

SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUR PET

There is no denying that social media are powerful tools for young and old alike. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Foursquare, Skype and others have had worldwide impact on the way we communicate in the twenty-first century. Hand-held devices and compact computers allow us to access daily news, weather and stock market information. There is an overwhelming amount of information at our fingertips. Customized aps have made us a different generation from any before us. However, does our total reliance on the web for fast answers and quick fixes make us a better society? Not always, especially when it comes to caring for our pets.

We recently had a client who arrived with a dog in acute kidney failure that was induced because the client had given the dog Motrin to alleviate the pain caused by hip problems. Even though we referred the dog to a specialist, it died the following day. We also had three cats last year that suffered liver failure because the client used old car engine oil to treat ringworm. Unbelievably the owner read about this bogus “remedy” in an Internet chat room and decided to try it. Liver failure occurred when the cats absorbed the dirty oil via their skin.

We used to hear clients tell us, “My groomer told me or my barber told me that my cat or dog has this or that.” Now we hear, “I read on the Internet that...” When I browse the web for veterinary information, I am astounded by the misinformation that is posted. Even though some of the information that is out there is untested, dangerous and even bizarre, too many people give credence to it. Just because information is posted on the Internet, it is not necessarily true. Anyone with a

computer has the ability to post on the Internet.

Many veterinary practices maintain web sites that offer sound professional information. (Ours is lakeland-animal-clinic.com) So do several veterinary organizations. Pet owners, especially, must learn to distinguish fact from folly. Even if you trust the veracity of the information you find about pet care, it is never a good idea to try to treat your pet without the advice of a veterinarian. The Internet does not know your pet's medical history, contributing conditions and other factors to consider. Something touted as a panacea may, in fact, be toxic for specific species.

Computers cannot replace human interaction with your veterinarian. Only the vet knows your pet and your life style. Having a good relationship with your veterinarian means your pet will not be treated by a computer, but by a caring person with a well-established knowledge of veterinary medicine and a wealth of experience. Pet owners must be savvy Internet users. Your pets have only you to make informed decisions about their care. You and your vet together offer them the best chance to lead long and happy lives.

