What you need to know about keeping your family, including your pets, safe from Rabies

The recent outbreak of rabies in South Africa has brought to light how terrible this disease is and how as pet parents we need to be vigilant to keep our families safe.

Rabies is a 100% preventable disease yet 55,000 people around the world die every year from the disease. Several major health organisations, including World Health Organization (WHO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), have pledged to eliminate human deaths from dog-transmitted rabies by 2030. As pet parents the first step we can take in helping to make this happen is to vaccinate our pets. Cats and dogs should be vaccinated against rabies at 3 months and then receive a booster 1 month later. Thereafter they should receive the vaccination annually, unless your vet advises differently. In South Africa it is law that pets are vaccinated against rabies and as a pet parent it is your responsibility to ensure this happens.

However, in many cases the real danger is in stray or feral pets and sadly it’s our children who are most at risk.

Rabies is transmitted most often by being bitten or scratched by an infected animal, however in rare cases it can even come from being licked by an infected animal. If you suspect that you have been infected, you should immediately flush and wash the wound for a minimum of 15 minutes with warm water and disinfectant, thereafter seek immediate medical attention. Advise the doctor of your suspicion, as they will not only notify the relevant authorities but will also administer the correct treatment protocol. Unfortunately if you wait to get medical attention and the rabies symptoms set in the disease will be fatal.

Dr. Guy Fyvie, Nutritional Advisor at Hill's Pet Nutrition, South Africa provides some tips on how to stay safe during a rabies outbreak:

1. **Children under the age of 15 make-up 40% of the reported cases of being bitten by a suspected rabies infected animal, it is important to warn your children of the risks of interacting with strays and pets that are not theirs.**
2. **Don't ever take the chance. If bitten or scratched assume the worst and follow the treatment protocol. There is simply nothing that can be done once the symptoms present themselves,**
3. **Ensure your pets rabies vaccinations are up to date and if you are in an immediate outbreak area have your pet revaccinated. If you can't provide proof of a pet's vaccination status, they may be euthanized if they come into contact with an infected animal, regardless of whether they are showing symptoms.**
4. **Do not let your pets roam the streets. This should be applied at all times.**
5. **Do not let your pets interact with unknown animals — an animal can become infected by fighting with another animal, even over a fence.**
6. **Do not approach stray dogs or cats (or wild animals), especially if they are showing abnormal behaviour such as being aggressive or very docile.**

If you suspect an animal is infected contact the health authorities immediately. Do not try to restrain the animal yourself.

Please contact us should you not be sure when your pets were last vaccinated.

"As pet parents we should all be doing our part in helping to raise awareness and reduce rabies fatalities in South Africa," concludes Dr Fyvie.

This article can be found at www.hillstransforminglives.co.za
Whilst their love and loyalty doesn’t age, our pets certainly do, and often quicker than some pet parents realise. Cats and dogs are considered ‘seniors’ by seven years of age, and even as young as five for large breed dogs, like Labradors. And whilst ageing isn’t a disease, older pets are at higher risk of heart disease, cancer, arthritis, kidney and liver disease.

You may believe your seven-year-old cat or dog is in its prime. However, on the inside, the picture can be quite different. Many conditions simply aren’t evident before irreversible damage has occurred. This is why a senior health screening is vitally important. An annual heath check at the vet is equivalent to you seeing the doctor about once in seven years!

Ask your vet about the IDEXX SDMA, an affordable new test that can detect kidney disease in cats up to four years earlier than before and up to two years earlier in dogs. Kidney disease is known as the silent killer because symptoms rarely show before it’s too late. Since the new test became available globally last year more than 350,000 pets have been diagnosed with kidney disease that traditional tests would have missed. Early detection allows for prompt intervention which can extend life and improve the quality of those years.

With age, the optimal range for different nutrients becomes narrower, making it easier to tip into dietary deficiencies or excesses. Several small meals a day may be easier on an older pet’s digestion. But avoid overfeeding – obesity can lead to numerous health problems and can shorten a pet’s life.

Have fresh water available at all times – older pets’ are less able to regulate water balance and more prone to dehydration. Ensure food and water bowls are within easy reach of the elderly pet that may find it painful to bend, stretch or jump.

Go for walks and play together. Appropriate exercise will help you both stay fit and also keep the brain active, helping to avoid ‘doggy Alzheimer’s’.

So should your best friend be reaching that senior stage, it’s time for a visit to the vet and to make the seven-year-switch to the right food.

Tell Tail Signs of Ageing

Age-related changes start small and may seem insignificant. It may be as simple as a few grey hairs or being less excited about playtime or walks. Other ‘tell tail’ signs of ageing include:

1. Sleeping longer or changes in sleep patterns.
2. Stiffness, limping or difficulty rising from rest.
3. Drinking more than usual.
4. Increased urination or ‘accidents’.
5. Weight loss or gain.
6. Changes in behaviour
7. A duller coat, lumps or bumps
8. Coughing, panting more, or shortness of breath.
9. Appearing confused or disorientated.
10. Bad breath, red and swollen gums, difficulty chewing or changes in eating habits.

NB: Many changes will not be evident on the outside! A senior health check is vital.

Ways you can assist your senior pet

1. Most importantly, go to the vet for a senior health check.
2. Switch to a food specifically formulated for senior pets.
3. Have clean water easily available at all times and monitor water intake.
4. Try to make your home more comfortable e.g. easy access to a warm bed, litter tray, food and water bowls; non-slippery floor surfaces; using ramps or steps as needed.
5. Regular grooming including brushing the teeth and trimming the nails as needed.
6. Consistent, gentle exercise and play is good for mind and body.
7. Lavish love and attention.

Hills Science Plan Prescription has a range of Pet Nutrition to suit your elderly pet’s needs.

Hills J/D – proven to improve joint health.
Hills J/D Reduced – to assist with weight loss as well as improve joint health.
Hills K/D - clinical nutrition to support your dog’s kidney health.
Hills K/D & Mobility - This clinical nutrition not only supports your dog’s kidney function, but also helps to improve his mobility and increase his cognitive alertness and vitality.
Hills Mobility – proven to improve mobility in as little as 21 days.
Hills Metabolic – proven to reduce body weight by 13% in 60 days.
Hills Metabolic & Mobility – Best of both. Proven to improve mobility and reduce body weight as mentioned above.

Make an appointment with your vet to discuss your senior pet’s health and to ensure that he/she is on the best food suitable for their need.
We have discussed “Golden Oldies” and the prescription foods available. Should your pet not require a specific prescription food, Hill’s Science Plan Youthful Vitality is the next option to feed your “Golden Oldie” as it provides precisely balanced nutrition to fight the signs of aging in an Adult 7+ pet.

Complete Nutrition for:
- Vitality & Brain Support
- Energy & Interacting
- Luxurious Coat

**Key Benefits**
Clinically proven nutrition that can transform your pet’s life.
Hill’s® Science Diet® Youthful Vitality Dog food provides precisely balanced nutrition to fight the signs of aging in an Adult 7+ dog.

**Complete Nutrition for:**
- Vitality & Brain Support
- Energy & Interacting
- Luxurious Coat

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
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<th>How It Works</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Function</td>
<td>Antioxidants</td>
<td>Powerful antioxidants for a healthy brain to support desire in family interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy and Vitality</td>
<td>Protein, phytonutrients and L-carnitine</td>
<td>Protein, phytonutrients and L-carnitine to support the ability to get moving, activity and interest in playing</td>
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<td>Healthy Immune System</td>
<td>Vitamins C &amp; E</td>
<td>Vitamins C &amp; E help bolster a strong immune system</td>
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<td>Healthy Digestive System</td>
<td>High-quality ingredients</td>
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<td>Luxurious Coat</td>
<td>Omega 3 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Essential fatty acids promote a hair coat with increased shininess &amp; softness</td>
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Great tasting natural nutrition for a long, happy life. With a wagging tail and licks on your face, no one can say hello like your dog. Because every moment you spend together is special, we strive to give you more time with them. With natural ingredients and the right nutrients, Hill’s Science Diet is precisely prepared to offer your pet the nutrition he needs for lifelong health and happiness.

Hill’s makes every bag of their dry food in their own US facilities with high quality US and imported ingredients. These ingredients must meet the strict requirements for purity and nutrient content, which exceed industry standards.

You can make a difference in the lives of shelter pets. With every purchase of Science Diet you help feed over 100,000 homeless pets every day, 365 days a year.

Learn more at hillsfoodshelterlove.com.

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**PAWSITIVE PUPPY SCHOOL**
Dogs are social creatures. Your puppy needs interaction with you, other people and other animals, beginning very early in life.

Proper socialization will engage all of your puppy’s senses through exposure to the sights, sounds and smells of day-to-day life. This exposure will desensitize and condition your pup so that he develops a comfort level with different and new situations. Socialization also helps you train your young dog to handle new experiences and challenges with acceptable, appropriate behaviour.

An unsocialized dog is unlikely to cope well with changes in his environment or situation, making him difficult to handle for his owner, veterinarian, groomer, pet sitter and any visitors to the dog’s home. If your puppy isn’t properly socialized, he can develop permanently ingrained fear responses and generalized anxiety. Almost half of all dogs turned in to shelters have at least one behaviour problem - aggression and destructiveness are among the most common. Both of these behaviours can be caused by the fear and anxiety that develops from improper or incomplete socialization.

Make socializing your puppy a positive experience. Start socializing your pup from his first day home with you, but take it slow. Don’t hurry or force his progress and don’t try to do too much at once. Puppies tire quickly, so keep his socialization sessions frequent but relatively brief and always positive. When your puppy shows hesitance or fear -- and most puppies will as they attempt to adjust to a big, noisy world -- do not reward his fearful behaviour with a lot of attention and affection. Stay close by to reassure him he’s safe, but remember that your puppy views your attention and affection as a reward for a particular behaviour. Rewarding his fearful behaviour can encourage his fearfulness.

Socializing your puppy should be an enjoyable, satisfying experience for both of you -- one that will pay dividends for the rest of your life together as pet and owner.

For more information on our Puppy Classes contact Nikki de Freitas 0837022887
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