

PET WELLNESS

SASKATOON
STARPHOENIX

MAY 2021



Cats in the great outdoors?
Consider a Catio.

Heading back to the office soon?
Here's how to help your pet deal with anxiety separation. p. 15



LICENSING PROVIDES PEACE OF MIND!

If your pet ever escapes, a valid pet license provides identification, safe shelter and direct return home.

Purchase or renew your pet license online at saskatoon.ca/petlicensing or visit one of our pet license vendors.

VENDORS

Acadia Veterinary Clinic
#4 - 3421 8th Street East

Arlington Animal Hospital
3010 B Arlington Avenue

City Hall
222 3rd Avenue North

Critters
2 - 202 Primrose Avenue
3 - 406 Ludlow Street East
90 - 220 Betts Avenue
112 - 110 Ruth Street East
Bay F - 411 Herold Court

Cumberland Veterinary Clinic
#20 - 1010 Taylor Street East

Early's Farm & Garden Centre
502 51st Street East
2615 Lorne Avenue

Erindale Animal Hospital
#11 - 410 Ludlow Street

Forest Grove Veterinary Clinic
#8 - 415 115th Street East

Lawson Heights Animal Hospital
#120 - 227 Primrose Drive

Pet-I-Coat Junction & Barkery
110 Wedge Road, Unit 6

Pet Planet
40 - 1519 8th Street

Saskatoon Animal Control Agency
1925 Avenue B North

Saskatoon SPCA
5028 Clarence Avenue South

Stonebridge Veterinary Hospital
#5 - 215 Stonebridge Boulevard

Wilson's Lifestyle Centre
303 Owen Manor

PET LICENSING FEES

DOG

Spayed/Neutered	\$30
Not Spayed or Neutered	\$60
Juvenile (Under 1 Year)	\$30
Replacement Tag	\$10

CAT

Spayed/Neutered	\$18
Not Spayed or Neutered	\$40
Juvenile (Under 1 Year)	\$18
Replacement Tag	\$10



DOG DAY OF SUMMER

FREE END OF SEASON
LICENSED POOCH SWIM

MAYFAIR POOL
1025 AVE F NORTH

For updates please visit
saskatoon.ca/dogdayofsummer



PET WELLNESS



EDITOR
WRITERS

Jeannie Armstrong
Jenny Gabruch
Jennifer Jacoby-Smith
Elizabeth Ireland
Hilary Klassen
Andrew Livingstone
Wendy Livingstone
Paul Sinkewicz
Corrie Sherwin

DESIGNER

To advertise in the next edition of Pet Wellness, contact Shellie Nordick at The StarPhoenix. Tel: (306) 657-6347; email: snordick@postmedia.com.

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**Pets can't ADD
but they do MULTIPLY**

**Fix your critter to prevent
an unwanted litter.**





The City of Saskatoon has a variety of off-leash dog parks for dog owners and their four-legged friends to enjoy. Whether you've got a big dog that needs to run off energy or a small dog that just wants some fresh air and to socialize with other pups, there is a dog park to suit your needs. (PHOTOS: CITY OF SASKATOON)

Which off-leash park is the *perfect fit* for your dog?

BY JENNIFER JACOBY-SMITH

The City of Saskatoon has established 11 off-leash dog parks for you to enjoy with your four-legged buddy. In 2019, the City of Saskatoon estimates over 300,000 people visited an off-leash area. The parks are an important way for dogs to get exercise and socialize with other dogs and people.

These parks vary in size, terrain, features, and location. Some are small and very urban, such as the Caswell dog park by Mayfair Pool, which is less than an acre in size. Others are sprawling, such as the Sutherland dog park or Chief Whitecap, with acres of space beside the river for dogs to run and play in a natural environment.

Choosing a dog park to visit may depend on how much time you have for recreation, how crowded the space is, what experience you want for your dog, and even your dog's personality.

While the City of Saskatoon has

not designated any park as being for large dogs or small dogs, Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager/Open Space Programming and Development with the City of Saskatoon, says the smaller urban parks are ideal for a quick burst of activity.

"If I'm in the neighbourhood and I'm walking by the dog park and see there's no one in there, I might let my dog go in there, run around, get a lot of the energy out. And then we continue on-leash on our walk around the neighbourhood," says Babyak.

Meanwhile, larger parks with lots of naturalization offer a completely different experience.

"Then we go to one of our rural parks—whether it's Hampton or South West or Chief Whitecap—and you go in there for an hour or a couple of hours or a morning or afternoon. It's naturalized. It's a larger space. The dogs can run and explore," says

Babyak.

Some dogs will naturally do better at a larger park that is less crowded, according to Margot de la Gorgendiere, a dog park ambassador.

"It's important to choose a dog park that fits your dog's personality because the dog park is a shared space and we want all the park users to get along in order to avoid dangerous interactions," she says. "For instance, if a dog is possessive of his ball, that dog might not do well in a smaller, more crowded park. In that case, it might be best to leave toys at home."

De la Gorgendiere is a frequent user of the Paul Mostoway dog park. The park is located on the west side of the city east of McClocklin Road.

"The best thing about the Paul Mostoway dog park is that it is practically across the street from me. My dog and I watched the

work being done as we passed by on our daily walk. We were there on the day it opened and visited it almost every day of the rest of her life," says de la Gorgendiere.

"I love how they kept the trees that were already there and that they did not level the terrain. It is nice following the paths and observing the birds while out with your dog. I like how it is completely enclosed by a fence."

De la Gorgendiere also visits other parks with her dogs depending on the time available. She says, "The large ones like Chief Whitecap, Sutherland, the South West Park are great for burning off energy in an active dog."

No matter which park you choose for recreation with your dog there are a couple of very important things to remember to make the experience enjoyable for everyone.

"We expect that all dog owners have control of their dogs at all times," says Babyak. "Some even in the dog park will put their dog on a leash while they're passing other dogs, just to ensure that they're under control."

Also, when visiting any City of Saskatoon off-leash area, it's important to be a responsible pet owner and clean up after your dog. It might also be a good idea to pick up your dog's poo and at least one other land mine to keep the parks clean for everyone to use.

"Saskatoon is really fortunate that we have a wide range of dog parks. I've seen some urban centres with dog parks and they're the size of a tennis court," says Babyak. "(Here) there's not a lack of space that's for sure."

To see a map of off-leash dog parks in Saskatoon see page 6 in this guide. Or visit saskatoon.ca/dogparks.



Margot De la Gorgendiere, husband Jim McDonald, and pup Caffrey have enjoyed the benefits of exercise, fresh air, and socializing with other dogs and pet owners at Paul Mostoway dog park on the west side. (SUPPLIED PHOTO)

PLAY NICE!

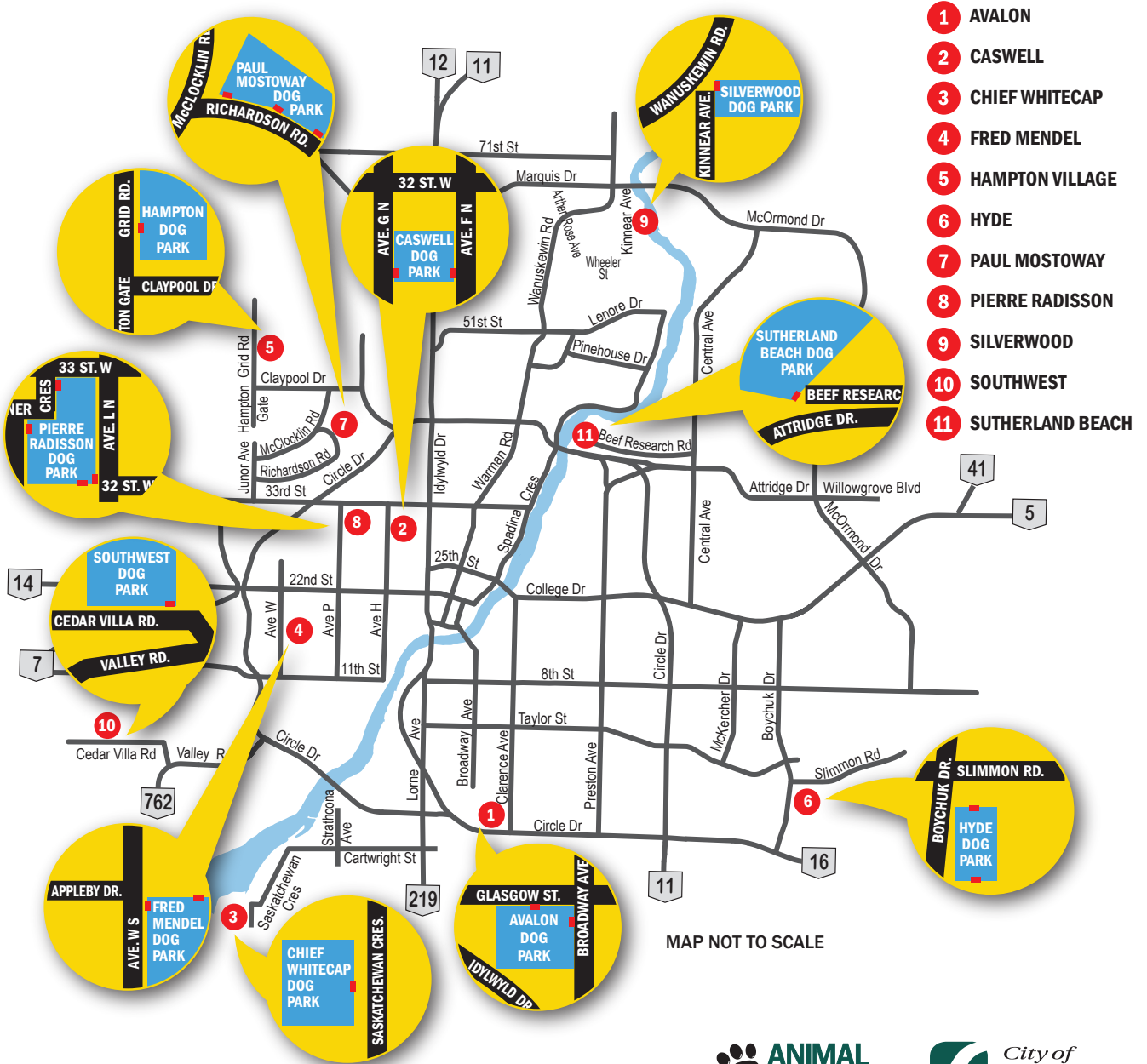
Dog parks are a great place for socialization and exercise. Ensure you and your dog are ready for the off-leash experience. Your dog should know and obey basic commands of come, sit and stay before visiting a dog park. Consider taking obedience classes or hiring a qualified dog trainer.



DOG PARKS

All dogs must have a current pet license to access the dog parks.

For more information on Dog Park openings & closures, visit saskatoon.ca/dogparks.



MAP NOT TO SCALE



DOG PARK ETIQUETTE

- Your pet license is like an all-access pass to Saskatoon’s Dog Parks. Only licensed dogs are invited to play!
- Be a good buddy and interact with your dog, keeping him or her within sight at all times. Off-leash doesn’t mean unattended.
- Scoop your dog’s poop. Bring a few extra baggies, just in case.
- Play nice! Your dog should know and obey basic commands of come, sit and stay before visiting a Dog Park.
- If you take a toy to the park, expect other dogs to play with it. Better yet, leave the toys at home.
- Is your dog hot to trot? The mere presence of a female dog in heat can cause a frenzy among potential four-legged Romeos. It’s best to have your dog spayed or neutered before planning a Dog Park visit.
- If you have concerns about the behaviour of a dog or its owner while at the park, contact the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency at 306-385-PETS (7387).
- Have fun! When dogs and owners play by the rules, everyone has a good time!

Pandemic pet?

More people experience the joy of responsible pet ownership

BY JEANNIE ARMSTRONG

For many Canadians, pets have made pandemic life more enjoyable. In fact, according to an online survey conducted in November 2020 by Narrative Research, 18 per cent of Canadians said they had obtained a pet since the pandemic started.

Over one-half of Canadians currently have a pet in their household, with cats and dogs essentially tied in popularity.

To ensure the health and happiness of your pet, it's vital to be a responsible owner. The Animal Services web pages developed by the City of Saskatoon are a great resource for all pet owners—new or long-time. All you have to do is go to Saskatoon.ca, click on “Services for Residents” and click again on “Pet Licensing & Animal Services.” You can also go to the quick link at Saskatoon.ca/animalservices.

BENEFITS OF LICENSING YOUR PET

“Not everyone realizes that in Saskatoon you need to purchase a pet license for a dog or a cat and that the license needs to be renewed annually,” says Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager/Open Space Programming and Development with the City of Saskatoon.

All dogs and cats over the age of four months require a valid pet license, explains Babyak. Good news for pet owners is that

there has been no increase in the price of a pet license for 2021. The annual license fee for a spayed/neutered dog is \$30. If the dog has not been spayed or neutered, the annual license fee is \$60. A license for a spayed/neutered cat is \$18; a license for an unaltered cat is \$40.

“That’s less than buying a cup of coffee once a month,” says Babyak. In comparison, the base fine for not licensing your dog or cat is \$250.

Pet licensing helps identify your dog or cat if it is at large, contributing to the pet’s safe return home.

“Some people have the misconception that if your pet is microchipped you don’t need to obtain a pet license. That’s a myth. Microchips are not licenses. The good news is that you can go online and link the microchip to the dog’s or cat’s pet license,” says Babyak.

“Officers with the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency are equipped with scanners, so when they find a lost cat or dog, they can scan the microchip and obtain the information from the pet license. It could be that the animal has lost its license tag, so being able to scan the microchip is a benefit. The more quickly we can identify the pet, the more quickly the pet can be returned to its owner.”

Pet owners who license their dog or cat enjoy another benefit: the Pet-At-Large



The City of Saskatoon requires that all dogs and cats over the age of four months have a valid pet license.

(PHOTO: CITY OF SASKATOON)

(PAL) Perk, which is like a “get out of jail free” provision redeemable once during the pet’s lifetime. “Every pet at some point may make a dash out the front door or leave the yard through an open gate. The fine for a dog or cat caught running at large starts at \$100. With the PAL Perk, maybe you don’t have to pay that fine or the impound fee.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

PET LICENSING

What your license pays for:

- Bylaw enforcement
- Pound services
- City-wide pet events
- Subsidized Spay and Neuter Program (SSNP)
- Dog park programming and development



There are several convenient ways to purchase a pet license for your dog or cat. About half of all pet owners purchase their pet licenses online at saskatoon.ca/petlicensing. “We’ve upgraded our software to make the pet license process more customer friendly,” says Babyak. “It’s now easier to access the site through your laptop or mobile device.” Renewing your pet’s license annually is also convenient; just search by last name, license tag number or microchip number.

Pet licenses can also be purchased in person at City Hall, or at one of 17 pet license vendors located across Saskatoon. (See page 2 for a complete list of pet license vendors.)

A BETTER DOG PARK EXPERIENCE

Are you and your dog are feeling cooped up after spending so much time at home? Fun and exercise await at the City of Saskatoon’s 11 off-leash dog parks.

To visit a dog park, your dog must have a valid pet license from the City of Saskatoon. Owners must accompany their dogs, observe them and keep them under control at all times. Cleaning up after your dog is a must!

Several of the City’s off-leash parks were upgraded in 2020, says Babyak. “We completed our upgrades to the Hampton dog park, located north of Hampton Village. We expanded the parking lot, installed information kiosks, formalized some of the trails within the area, improved some of the fencing and added more garbage receptacle cans,” says Babyak.

To make the dog park experience more enjoyable for everyone, two amendments were made to the Animal Control Bylaws relating to off-leash parks. “One of the bylaw changes that came into effect midway in 2020 is that now the maximum number of dogs a person can take into our off-leash areas is four,” says Babyak.

An exception has been made for commercial dog walkers who routinely walk more than four dogs at the same time. “We came up with a commercial dog walking permit program. The permit allows a qualified dog walker to exercise between five to eight dogs at the same time. This is only allowed in certain dog parks, because of the size and space of the area: Chief Whitecap, Hampton, Southwest and Sutherland Beach.” All dogs must have a valid City of Saskatoon-issued license.

To qualify for a commercial dog walking permit, an application form must be completed and reviewed. An officer from the Saskatoon

Animal Control Agency will then meet with the dog walker and conduct a ‘road test’ in one of the dog parks. “If they meet all of the criteria during the walk-through, then the permit will be issued,” says Babyak.

“The other bylaw amendment states that if an individual receives three or more nuisance behaviour violations at the dog parks, they’re no longer permitted to utilize them,” says Babyak.

Nuisance behaviours include not being able to control your dog with sight or voice commands; behaviours that could injure another animal or person in the park; chasing, threatening or biting another person or animal; excessive barking or howling; and causing damage to property.

“It’s the responsibility of the pet owner to ensure that they control and leash their dog and remove it from that situation to prevent the behaviour from continuing,” says Babyak.

The bylaw amendments were made as a result of a customer satisfaction survey conducted by the City of Saskatoon. “We talked to people who use the dog parks, as well as those who don’t. The survey revealed that safety and the behaviours of people’s dogs were concerns. We want to ensure that everyone using the dog park has a good experience,” says Babyak.

Health protocols are in place at all 11 dog parks due to the pandemic. “We encourage people to maintain physical distance (two metres) and to wear masks where appropriate, on narrow pathways, for example. We’ve put some additional signage up to encourage

people to be respectful of those protocols,” says Babyak.

He also reminds users that the parking lot adjacent to each dog park is not an off-leash area. “For safety reasons, we encourage everyone to keep their dogs on leashes when leaving their vehicles and entering the dog park, and when they’re exiting the dog park to go back to their vehicles,” says Babyak. Not leashing your animal between the dog park entrance and your vehicle could result in a \$100 ticket for allowing your dog to be at large.

OUTDOOR PLAY FOR CATS

Cats also like to enjoy the great outdoors, but it’s important to keep your kitty safe and not let it run at large. Potential hazards include becoming lost, exposure to disease and toxins, and injuries caused by traffic or other animals.

If you want your cat to take in the fresh air and experience the stimulation of the outdoors, consider teaching your cat to walk with a harness and leash, or invest in a “catio” (cat patio). CatiOS can be purchased at local pet stores or online. Many websites also offer DIY instructions on how to build your own catio.

Remember, when a cat is off private property, they must be on a leash no more than two metres in length and under proper control or in a kennel. Letting your cat run at large could result in a \$100 ticket under the Animal Control Bylaws.

JOIN THE PARTY!

Your dog’s pet license is an invitation to the City of Saskatoon’s annual pooch pool party.



The annual Dog Day of Summer pool party is open to well-socialized dogs with a valid license and up-to-date vaccinations. (PHOTO: CITY OF SASKATOON)

The Dog Day of Summer event takes place at Mayfair Pool. The tentative date set for 2021 is Wednesday, August 25.

The event is open to well-socialized dogs with a valid license and up-to-date vaccinations. Pre-registration is required, as the number of dogs allowed in the pool at any one time is limited. Different sessions are offered, from mid-day to early evening.

“Last year’s Dog Day of Summer event was cancelled because of COVID, but we’re hopeful it will go forward this summer,” says Babyak.

SUBSIDIZED SPAY & NEUTER PROGRAM

Pet license fees help to support the City of Saskatoon’s Subsidized Spay and Neuter program. This program assists low-income pet owners who might not otherwise be able to afford to have their pet neutered or spayed. “So far in 2021, we’ve received about 145 applications,” says Babyak. “About three-

quarters of those applications are from cat owners. That’s a good thing, because the cat overpopulation in Saskatoon is quite challenging.”

WATCH OUT FOR WILDLIFE

Wildlife sightings are not uncommon in Saskatoon, especially in or near the city’s scenic river valley. “The animals that we can see tend to be coyotes, skunks, foxes, moose, deer, porcupines, beavers, muskrats and other species,” says Babyak.

The City of Saskatoon’s Animal Services website offers helpful information on living with urban wildlife, including detailed descriptions of common species, their behaviour and diet and what to do if you have a wildlife encounter.

For example, if you see a badger, take the opportunity to admire it from a safe distance. Never approach or feed it. Identify and maintain escape routes to allow the animal to retreat to its burrow. If the



Pet licensing helps identify your dog or cat if it is at large, contributing to the pet’s safe return home. (PHOTO: CITY OF SASKATOON)

badger is injured, trapped or diseased, call Urban Biological Services at 306-975-3300.

“And if you see larger wildlife—moose, deer, bears—we encourage people to call the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment. We have links for all those as well on the website,” says Babyak. More information on “Who to Call” when you see urban wildlife, is listed on page 23 of this guide.



Recently relocated to a bigger facility, our team is dedicated to providing high-quality care to the pets and people of our community.

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!



IT’S YOUR “DOODY”!

The nice spring weather is enticing everyone to get out and enjoy Saskatoon’s beautiful neighbourhood parks and walking paths—including dog owners.

The City of Saskatoon reminds pet owners that it’s their responsibility to clean up after their dog when going for a walk. Failure to do so could result in a ticket being issued by a Saskatoon Animal Control Agency officer. The minimum fine for each offense is \$100, under the City of Saskatoon’s Animal Control Bylaw.

“With the pandemic, more people are looking for opportunities to get

outdoors—and are making use of our neighbourhood parks and walking trails. Dog droppings aren’t something you want to come across or step in. That’s especially true if you have young children with you. They’re not likely to be paying attention to that,” says Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager/Open Space Programming and Development with the City of Saskatoon.

“We’re encouraging dog owners to ‘scoop the poop—and one more’ to help keep our outdoor spaces looking their best,” says Babyak.

“We are also encouraging

people—if they see individuals who are not being responsible pet owners, to contact the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency, if they can identify the person or animal. Based on those reports, SACA can patrol that area more often.”

For more information, go to Saskatoon.ca/animalservices.



1010 Taylor St E
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7H 1W5

info@cumberlandvetclinic.ca

306.373.3500



Local Pet Events



Pets in the Park

Kiwanis Memorial Park North
Fundraiser benefiting the SPCA, SCAT Street
Cat Rescue and New Hope Dog Rescue.

petsinthepark.ca

Night to Howl

Saskatoon SPCA Fundraiser
Walk, bike or run with friends and
family. Humans and canines welcome.

saskatoonspca.com



Dog Day of Summer

Mayfair Outdoor Pool
FREE end of season licensed
pooch swim. Registration required

saskatoon.ca/dogdayofsummer

Scoop the Poop

Various dates throughout City of Saskatoon
Dog Parks. Help keep our dog parks beautiful.

saskatoon.ca/dogparks



Saskatchewan Pet Expo

Fun and educational
event about pets.

facebook.com/saskatchewanpetexpo



Canine massage therapy: an important step towards your pet's well-being

It's begun. You've made the decision to get a puppy or adopt a dog and now you have a lifetime of important decisions to make.

A dog's well-being starts the minute they are born. Suddenly you're immersed in a furry world that includes weaning, vaccinating, feeding, training, grooming and dispensing lots of love. (Oh and picking up poop, too!)

Pet wellness occurs on many levels, but there is one form of therapy that could literally last a lifetime for your pup. *Canine massage* is a form of alternative therapy that boasts a long list of benefits like relaxation, increased oxygenation, relief from pain, improved joint flexibility, as well as potential improvement to the immune

system. Canine massage sessions use touch to maintain or improve your dog's physical and emotional well-being.

This massage therapy can also augment the normal flow of blood and lymphatic fluid to the rest of the body for optimal health. So, if you know your dog has problems with its joints, you will see the animal adjust his weight to ease the strain. Massage will help to restore balance in movement and comfort.

Massage is good for every stage of a pet's development:

- For puppies. Massage provides calming measures for the little ones, ensuring they are developing proper gait as their bones and muscles develop;
- For all ages. Massage helps

keep muscle fibres lean and healthy while releasing toxins that may be building up in the body. Massage maintains overall health as well as helps improve circulation issues;

- And senior dogs, too. As your dog ages, they become less active, which can lead to stiffness and aches and pains. Regular massage keeps the muscles active and supporting the body.

Find out more about canine massage therapy at Furbaby Pet Care.

Jocelyn Davey Hawreliuk is the owner of Furbaby Pet Care in Saskatoon. Among her many credentials, she is a Certified Canine Massage Therapist (CCMT), as well as a Certified PetTech™ Pet First Aid, CPR &

Pet Saver Instructor.

Furbaby Pet Care is an indoor/outdoor 24/7 pet care facility in Saskatoon's Stonebridge area offering pet daycare, boarding, training, grooming, mobile pet-sitting and dog walking, pet massage, pet transport and more.



Canine massage could provide a long list of benefits for your new pup at every stage of life.

(SUPPLIED)

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(Left to right) Eva with her horse Sky; Romeo with his dog Noah; Jasmine and her horse Music. (SUPPLIED)

SACA could be your dog or cat's best friend

BY JEANNIE ARMSTRONG

When portrayed in the movies, animal control officers get a bad rap. They're often cast as the villains of the story.

In real life, the exact opposite is true. Saskatoon Animal Control Agency (SACA) team members are actually animal heroes. Every day, they rescue dogs and cats that are running at large. The animals are often confused, afraid, injured, cold or suffering from hunger and thirst.

The Saskatoon Animal Control Agency is contracted by the City of Saskatoon to enforce the Animal Control Bylaw and the Dangerous Animal Bylaw,

and to provide animal control services. Pound services are provided by the Saskatoon SPCA. These services are supported through the revenues collected through the issuing of dog and cat licenses by the City of Saskatoon.

HAPPY ENDINGS

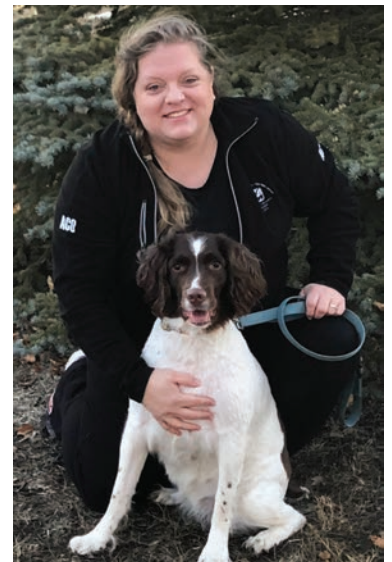
In 2019, SACA reunited 381 animals with their owners. The pets were able to be identified because their caring owners purchased an annual pet license from the City of Saskatoon.

Eva Alexandrovici, SACA president, says that the number of animals identified

through their microchips has also increased. "In 2005, we identified 71 microchipped animals. In 2019, the number increased to 279, so that's a positive change."

A microchip scan helped Alexandrovici return one cat, missing for over a year, to its owner. "It was pretty obvious that cat had just been sleeping on the streets and was in pretty bad shape. The owner was so happy to get her cat back, she was in tears," she says.

"A big part of our job is to issue tickets under the Animal Control bylaws, and believe it or not, none of us like to issue



Heather and her dog Pickles. (SUPPLIED)

tickets. It's not the best part of the job, but it is an important part of bylaw enforcement. So when we get to make somebody happy by reuniting them with their pet, it makes the day that much better."

Another way that Alexandrovici

**Pets like to ROAM.
A license gets them HOME.**

Annual pet licenses as low as \$18/year.
saskatoon.ca/petlicensing



and her staff offer assistance is by helping to mediate problems between pet owners and their neighbours. “There may be a dispute between neighbours, over a barking dog or an animal at large on the neighbour’s property. Often we are able to step in and mediate the problem,” says Alexandrovici. “Enforcement isn’t always the answer; a lot of it is education.”

Alexandrovici suggests that individuals who are upset by their neighbour’s barking dog begin by having a conversation with the pet owner, who might not even be aware that their dog is barking excessively.

If it’s not feasible to have that conversation, the SACA team can take the complaint over the phone and provide the resident with a questionnaire and a “bark log” to document the barking incidences.

SACA staff members will then go to see the dog’s owner and provide educational material to help the owner reduce the nuisance barking. Alexandrovici says, “We will do a follow-up on the complaint, talk to the owner of the offending animal, then talk to the complainant again. Sometimes the problem can be resolved just by having a conversation.”

A HISTORY OF CARING

A lifelong animal lover, Alexandrovici began her career in 1999 working at the Saskatoon SPCA. She performed many roles there, including animal care, arranging for adoptions, and working as an animal protection officer.

In 2004, policy changes resulted in animal control services being contracted by the City of Saskatoon to an outside agency. Alexandrovici, with a business partner, bid on the contract and she established the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency. “Heather Ens, who also worked at the SPCA with me, became our general



Sabine and her dog Mercedes; Tiffany and her dog Francis. (SUPPLIED)

manager and has been an essential member of our team ever since. Since we started in 2004, we have made quite a few changes and are always trying to adapt and to make the program better.”

SACA was tasked with enforcing the City of Saskatoon’s Animal Control bylaws and Dangerous Animals bylaw. The Saskatoon SPCA was made responsible for enforcing the Animal Protection Act. “Now there was a clear difference between the two agencies,” she says.

“In enforcing the Animal Control bylaws, we deal with licensing of cats and dogs, animals running at large, barking complaints, feces complaints and prohibited animals. Off-leash parks are also part of the Animal Control bylaws. Under the Dangerous Animal bylaw, we investigate complaints about dangerous or aggressive dogs and cats.”

Since SACA began to enforce

the Animal Control bylaws, more Saskatonians are licensing their cats and dogs. “That is great news, because it means we have a higher rate of return and are better able to reunite animals with their owners,” says Alexandrovici.

“Returning an animal can happen in different ways. We can receive a call from a member of the public that they found an animal. We will ask if the animal has a collar and license tag. If there’s a license tag, we can trace the owner very easily, contact them and reunite them with their pet. If the caller isn’t comfortable handling the animal, or it’s running loose in the neighbourhood, we would send out one of our officers. If the officer is able to secure the animal, and it has a City of Saskatoon pet license, a microchip, or other type of identification, we’ll try our best to return the animal to the owner.”

When a pet is caught running at large, the SACA officer has to issue a ticket to the owner. If the dog or cat is not licensed, a ticket for non-



Anthony and his dog Buddy. (SUPPLIED)

compliance to license must also be issued.

Responsible pet owners who license their pets can take advantage of the City of Saskatoon’s Pet-At-Large (PAL) Perk, says Alexandrovici. “Once

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

SACA could be your dog or cat's best friend

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

in the lifetime of the animal, the owner can apply the PAL Perk to waive the fine for running at large. It won't cost them anything. It's basically a free service for a SACA officer to return the animal to its owner. The PAL Perk also applies to pound fees, if the animal has to be taken to the Saskatoon SPCA because we haven't been able to contact the owner right away."

MEET THE SACA TEAM

Members of the SACA team are animal lovers, each with their own beloved pets. When assisting lost or stray animals, they empathize with both the animal's owners and their pets.

We asked team members what they enjoy most about working with the community:

Romeo says: "I love helping pet owners reunite with their animals and promoting responsible pet ownership."

Jasmine comments: "I've always wanted to work with animals and I love that I now have the opportunity. I also enjoy working with and educating pet owners in our community."

Anthony says that he has witnessed the results of irresponsible pet ownership while working at an animal shelter. "As an animal control officer, I have the opportunity to combat this issue before the animals are affected."

Elizabeth, who works as a dispatcher at SACA, says the team is awesome to work

with. "The entire team does its utmost every day to ensure the safety and well-being, not only of pets but the citizens of Saskatoon as well."

Victoria adds: "I enjoy being able to make a difference in my community and interacting with animals."

Sabine comments: "I enjoy being able to reunite an animal with the owner after being lost."

Working at SACA is something Tiffany always wanted to do. "I love working with animals directly, and roles in this field allow you to meet and engage with lots of different people."

SACA general manager Heather says, "In 2002, I finished my degree and took a temporary position at Animal Control. I fell in love with the job, the people and the animals, and my 'temporary job' became my career."

Alexandrovici echoes her staff members' dedication. "I feel rewarded when I can make a positive change, and help individuals and pets in our community," she says.

KNOW MORE

To learn more about the Animal Control Bylaw and Dangerous Animals Bylaw, visit the City of Saskatoon's Animal Services website, at Saskatoon.ca. You can also call the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency at (306) 385-7387.



Victoria and her cat Luna. (SUPPLIED)



Elizabeth and her cat Kiki. (SUPPLIED)



It's Your Doody



Heading back to *the office* soon?

Here's how to help your pet deal with anxiety separation

BY PAUL SINKEWICZ

The COVID-19 pandemic has been going on for one year—for you.

For your four-legged furry best friend, it has been going on for seven years, and his or her highly attuned senses have noticed your every trip to the fridge; the sound of you plopping down on the sofa; the ritual routine that starts your workday in front of the computer screen.

Pet adoptions skyrocketed during the COVID lockdown as people looked for comfort to fill the new voids in their lives. Families that already had pets suddenly changed routines to give pets near 24/7 access to ear scratches and tummy rubs.

When the infection rate slows enough, and society begins to return to near normal, how will you help your pet make the transition?

It's something you should plan for now, says Amber Matthews, the Saskatoon SPCA's behavioural specialist and a certified professional dog trainer.

"There's definitely reason to be concerned, especially if you got a really young dog or cat during this COVID period, or even an older animal that is new to the household and is not used to the previous work routine and is used to people being home with them 24 hours a day," Matthews says. "But there are quite a few things you can do to prepare."

The first thing to understand is that the animal is going to have the same physical, social and mental needs as it did while you were at home, says Matthews. You need to have a plan in place to actually make sure you're still meeting those needs.

"If you know your future routine is going to change significantly, you'll need to make sure that you're adjusting your daily routine

now as much as possible to suit that. So, if you're used to walking the dog at noon and you're no longer going to be able to do that, you need to make sure you're trying to shift things to what your dog's day or your cat's day is going to look like once you're back in the office."

Matthews advises that owners begin to wean their animal off the expectation of those activities happening at the same time every day.

"I think the other big, important thing that a person should be trying to do to prepare their pets for this is practicing some quiet time away from the family in the household, even right now," she says. "Whether you have a dog that can be crated, or even if you put them in the bedroom with a chew toy, just let them settle in the house without you right near them. That's called independence training"

Owners should also keep a lookout for signs their pet will have problems when they are out of the house for extended periods. You may notice your pet hasn't been able to calm down, they are pacing or are just more active than normal. There can be inappropriate eliminations when a house-trained pet begins to urinate or defecate in the house or in inappropriate areas.

You may also notice vocalizing when you get home, or as you leave your pets will begin whining or scratching at the door. A dog may take up chewing, especially around points of exit like windows or doorframes or leave evidence of excessive salivating.

Matthews says separation anxiety is similar with cats. You can get the same kinds



Now's the time to take steps to help your pet make the transition to post-pandemic life. Independence training now can help reduce the likelihood of your pet experiencing separation anxiety when it's time to return to the office. (PHOTO: PAUL SINKEWICZ)

of behaviours. A common sign of stress in cats is seen when a cat is hiding. You can also see a lot more digestive issues or loss of appetite in cats.

"While dogs with separation anxiety have more potential to chew or cause themselves harm trying to break out of the house, cats aren't maybe that extreme. You may see excessive grooming and loss of hair where they're excessively licking themselves"

When is it time for a pet owner who has tried other methods to consider a medicinal solution for a pet and consult their vet?

Dr. Karen Machin, associate professor at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, says it depends on the problem, severity and duration. Problems that have only been going on for a few months, and with low severity, can first be treated with training and behavioural modification. When the problem is more severe, or has been going on for some time, then medication should be added.

"The medication is meant to help the animal deal with the anxiety and to be able to cope in the absence of the owner," Machin

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Vaccines *provide* pets with wide range of benefits

BY WENDY LIVINGSTONE

Since the global pandemic began more than a year ago, we have all become much more knowledgeable about communicable diseases in general and ways that we can prevent their transmission. One important message conveyed by healthcare experts is that vaccines do not necessarily completely prevent disease but are vital in mitigating its consequences. The same is true when we vaccinate our four-legged family members.

“Vaccines do a very good job of protecting animals from severe illness, but not in all cases are we completely preventing infection,” says Dr. Jordan Woodsworth, clinical associate veterinarian in Wellness and Preventive Medicine at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), University of Saskatchewan. “In a lot of cases, we vaccinate to reduce severity of disease and reduce shedding of that pathogen. So, vaccination is a way to protect not only individual animals but also the larger animal population in the community.”

DOGS

Veterinarians recommend that dogs be vaccinated against canine parvovirus, canine distemper, canine adenovirus, rabies and in some animals, Bordetella, often referred to as kennel cough.

Parvo is primarily a gastrointestinal illness with symptoms that include vomiting and diarrhea, which can be bloody. In some cases, the animals require emergency care.

“If animals don’t receive treatment, they are at risk of dying,” says Woodsworth, “but we have pretty darned good success if animals get the treatment that they need in a

timely fashion.”

Parvovirus lives in the environment and is very hardy. “If a dog came through, say, a (boarding) kennel and had parvo, was shedding it, and the area was not properly disinfected, that could be spread to dogs



“Vaccination is a way to protect not only individual animals but also the larger animal population in the community,” says Dr. Jordan Woodsworth, Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

(PHOTO: CHRISTINA WEESE)

that come the next day, a week later or three months later. So it’s really important when people are taking their animals out that they make sure they are up to date on vaccines,” says Woodsworth.

Protection against rabies is equally

important. If animals are actively shedding the virus in their saliva, humans and wildlife can be infected through a bite. The disease can be fatal to both. “That’s why we really advise that everyone have their animals vaccinated against rabies,” says Woodsworth.

Distemper can also infect a wide variety of wildlife species. “Distemper virus can be transmitted to coyotes, foxes, bears, raccoons, weasels and a lot of other species, and that could cause damage to their wild population,” she says.

CATS

Vaccines recommended for our feline friends include feline panleukopenia, which is closely related to canine parvovirus, feline calicivirus, feline herpes, rabies and feline leukemia virus.

Woodsworth advises against allowing cats to wander free. The City of Saskatoon has a bylaw in place that forbids cats and dogs from roaming outdoors. Cats that wander face a much higher danger of encountering viruses such as feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus. They may not show any symptoms until years later but can still spread the virus to cats with whom they share space or fight. There is no effective vaccination for feline immunodeficiency virus.

As with humans, vaccinations for animals sometimes cause side effects such as soreness at the site of the vaccination, tiredness and loss of appetite.

Woodsworth says the benefits of vaccines for individual pets and for the community far outweigh the risks. “They do a very good job of protecting animals from illness and from severe illness and protecting the population; it’s uncommon for us to have reactions that are problematic,” she says.

Pet owners could also save significant

dollars by vaccinating their animals. “The cost of vaccinating an animal is going to be vastly less than the cost of treating an illness,” says Woodsworth. “An average primary healthcare or well-care visit for a cat or a dog is going to be in the range of a few hundred dollars, depending on the clinic and what that animal needs, whereas, if we are talking about treatment for, say, parvovirus, we are talking in the thousands, without a guaranteed outcome. And the costs can be both monetary and emotional.

“If we want to feel free, safe, and entitled to take our animal for a walk in the neighbourhood, to the dog park or to the groomer, I think it’s part of our social responsibility to make sure they are protected so they are also protecting the animals that they may come into contact with,” says Woodsworth.

WHEN TO VACCINATE?

“For puppies and kittens, typically we recommend that they are vaccinated starting as early as six to eight weeks and then be revaccinated every three to four weeks until they are between 12 and 16 weeks of age. The date and timing of the last vaccination in the puppy

or kitten series is the most important because that’s when we are going to know they have responded to that vaccine. They can get rabies vaccines at or after 12 weeks of age, and all of those vaccines need to be boosted a year later. And then, depending on the vaccine, we typically give a re-booster every one to three years depending on the vaccine,” says Woodsworth.

“With senior animals, their immune systems are less robust and less functional, so they are a little less capable of fighting off infection when they come in contact with some of these viruses. So it’s just as important for us to stay on top of vaccination when animals get into their senior and geriatric years.”

For more information on pet vaccines, contact a veterinarian.

Heading back to the office soon? Here’s how to help your pet deal with anxiety separation

says. “It should be used as long as it is needed. In some cases, medication could be needed for life, but the hope is that the animal can be weaned off medication at some point.”

Machin says the downside to not treating a pet, especially when signs are severe, is that the behaviour can threaten the human-animal bond, resulting the animal being surrendered or the owner turning to euthanasia for the pet.

“The earlier the animal is treated, the better the chances that the pet has to recover,” Machin says. “If there are signs of separation distress, it is better to deal with them as soon as possible.”



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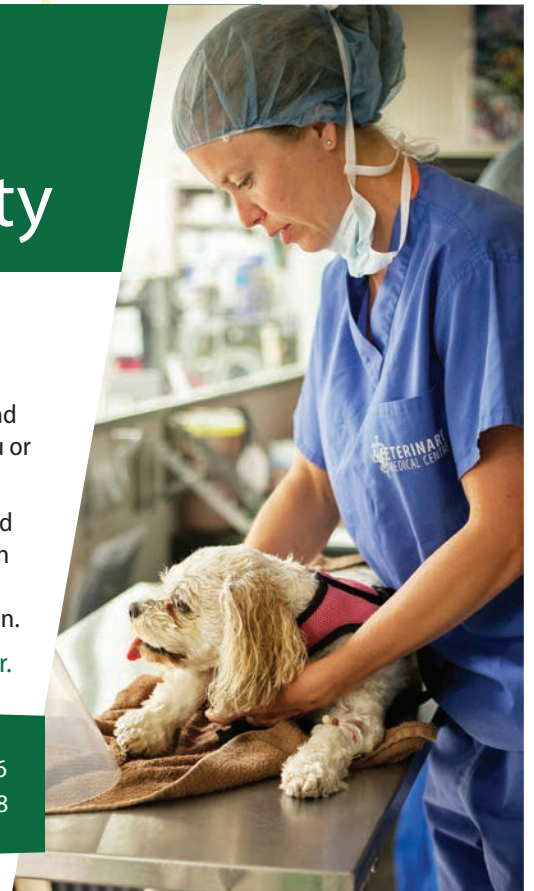
We’re there to support your regular veterinarian with specialized services and technologies. Our community roots also show through our partnerships with groups like the Saskatoon SPCA, SCAT Street Cat Rescue, New Hope Dog Rescue, Saskatchewan SPCA and Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan.

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K9 heroes: A day in the life of a *canine cop*

BY PAUL SINKEWICZ

Hutch has put the collar on countless bad guys in his career with the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) Canine Unit.

Once the three-year-old Belgian Malinois latches onto a scent, a suspect can hop fences and dart down alleys, but it will only delay the inevitable.

The highly trained police service dog has about 300 million olfactory receptors in his nose, compared to about six million for a human. And the part of his brain dedicated to analyzing smell is about 40 times larger than ours.

Handler Const. James Hindmarsh knew he wanted to work with the Canine Unit very quickly after joining the SPS eight years ago.

"After my first few months on the street just watching the dogs—and watching the guys work the dogs—it just convinced me it was something I wanted to do," says Hindmarsh. "I loved dogs growing up and so why not have the ultimate dog?"

Officers must be on the job five years before they can join the unit, so when his opportunity came, Hindmarsh began training to become a handler.

Now his typical workday involves a lot of training and working on different specifics of the job, like obedience or drug searches.

"We're tracking every day, for sure," he says, and it's not uncommon to be out assisting other officers several times during a 12-hour shift.

"The rush comes from the high pressure that's put on the team for the handler to get their dog out and getting to work, and hopefully finding the guy we're looking for."

The dogs live with their handlers and become a part of the family.

Hutch can tell when it's time to go to work and gets excited to jump in the back of the cruiser.

"But once I go home at the end of the day, he switches right off and he's just a dog again and hangs out with my kids and my wife," says

Hindmarsh. "He'll hang out in the back yard and chase the ball and he'll roll over and want his belly scratched just like any other dog."

A full complement for the SPS is nine dogs, with eight constables covering the city's four platoons with two handler/dog teams each. The city has three dogs that are narcotics trained, two that are explosives trained and one dog that is attached to the tactical support unit.

On the lookout for treats when they are good boys are Loki, Diesel, Hutch, Oliver, Yanga, Benny, Viper, Bam and Brian.

Sgt. Cory Goodwin was a dog handler for nine years before getting promoted and taking over the Canine Unit two years ago. He also still works with his Police Service dog, Brian, and over the course of his career can recall many exciting outings—like the call involving multiple suspects who had committed a home invasion. They were then involved in a pursuit with patrol officers while operating a stolen vehicle, and when the driver hit a ditch in the Montgomery area, all the suspects fled on foot. But after several hours of tracking, the canine teams located all five in various locations spread from the edge of town all the way to the Cory Park potash mine.

Sometimes the most gratifying searches don't involve any bad guys, said Goodwin.

"One frigid winter evening we received a call from a private care home advising that an elderly gentleman suffering from dementia had left the home and was not dressed for the outside temperature," he says. "We were able to track and safely locate the patient."

The SPS will have a couple dogs retiring at the end of this year, so it has purchased two new dogs from a supplier in Ontario. But the dogs—usually German Shepherds or Belgian Malinois—can come from all over the world.

Goodwin is the training officer for the police service, and will be running a 16-week intensive spring training program for the new recruits.



Constable James Hindmarsh has spent many hours training and bonding with his canine partner, Hutch, a three-year-old Belgian Malinois. (PHOTO: SPS)

The teams have different profiles that they train in, like tracking, evidence searching, building searching, compound searching, obedience and agility, and criminal apprehension.

"At the end of the day, whether we are tracking a violent and armed suspect, seeking evidence, or assisting in locating a missing person, it is always deeply satisfying to successfully and safely conclude a situation with a partner that we have spent countless hours training and bonding with," said Goodwin. "I cannot believe that I have been a dog handler for over 11 years. I love this job every bit as much today as I did the first day I started, and I will forever be grateful for this amazing opportunity."

Wildlife rehabilitation centre offers animals *a second chance*

BY ANDREW LIVINGSTONE

Wildlife thrives in even the most urban areas, which results in frequent encounters with humans and pets. When those animals appear injured or orphaned, often Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation is there to help. The organization cares for wildlife with the goal of returning the animals to their natural habitats.

“People, and places, and organizations bring us animals they find that they’re worried about. We take them in and determine what exactly is going on with them,” says Jan Shadick, executive director of Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation. “Sometimes, they are healthy orphans, sometimes they are injured, sometimes they are ill, and so we do what we can for them. As many as possible, we try to put back into the wild. That is the ultimate goal: to return these animals back into their natural habitat.”

Often, however, it is more appropriate not to intervene. “We’re always trying to get the word out to call us before you pick it up so that we can make a decision based on the natural history of the animal—if it is something that needs to come into care, or if what they’re doing is actually quite normal but people think that it’s a problem,” says Shadick. “I’m speaking specifically around hares and fawns, where the parents have a tendency to do what we call ‘benign neglect,’ in terms of parenting”

Discretion is particularly important in the spring, when newborn animals are in abundance and Living Sky is at its busiest. “Unfortunately, when baby season hits, which is really May through August, we’re receiving baby birds every half an hour, and it’s just absolutely insane,” says Shadick.

The number of animals brought to Living Sky for rehabilitation has grown significantly over the years. “It has basically been upwards ever since we created Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation as an organization in 2010,” says Shadick. “We took in about 150 animals. The following year was about 220...

and, in 2020, we took in 2,000.

“Our philosophy is that, if somebody puts in the time and energy to save an animal and bring it to us, then we’re going to support that.”

The species of wildlife requiring care always varies, says Shadick. “We do get a wide variety of things, from mice to skunks, and foxes to fawns. Different species have ups and downs: like you might hear of a whole bunch of snowy owls one year, and, this past winter, we had a whole bunch of grosbeaks.”

None of those species recognize the boundaries between urban and rural environments. “We have this beautiful river valley, and it means we have wildlife traveling along that river valley, and some are just passing through—like the moose, and the deer, and the cougar—but other animals actively live within our neighbourhoods,” says Shadick. “We have coyotes in the city, we have foxes in the city, we have raccoons, we have skunks, and Saskatoon has now developed its own little population of red squirrels.”

This abundance of wild animals creates a myriad opportunities for encounters with domesticated ones, such as humans and their pets. “Dogs and cats definitely interact with wildlife on a regular basis, and, unfortunately, it’s not always really awesome for the wildlife and it’s not really awesome for your dogs and your cats,” says Shadick.



Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation receives approximately 2,000 injured or orphaned animals a year, including fawns, foxes, hares, skunks and birds. (SUPPLIED PHOTO)

If you encounter a wild animal in distress, you can call Living Sky at 306-281-0554, or you can contact the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment or the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society, which Shadick says will often transport the animal to Living Skies for care. For more information on “Who to Call,” see page 23 of this guide.

Pet Loss Support

The death of a pet can be one of the most devastating experiences an individual or family has to face. If you are having difficulty coping with the loss of a beloved pet or are dealing with an end of life decision, you are invited to gather with other animal lovers, like yourself, in a safe, supportive and informal environment to share your experiences, feelings, stories and pictures.

The Pet Loss Support Group

meets the first & third Sunday of every month at 2pm at the Edwards Family Centre 333 4th Avenue North. (There’s no cost to participate and no obligation to attend on a regular basis). For more information or to receive bereavement resource material, we invite you to call

Family Pet - 306-343-5322

Temporary meeting place for support group – Family Pet, 210A 33rd Street East, Saskatoon

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Saskatoon's cat *overpopulation* crisis:

How can each of us do our part to help?



One way to help with the city's stray cat crisis is to adopt or foster a cat from the Saskatoon SPCA, says executive director Graham Dickson. (SUPPLIED)

BY ELIZABETH IRELAND

Managing our city's ever-increasing population of stray and abandoned cats is an ongoing concern. Graham Dickson is executive director of the Saskatoon SPCA. "We generally have between 100 to 140 adult cats in our care. During the warmer months, that number doubles with an increase in kittens. As Saskatoon grows, so too does the city's stray and abandoned cat population," says Dickson.

"Community cats" are often the offspring of stray, abandoned or at-large cats that are not spayed or neutered. Without early human contact, kittens become feral and begin the cycle of breeding again. Feral cats are those cats that have reached six weeks of age without human contact, are scared of humans and often only come out at night.

The City of Saskatoon estimates that there are over ten feral cat colonies currently in our community. These cats pose several problems for the environment and have a big impact on local ecology and the population of wild birds. The situation can easily spiral out of control due to the fact female cats are fertile at an early age (often before six months), feline gestation times are short, and cats can live for up to two decades. In fact, according to Humane Canada, a single cat can produce 420,000 more cats in a seven-year span.

How can the public become involved in helping with the stray cat crisis in our city? Options include adopting a cat from the Saskatoon SPCA or fostering cats that are waiting for placement in a permanent home. Donating to the SPCA provides funding for affordable spay and neuter programs, as well as health care for cats at the shelter with more complex medical needs.

Dickson wants to address the misconception that people should bring cats they find directly into the SPCA. If individuals do find a cat roaming at large, they should contact the team at the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency. If possible, look for evidence of ownership such as a collar tag or ear tattoo before placing the call.

Sometimes lactating female cats are brought into the SPCA alone by well-meaning members of the public but Dickson warns that this could leave litters of kittens without food. "Cats are 13 times more likely to find their way back home, if lost, when left to their own devices," says Dickson.

Dickson notes that an animal shelter is a high-stress environment for cats and they really don't thrive. And the risk of disease increases in a shelter. "Cats like routine and predictability and there is strong evidence that the move through the shelter system is stressful for cats. Unless it is in distress, leave the cat where it is," says Dickson.

For reference, the Animal Protection Act states that an animal is considered in distress if it is deprived of adequate food, water, care or shelter; injured, sick, in pain or suffering; or abused or neglected. Dickson gives examples of distress such as obvious signs of lack of nutrition, evidence of abuse or severely matted fur.

Dickson's number one advice for current cat owners in the city is to have their pets spayed or neutered so that they don't contribute to the already-high number of unplanned litters of kittens. He notes that it is also critical that pet owners license their animals with the City of Saskatoon—not only is it required under the Animal Control Bylaw but doing so helps the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency to return your pet to you as soon as possible should they wander off your property. In addition, microchipping helps the agency identify your cat and arrange for its return.

For more information on adopting a cat from the Saskatoon SPCA, or to make a donation, go to saskatoonspca.com. Due to COVID-19, all pet adoptions are currently appointment-based.

Which pet is *right* for you?

When choosing a pet, consider these factors

BY JENNY GABRUCH

Pets can be a wonderful addition to any home, but there are many factors to bear in mind before making them part of your life.

It's important to carefully consider what type of pet best suits your lifestyle, home and family.

"Adding a pet to the family is a big commitment," says Dr. Liane Bitinsky, a veterinarian with Forest Grove Veterinary Clinic. "Do your research and think about what you want from the experience of pet ownership first. Spontaneity is not the best way to go with this adventure."

Bitinsky says key considerations include how much time you can devote to the pet, its lifespan and being aware of all the costs involved—from food, housing and basic supplies to health care and grooming.

Physical space is also important. A large breed dog, for example, may not be suitable for someone living in a studio apartment.

"Once you've decided to add a pet to your family, reflection on your preferences and lifestyle are the keys to determining what species of pet is the right fit for you," says Bitinsky.

DOGS AND CATS

Dogs and cats are popular choices for family pets. Dogs need exercise, training, and social interaction while cats are considered more independent creatures.

"If you decide a dog is the right pet choice, what breed to consider is the next decision," says Bitinsky. "There are hundreds of different dog breeds so, again, considering your preferences and lifestyle will help you to find the right breed for you."

Each breed is associated with typical characteristics and temperament traits. For example, does the breed tend to be vocal? Has it been bred to herd, guard or hunt? Does its personality complement your lifestyle?

Consider the dog's size, activity level and grooming requirements, and keep in mind a

dog can't be left alone for extended periods of time.

"Cats generally are easier pets if you are out of the home for long periods every day as they don't need outside access to a toilet," says Bitinsky. "Many cats are much more social with their humans than people sometimes think though, so providing adequate attention is important."

She suggests getting an older dog or cat rather than a puppy or kitten, which require more attention.

"With an older dog or cat, you don't have to go through housetraining, the chewing phase, and the demanding time that comes with puppy/kittenhood."

Vaccinations and regular vet exams will be part of the animal's care.

SMALL PETS

Small animals, such as hamsters or guinea pigs, may be a better option for those with busy schedules.

"All pets require time for their care and well-being, however small, caged pets, especially those that live a solitary lifestyle such as hamsters and fish, are fairly content if you're gone a lot during the day and in the evening," says Bitinsky.

Hamsters are common pets for kids but can be more prone to biting.

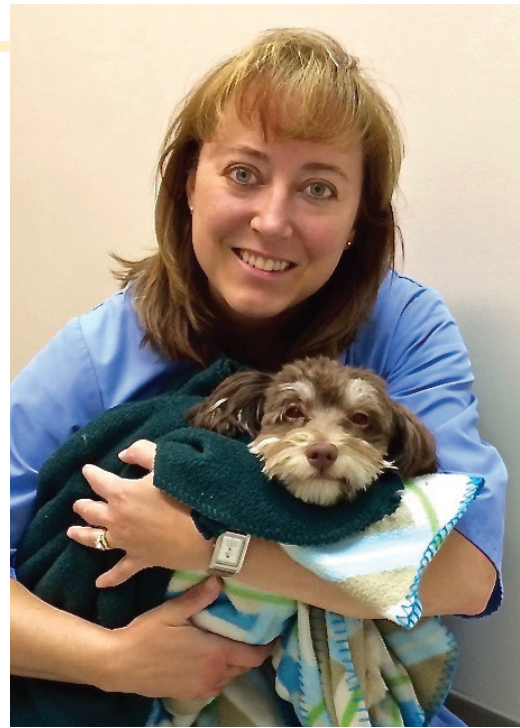
"Guinea pigs often make good choices for kids," she says. "Rats can be great pets. They are very smart."

Those considering a reptile as a pet should be aware of what special requirements are needed for its care.

"For many reptiles, careful balance of food, light and temperature are needed to keep your pet healthy," she says.

FISH

These underwater friends can make great pets. They are a popular choice as a first pet for children and are fascinating to watch for all ages.



Dr. Liane Bitinsky with furry friend Koda Janzen. (SUPPLIED)

"Beyond routine aquarium maintenance, fish are pretty undemanding pets," says Bitinsky.

BIRDS

"Birds can be really great, fun pets, although they can be noisy and messy," says Bitinsky.

"Parrots generally require more care and attention. They are quite social and can develop behavior problems (like feather picking) if they don't get the interaction they need."

LIFESPAN CONSIDERATIONS

People should consider the lifespan of the species as responsible ownership means being prepared to keep and care for the pet for its entire lifetime. Here are some average lifespans:

- Hamsters and rats: two to three years
- Guinea pigs and rabbits: five to nine years
- Dogs: 12 to 15 years
- Cats: 14 to 18 years
- Turtles and large parrots: 70 to 80 years

USask therapy dog program *continues* online

BY HILARY KLASSEN

When COVID-19 assaulted the planet, therapy dogs at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) needed to bring their furry presence online. The pandemic prevented in-person visits through the PAWS Your Stress program and necessitated the transition. No doubt an adjusted treat regimen played a role in the dogs' motivation.

The goal of the PAWS program is to provide support and comfort to individuals. Therapy dogs are known to help reduce stress hormones. In a time of uncertainty, Dr. Colleen Dell, professor of Sociology with the College of Arts and Sciences, knew it was important to maintain the relationships that had been established. "We knew that people needed support and it didn't seem right that we took the dogs out of their lives," she says.

PAWS took the program online in April 2020. From summer through the end of the year, therapy dog visits took place through Facebook Live several times a week. With the launch of mental health tips from the perspective of a dog, the animals set an example to their online audience by doing regular healthy activities like going for a walk, going for grooming, or learning a new trick. The program partnered with Scholastic Canada for book readings with a dog.

Around mid-May, funding from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation came through, allowing the program to conduct regular research to ensure it is responding to expressed needs in the community. Ongoing evaluations take place to inform and build on what is being offered.

"When September came around in 2020, based on feedback, we started to do Zoom sessions with the students, who meet with dogs and handlers in breakout groups," says Dell.

A handler who works at the U of S and is also a yoga teacher developed 20-minute once-a-month guided relaxation events designed for anyone in the community. "We work with veterinarians on, how does a dog breathe, and incorporate that in breath exercises that the handler does online," says Dell. Everything is

videotaped and posted on the PAWS YouTube channel.

Prior to the pandemic, students wanted the program to help them "be in the moment," facilitate closer connections and complement their coping skills. "We saw the same thing now that we're online," says Dell. "Students want to be there in the moment and forget everything else that's going on. They want to visit with these cute dogs that they have relationships with."

Sometimes students don't put their camera on and they don't converse. "They just want company in their home while doing their schoolwork."

Staff and faculty often bring their pets to Zoom events and talk about them. International students find the events to be another point of entry into the U of S community. "Dogs are great conversation starters," Dell says.

The therapy dogs are available through a partnership with St. John's Ambulance. They can be any breed or size, but they need to be social animals and are screened for extroversion. Dell says the 40 dogs on the roster now understand their time in front of the screen. "They want to sit in front of the computer. They may not see—it depends on the screen pixels—but they like hearing their name," Dell says.

Visits with therapy dogs can evoke memories of pets that participants had in the past. "Those pets stay as a source of support," says Dell, providing an added benefit.

The USask online dog therapy program now has about 100 videos online of dogs doing numerous activities. A diverse online community watches those videos. "There is research showing we feel good when we watch these videos online," Dell observes.

All of the current online programming will continue in 2021, including visits requested by outside groups. When students begin a phased return to campus, Dell anticipates some aspects of the online program will be retained. She finds it gratifying to see how effective the program is. "It's an opportunity to show that we care, in a time when we see that's what people really need."



"Is your meeting going to the dogs? Have a therapy dog come and lighten it up," says Dr. Colleen Dell. (PHOTO: DR. DELL)

Pets are good for your health

Can owning a pet be a prescription for better physical and mental health?

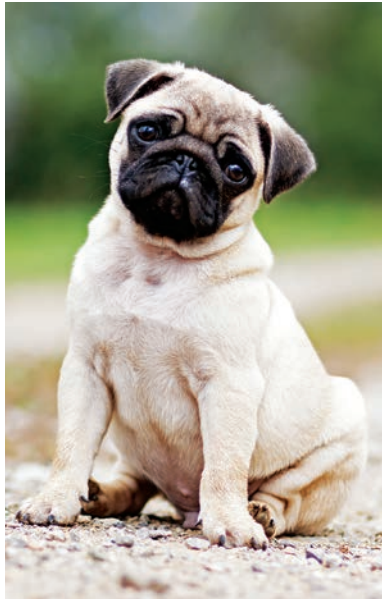
The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms the many benefits of pet ownership. According to the CDC, owning a pet provides opportunities for increased physical activity and exercise. Regular walking or playing with your pet can help decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels.

Living with a pet can also enhance mental health, helping to decrease feelings of loneliness and depression. The American Heart Association notes that pets also help manage anxiety by providing companionship and support. "When owners see, touch, hear or talk to their companion animals, it brings a sense of goodwill, joy, nurturing and happiness."



WHO TO CALL

Directing public concerns about animal welfare.



DOGS, CATS AND OTHER PETS

Concern	Location	Contact
Roaming/at large or stray	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Animal Control Agency
Injured and at large	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Animal Control Agency
	Outside of Saskatoon	Bylaw Enforcement or Animal Control for town or municipality
Noise	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Animal Control Agency
Dangerous dog	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Animal Control Agency
Suspected animal cruelty or abuse	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon SPCA
Dog bite	City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Animal Control Agency & Population & Public Health



LIVESTOCK

Concern	Contact
Roaming/at large or stray	Rural municipality
Suspected animal cruelty or abuse	Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
Immediate threat to public safety	RCMP

WILDLIFE

Concern	Contact
Injured or abandoned	Wildlife Rehabilitation Society or Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment
Hunting or trapping violations	Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment
Suspected animal cruelty or abuse	Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan

CONTACT INFORMATION

Animal Protection Services Saskatchewan: 306-382-0002
Population & Public Health: 306-655-4612
Saskatoon Animal Control Agency: 306-385-7387
Saskatoon SPCA: 306-374-7387

Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment:
1-800-667-7561 or 306-933-6240
Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Saskatchewan: 306-242-7177



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