and neuter services for cats once or twice a month on a sliding scale based on ability to pay. The cats that are adoptable are placed in foster homes. Feral ones are set free after being fixed. It also feeds 500 feral cats in 36 colonies every day in the Marathon area. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and partially supported by a second-hand store, Purr-Feet Thrift. One hundred percent of the store’s proceeds support the cause.

FLORIDA KEYS SPCA
Key West · 305-294-4857
This organization handles animal control from Key West to Mile Marker 16.7. It also handles pet adoptions. Volunteers needed to answer the phone.

KEY WEST WILDLIFE CENTER
Key West · 305-292-1008
The Key West Wildlife Center rescues, rehabilitates and releases wild animals back into the wild, with a focus on birds. Occasionally, individual animals that have recovered from their injuries but are not able to survive in the wild are placed in educational settings. The center is located in the Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park and is open to the public. It also has a separate program that ministers to injured, sick, and orphaned Key West chickens. Non-profit charity dependent on donations and volunteers.

LOWER KEYS FRIENDS OF ANIMALS
Lower Keys · 305-294-9445
This is a spay and neuter organization that offers one or two clinics a month in Key West. The operations are offered to pet owners at a reduced cost. It also offers financial assistance for pet owners whose pet has had a major medical emergency when the only options are surrendering the pet to a shelter or putting the animal down. Non-profit charity dependent on donations, membership dues and volunteers. It’s main fund-raiser is the annual Pet Masquerade, part of Fantasy Fest.

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make sure he has enough room — if not to roam, then at least enough to stand and turn around. When the time comes to leave home, the last thing you want is an uncooperative pet, eager to pout and run away from you like a cranky toddler.

DURING A DOWNPOUR
The time has come: Torrents are raining down upon your area, and maybe there’s even lightning and thunder. If your pet is in a shelter, have confidence that he is safe. Don’t hassle them unnecessarily — other worried pet-parents could be calling around the clock too.

If your pet is staying with friends or family, make sure to leave them a detailed list of all his routines and requirements. Choose only caregivers you would trust with your own children — and then relax. Chances are, Fido is safe and warm.

AFTER THE STORM
Familiar scents and landmarks are often altered during storms, and animals can easily become lost and confused, so walk your dog on a leash until he becomes re-oriented, and watch your cat for signs of disorientation and stress. That baby sapling you never noticed in the driveway could have been your pooch’s primary way of identifying his home — and if it’s knocked down, he may not recognize his own backyard.

Once your pet is acclimated to his surroundings, proceed with caution when you take him outside — damaged streets could spell danger. In hurricanes, rainstorms, and windstorms, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advises you to watch out for downed power lines, debris, and reptiles brought in by high water.

And remember that while the storm may not have been traumatic for you, it could have been for your pet; your coping strategies are likely to be quite different. Animals can often become aggressive or defensive after storms, as they sense that their territory has been invaded. Be patient and monitor your pets’ behaviors until you’re sure they can be unleashed.

If you cannot find your pet after a weather disaster, contact your local animal control office to find out where lost animals can be recovered. Bring along a picture of your pet and stay calm — in the case of major storms, animals that have wandered or gotten lost sometimes turn up weeks later.

TIPS FOR HURRICANE SEASON PREP:
• Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster.
• Make sure all pets wear collars and ID tags with up-to-date identification—the ASPCA also recommends microchipping your pet as a more permanent form of I.D.
• Obtain a rescue alert sticker, which will let rescuers know that pets are inside your home. You’ll get these when you order a free ASPCA Pet Safety Pack.
• Keep a pet emergency kit and supplies handy with items such as medical records, water, pet food and medications, and pet First Aid supplies.
• Arrange a safe haven for your pets in the event of evacuation. Do not leave your pets behind.
• Choose a designated caregiver who can take care of your pet in the event you are unable to do so.

COURTESY OF ASPCA.ORG
“At first I was embarrassed. Me, a cat, living with a single guy. But when I watch him pick something up with his hands and eat it, I can’t help but love him.”

— Maru
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Florida Veterinary Cardiology and Dr. Prosěk, one of only three Centers in the U.S.A. and only Center outside of California involved in the study needs your help:

**Inclusion Criteria**
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- Dogs greater than 5 kg
- A single documented episode of congestive heart failure

**Exclusion Criteria**
- Atrial Fibrillation
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- Significant System Disease
- Clinically Symptomatic System Hypertension with evidence of end organ damage
- Liver Disease resulting in Encephalopathy or abnormal clotting time
- Renal Insufficiency
- Significant Systolic Dysfunction
- Ruptured Chordae Tendineae with acute congestive heart failure
- Owners with poor compliance
- Owners unwilling to allow post mortem necropsy and device examination/retrieval
- History of Endocarditis or current Endocarditis
- Abnormal Cardiac Anatomy discovered prior to surgery or during procedure

**Highlights**
- Cost of the surgery will be covered by study, along with follow-up exams
- Owners responsible for initial visit screening exams only
- Surgery time is approximated to be only around 20 minutes

**Contact Dr. Robert Prosěk or Head Surgery Technician, Noel Gomez,**
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