

About Pets

Tooth trouble; becoming a vet

By
PETE KEESLING

Q: Our 13-year-old dog, Wilson, has had a swollen cheek for about a week now. He seems fine otherwise, though he isn't eating very well. Today, his eyes are real red and sore. He's old, so I'm afraid he has cancer. But my friend says his dog had a bad tooth and looked the same. Do you think Wilson has cancer? What should I do?

A: It's possible that Wilson has something as serious as cancer, but my bet is that his problem is more simple and treatable. And just like your friend's dog, all of Wilson's symptoms could be related to a bad tooth.

Schedule a visit to his vet. I think that appointment will give you a lot of peace of mind.

Several teeth in the upper jaw are located right below the eye. Their roots extend up to the space around the eye, and if one of those tooth roots becomes infected or abscessed, the eye will become red and inflamed.

Infections such as these are more common in older dogs and usually result from a crack or fissure in one of the teeth. Bacteria from the mouth can penetrate and make its way to the root through this opening.

Besides inflammation of the eye (called conjunctivitis), many patients also show discomfort while eating. Their tooth hurts whenever they chew food, so that even when they're hungry, they eat a little more slowly.

Treatment for this condition is pretty straightforward. Usually, the affected tooth is extracted, but there's also another alternative. A veterinary dental specialist can do a root canal, the same procedure used to treat people with similar problems. It's more expensive, so you'll want to talk to the vet about relative costs. But if Wilson has an abscessed tooth root, either of these treatments



The Fireplace Depot in Hollister has a makeshift living room so you can get a feel for what the fire places would look like in your home.

Turning up the heat

Fireplaces still an option for warming your house

STORY BY MELANIA ZAHARPOULOS STAFF WRITER

PHOTOS BY NICK LOVEJOY STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A log snaps sending a shimmering of sparks skyward, quickly extinguished into ash as they float

up the chimney and into the night. The smell of pine fills the room and the hearth is bathed in a romantic yellow-orange light.

The only thing the lovebirds parked in front of the blaze don't realize is that while they're relaxing by the fire, their chimney is polluting the surrounding landscape with smoke, ash and chemical residuals, all the while sucking the nice, warm air their heater has created for the home right past the bus.

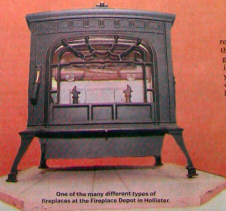
What that means is, not only do most standard fireplaces pollute, they raise heating bills, too. A home's furnace generally heats the

air that comes into the house, seeping around doors and windows, light switches and exhaust fans to be warmed

and retained in the house. Furnaces can be 75 to 96 percent heat efficient, meaning that for every dollar spent on electricity or gas, the homeowner will receive 75 to 96 cents worth of actual heat.

"If you're burning in a regular wood fire-place—the kind with those little glass doors that you find in most living rooms—you're going to get zero or less return on your heat content," said Mac McFarland, owner of The Fireplace Depot and McFarland Air Conditioning in Hollister with

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One of the many different types of fireplaces at the Fireplace Depot in Hollister.

GREATER HOMES OF THE SOUTH VALLEY

Elegance with a view

Editor's Note: This is the first in a new feature called "Elegance with a view," which starts here with a romance.





Steve McFarland shows one of the older styles of fireplaces he has in his store.

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 wife Pat. "If that fireplace is being installed in a new home, the only person who really wins is the developer. It's much less expensive — maybe \$800 — to install an open wood fire place."

The traditional model fireplace is of such concern that many counties are fighting to reach Environmental Protection Agency standards for air quality have banned the installation of open wood fireplaces in new home construction, Santa Clara County among them.

No ban exists in San Benito, which doesn't face as much trouble with air quality since it is considerably more rural. But even in the Hollister area, newer fireplace solutions are helping residents to retain the beauty of a hearth without the high cost of open wood fireplaces.

Gas

Gas powered fireplaces that "burn" realistic, but virtually indestructible cement logs have almost completely taken over the hearth industry, said McFarland, who estimates that nearly 90 percent of his business in today's market comes from the installation of gas fireplaces.

These fireplaces function with high efficiency because they operate on what's called a direct vent system, said Dan Hart, a sales estimator for Tri-County Installation and Fireplace in Santa Cruz, which serves customers from San Francisco to King City.

The way a direct vent works is this: fires need two things — a source of fresh air and an exhaust point. Traditional models have a chimney as their exhaust point and must pull air from the interior of the home to supply their oxygen needs.

Direct vent fireplaces line the interior of the flue and create two separate paths within the contained space. The front of the fireplace is blocked with an airtight panel of glass, forcing the fire to pull air down one tube and release it through the other.

Meanwhile, pure radiant heat emanates from the fireplace into the home.

And since gas fireplaces contain a cer-

trified flame, they don't need a chimney to be installed at all. Instead, gas fireplaces can be vented straight through a side wall, said McFarland.

Model options range from a remote-controlled version that will maintain the temperature of your choice or turn itself on in the morning to a see-through model that has been popular with Hart's clients as a divider between their master bedrooms and adjacent Jacuzzi.

'The biggest drawback to a traditional fireplace is that wood is set on fire, you lose all control.

MAC MCFARLAND,
 THE FIREPLACE DEPOT
 AND MCFARLAND AER
 CONDITIONING

EPA Approved Wood-Burning Stoves

Another fireplace option that many homeowners don't realize they have is the installation of an EPA-certified wood stove. These clean-burning alternatives to standard wood fireplaces will burn one load for an average of 12 hours, and their adjustable oxygen intake valves allow the homeowners to control the intensity of the burn.

Arriving in an endless array of shapes, colors and combinations, from grill racks and stove plates for emergencies to decora-

tive flourishes, these stoves are slighly milder of wood-based renewables, returning more than 70 percent heat efficiency.

"In general, if you use flames in a wood burner, you're wasting energy," said McFarland. "The biggest drawback to a traditional fireplace is that once that wood is set on fire, you lose all control. You're after one long, slow smolder."

Moreover, the stoves don't pollute as much because they engage in what's called a double burn, generating additional heat by burning their own smoke, ash and chemical residue a second time. The resulting exhaust is around the same as that from a single cat.

Heat-N-Glo

The final option for homeowners is to install what's known as an illusion fireplace. Really, there's no fire. It's the play of light on the warmth of the built-in electric heater that looks something like a fire.

Popular in apartments and condominiums, and newly available for installation in high-end RVs, they're today's "instant fireplace."

"This is DisneyLand," said McFarland. "It's smoke and mirrors."

But esthetic concerns aside, adding a fireplace can mean adding value to a home as well, said Peter Gallo of Gallo & Gallo Appraisal in Morgan Hill, though how much depends on the size and quality of the home.

"Usually the highest contributory value that can be given is the actual cost of installation, but fireplaces are still very popular," said Gallo. "Lots of houses have more than one. You start getting into higher quality homes and they may have three or more."

Installation on gas, wood stove and Heat-N-Glo fireplaces ranges between \$1,000 and \$4,000 depending on the size and quality of the unit as well as the choice of extra amenities.

Subsets from \$100 to \$300 are available to Santa Clara County residents through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. For more information, visit www.baaqm.org/management.htm.

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 would be good for me if I want experience handling lots of animals?

A: What a fantastic question! I think it's great that you are considering this profession for your career.

I was 12 years old when I first met a veterinarian at a school career day event. From the moment I heard him talk about his work, I knew I wanted to become a veterinarian.

It is a lot of hard work, all right, and most veterinarians work many more than 40 hours per week. But when you do something for which you carry a passion, the work is enjoyable and the time passes quickly.

I always recommend that young people think about some of the youth activities that are available in the local area. The 4-H club and the FFA (Future Farmers of America) are two fantastic organizations that allow young people to learn how to raise and care for animals.

Each of these organizations teaches proper husbandry and training for many different species, including house pets and farm animals.

Membership in one of these groups can help you in future years when you apply to college and veterinary school.

In addition, there are several local welfare organizations that encourage volunteers to help them.

All of these groups are very special because of the hard work they do for animals. All of them would give you some very good experience learning more about animals.

The Friends of the San Martin Animal Shelter (FOSMAS) work at the county shelter with animals that are placed for adoption.

Because of your age, it's possible that your mother or father might have to attend your work sessions with you for a while, but FOSMAS is a terrific group that provides a lot of crucial help for the animal shelter on Murphy Avenue in San Martin. They have a Web site, www.fosmas.org, that has lots of information on their activities.

Town Cats of Morgan Hill is another group that encourages volunteers to help them. They're a nonprofit, no-kill adoption center that helps place orphaned cats around the area. You can find out more about them on their Web page www.towncats.org.

And finally, we have to mention Fury Friends Pet Assisted Therapy Services. This group's goal is to enhance lives and reopen the closed emotional doors of people with special needs.

This is one of my favorite groups because of the wonderful service they provide. Members take their pets to visit people in hospitals and nursing centers, sharing time with people who have no pets.

The smiles on the faces of these folks is very rewarding. Fury Friends is always looking for volunteers. More information about this wonderful group can be found on their Web site www.furyfriends.org.

When you are a little older, you might want to apply for a job at a veterinary hospital. And if your interest is in wildlife, you can contact the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center (WERC).

They require the volunteers to be at least 16 years of age. Good luck, and follow your dream. Veterinary medicine requires a lot of dedication and work, but it's a very rewarding career.

Petle heading to a veterinarian at San Martin Veterinary Hospital and co-hosts Petcareers, a weekly show about pet health on KTRN in San Jose and a bi-weekly column for South Valley PetManagement. If you have questions about pet care, please email them to Vets_30_E. Third St., Morgan Hill, CA 95037.

National spay/neuter month

February is designated as National Spay/Neuter Month. There are already a number of spay/neuter clinics and cat catchers in your area, and adoption groups are so busy. So if your pet has old "teen" issues, take time to get it spayed or neutered this month. There are spay/neuter clinics that are free or very low cost. Contact your local humane society, animal shelter or rescue group to find the spay/neuter clinic nearest you.

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of times there's this veil of fog that just sort of creeps over the