

# No after hour animal control

By Maureen McGuinness  
**GUILDERLAND** — If the bark is worse than the bite, residents may be told to put up with a stray animal until the morning. The town's animal control unit will only be handling emergency calls after 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and after midnight Friday

through Monday according to Pat House, animal control officer. Callers must communicate to the control unit what the problem is and the severity. The dispatcher will consult with the supervisor on duty and then it will be determined if an animal control officer need be

sent. According to House the dispatcher must follow the "emergency only" rules. According to sergeant Mary Schmitz, the officers are still on call 24 hours a day, but will only respond to emergencies. "If an officer went out every time a raccoon walked down the street they'd never have any time off," Schmitz said.

A stray animal that comes up to the house and poses a threat, or an animal that bites are considered emergencies. If an animal is just roaming around it is not considered an emergency. House said she would like to pick up all of the strays so that they don't get injured or hit by a car, but she can not do that after hours.

"It's not up to us," she said. "We used to go any time any where."

There are many after hour calls House said. It could be because people work during the day so they don't notice the problem, or it could be because the animal is tired and hungry and wants shelter during the evening. House urges residents to call as soon as they notice the problem.

Many residents don't realize that there aren't any veterinarians on duty after 10 p.m. Sick or injured pets must be taken to Latham for attention after that time. House said that may be too long of a drive for an injured or sick animal. She also said that it is expensive to take animals there. In order to prevent this she urges pet owners to keep an eye on their animals during the evening and night, and don't allow them to wander.

# Hot cars no place for pets

By Michele Liberti-Lansing  
**GUILDERLAND** — The kindest act you can perform for your pet this summer is to leave it at home. If not, you may run the risk of losing that pet to heatstroke.

Many people think nothing of going to a shopping mall on a hot summer day and leaving their animal locked in the family station wagon, with the windows partially cracked. They figure they'll only be a few minutes — no problem, right? WRONG, warns veterinarian Dr. Edward Becker of The Animal Hospital on Veeder Road in Guilderland.

On a warm day, the inside of a car can reach 160 degrees in a matter of minutes. With only hot air to breathe, a pet can quickly suffer brain damage or die from heatstroke. Just how warm is "warm?" Becker replies, "There are a lot of variables — the angle of the sun, the amount of insulation in the roof of the car, the size of the car's interior, the color of the car — the sun can heat up the roof of a car quickly, especially if it's a dark color; if it's a bright, sunny day and the car is parked where it can't be cooled by a breeze, it could get excessively hot inside, even with an air temperature in the mid 60s."

"From now, right through the end of September, when the sun is high enough to really warm up a car, pets should not be left in the car," Becker cautions. "Even if you park your car in the shade, with the windows opened — the problem is, the shade doesn't stay shady — and unless you figure that out ahead of time, your pet is in trouble."

He continued, "In the summer you really can't open the windows enough without jeopardizing the pet — if you open them just a crack, you're really not going to get any air movement through the car. Worse yet, I've seen pets in cars with the windows open, but the pet is leashed to the steering wheel — what happens then is, the pet jumps out and hangs himself."

If pet owners choose to ignore this counsel, and passersby happen to notice a pet locked in a hot car, they should immediately contact their local police, humane society or SPCA. It is crucial to recognize the symptoms of heat stress. These include heavy panting, glazed eyes, rapid pulse rate, dizziness, vomiting or a deep red or purple tongue.

Becker explains what happens physiologically to a pet suffering from heat stress (or heatstroke): "Basically, what's happening is that the body temperature is getting too hot. (Normal body temperature for both cats and dogs hovers around 102 degrees, said Becker.) Their physiologic response to that, when the temperature goes either too high or too low, is the nervous system automatically tries to re-adjust it, which is totally involuntary. "Animals don't sweat like we do," Becker explained. "Cats sweat through their feet, dogs use panting — their tongue is used just like a radiator of a car — they shunt a lot of blood through it, and then

blow air back and forth, like your fan does in a car. Cats will pant too, when they're really hot — but they don't use this mechanism as readily as dogs do. So, as the body temperature gets higher and higher, the body tries more aggressively to control it and a point is rapidly reached where the nervous system starts to fail — the brain can't function when it gets too warm."

Becker said the average rectal temperature of an animal in the midst of heatstroke rises from 102 to between 105 and 111 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most cases of heatstroke occur in automobiles, or transporting crates — but the condition can also occur in dogs who are confined by a chain outdoors — in these cases, excitement and exercise associated with animal fights appear to precipitate it. Heatstroke is rare in dogs that run free, Becker related.

According to Becker, cats can apparently tolerate higher temperatures better than dogs — however, heatstroke does occur in cats, though it's not as common. Other factors such as high humidity, an animal's obesity, the age of the dog (the very young and very old are more vulnerable), and the breed of dog (short-nosed breeds like pugs and bulldogs are more susceptible because their nasal passages are not as efficient at cooling) also increase the risk of heatstroke.

Should your pet become overheated, get it into the shade and take these emergency steps: Apply ice packs or cold towels to the head, neck and chest; don't give an unlimited amount of cold water — let the animal lick ice cubes or even ice cream; then get it to a vet immediately. This action could save your pet's life.

Upon arrival at a veterinarian clinic, the doctor will immediately attempt to lower the animal's body temperature. Said Becker, "The chief determinants of whether the animal lives or not, are duration and degree of hyperthermia (how long they were hot, and how hot they were). The most efficient method of lowering the rectal temperature is to submerge the trunk and the limbs in a tub of cold or ice water. We'd then treat the animal for shock with injectable medication — it depends on the case, but we'd give them tranquilizers to counteract the shivering mechanism, steroids to prevent swelling of the brain — and if they're so hot their blood starts to concentrate, we'd give them intravenous fluids (to replace body fluids) — but if the owner can get the body temperature down immediately, at home, they could save the animal's life."

Becker said, in his practice he sees "probably one or two cases a year" of heatstroke. "They (dogs) come in flat out, on their sides, unconscious. I've never seen one walk in." So, when your pet casts you a forlorn look as you're about to leave your home without it this summer, remember, you may be saving its' life.

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## Tragedy...

(Continued from Page 1)

pher's mother, who admitted that he "couldn't stand the sight of blood." Christopher, a senior at VCHS, was the first person to arrive at the scene of the stricken boy during the entire incident and holding his head in his lap. Christopher, enroute to the village park for a game of basketball, spotted "something" lying on the railroad tracks in back of the park, discovered it was a body, and then heard the screams of several children playing nearby.

His mother recounts what happened next: "Christopher went over to him and saw his ankle was just hanging off...the leg was mutilated from the knee down. He then put the boy's head on his lap — not having any first aid training, he stayed with the boy. He then saw a lady running down the tracks — she was a member, it was discovered, of the Voorheesville Rescue Squad — she lived nearby and heard the kids screaming.

"The boy was holding on to Chris's hand. The woman from the rescue squad put the tourniquet on his leg. Chris said they sat there for what seemed like 10 or 15 minutes, although it probably wasn't that long. He said the boy was conscious and talking, and kept repeating, 'Get my mother.'"

Despite fearing that another train might come along, the rescuers remained on the tracks the entire time, because they were unable to move Bellanger. Domermuth arrived shortly after Connell and tore off his shirt to wrap around the boy's leg, in an attempt to stop the bleeding. Meanwhile, youths in the area ran for help, said Mrs. Connell, who said her son later returned home, "white-faced and shaken," from the event.

## Resignation...

(Continued from Page 1)

The staff and volunteer EMS personnel were fantastic to work with and the town's program is one of the best in the area.

The EMS council is currently conducting a search to find a replacement. The EMS coordinator oversees the program and coordinates schedules, works with the fire departments, first responders, and civilian paramedics. The person would also coordinate training sessions. Moss said he hopes to have the council's recommen-

dations by July.

The town also has four paid part time paramedics, and approximately 15 volunteers.

The town has experienced a high turnover rate in the police paramedic program. Four paramedics resigned between May 1989 and March 1990. Moss said that this has been frustrating since the town has invested in training the police paramedics and loses them as soon as they are finished with school. Moss said that there is no legal action the town can take to prevent this from happening.