

## Pet Talk Tuesdays – 6/1/2021

**Nick Rusch:**

The time for our Pet Talk Tuesday, joining us, Dr. Marty Greer from Veterinary Village in Lomira. I'm fine. Really. I don't know what that was.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

I hope so.

**Nick Rusch:**

Yeah. Everything's fine. On a Tuesday that feels like a Monday, right? That's kind of how this works when we do this.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly. It sure does feel like Monday.

**Nick Rusch:**

Well, I understand today, we're going to chat about puppies a little bit.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yes. Yes we are. I think it's an important topic and one that we really haven't touched on much, and I'm going to start off with admitting something to you here on the radio. I'm a dog breeder.

**Nick Rusch:**

Okay.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Not everybody thinks that's favorable.

**Nick Rusch:**

But you're a responsible one.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

I am a responsible one. In fact, I'm so responsible that I got to half a nights sleep last night because I had a litter of puppies during the night.

**Nick Rusch:**

Oh no.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

So yes.

**Nick Rusch:**

Oh no.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah. It's a good thing we're on the radio and not on anything visual, because I'm not at my best. We'll just say for appearance. So yeah, I am a dog breeder and I work with a lot of dog breeders and I'm proud to say that. And in this era

of COVID where 40% more dogs have entered homes than we saw before, it has certainly changed the dynamics of pet ownership and of relationships with veterinarians. So let's talk about that.

**Nick Rusch:**

Okay. We know that there've been instances, certainly, of people adopting many more animals. And now, some people having gone back to work, the dynamics have certainly changed for not only the owners, but the animals.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah. Some of them have, some of them haven't. So the first thing that happened with COVID is that the shelters and the rescues pretty much emptied everything out. They didn't want to have people in and out of facilities. And so they found foster homes for everybody. So it has become that plus the fact that everybody that didn't have a dog, but had always wanted to get one, got one during COVID. We've had a significant shortage of dogs. So instead of the typical scenario where we're being told over and over and over again that we're seeing too many dogs in shelters and rescues, and there aren't enough homes and that we're euthanizing dogs for this reason, that has changed. And it continues to be that way. There have not been an influx of dogs back into shelters as people have started to return to school and work.

So I think that's first and foremost that people are well-educated about that piece because they may still be under the impression that there is a dog overpopulation problem. Now, in reality, for the last 20 years, there has not been a dog over population problem in the Northern 35 states. Only in the Southern 15 states have we seen that. So I want to start off with that educational piece. And the National Animal Interest Alliance has a great website called The Shelter Project that you can go to and take a look at and verify this information state by state, county by county. Now this does not apply to cats. So please don't misunderstand me. There are still more cats out there than we need, but there aren't too many cat breeders. Most everything that's being bred is being bred by responsible dog breeders. That word that you started off the conversation with is a really important word.

**Nick Rusch:**

The thing is too now, why is there such a division between the Southern states and the Northern states? And we know that we've had an influx of puppies that have come our way from the Southern states as well, because there's so many rescue dogs there.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Right. Part of it is that dogs come into the country across the Southern borders. So in California, New Mexico, Arizona, those counties, those states that abut Mexico do see an influx of dogs coming across. We also see dogs coming in from some of the island countries, the Caribbean. So that's starters. Secondly, it's a lot easier to be a dog living outside in the Southern states than it is in the Northern states. So I think they're more effective at reproducing than we are here in the Northern states. And then the other thing is we really think that there's a difference in culture that people in the Northern states tend to be more responsible with their dogs. They tend to spay and neuter. They tend not to just let their dogs wildly run loose in the streets, having puppies. So we think that there is definitely a cultural difference.

The Midwest and the Northern states tend to have a different level of responsibility, shall we say? So I think that's part of it. And the Northern states, of course, we're all very kind people and everybody's willing to take in a dog. So that's part of it. But what we've really seen that I think has been fascinating during COVID is we've had a lot of people that have never had dogs before as adults, but they'd always promise their kids. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We'll get a dog one of these days. And they've come into the practices, the veterinary clinics with a dog and without a lot of adult type of experience with raising a dog and housing a dog and all the things that need to be taken care of. And what became pointedly clear to me at the beginning of COVID is I had one client who came in with a new puppy.

She had two kids, she was a teacher. She was teaching from home, homeschooling her kids. She had a lot on her plate and then she got a puppy. And like I said, a lot of these people have never had dogs as adults. They had him as a kid, but they've never been that person that was completely responsible. So she came in and we spent a lot of time in the exam room, on multiple occasions, educating her about how to take care of the puppy, which is really important for veterinarians to do, but we got busier and busier and time got shorter and shorter. And so it became evident to me that my exam room materials were out of date and I wasn't traveling, so I had some extra time because we were only

allowed to see sick and injured patients and time sensitive patients. So I had a little extra time on my hands. So I wrote the puppy manual called Your Pandemic Puppy, which is now available since November on Amazon, as a guide, both for medical care and behavioral care. So I think behaviorally, we need to talk about quite a bit of that.

**Nick Rusch:**

It's interesting. And I think your point is very well taken that people have not had dogs as adults, and it's a different relationship when you're the one that's responsible for the animal. And most owners that you meet, I think, are very responsible, but it's one of these things where if you haven't gone through the training, whether it's just owning a dog and the day-to-day care or sought some help, perhaps, whether via your book or via talking to someone at a practice, there's a lot there to pick up. And we always talk about at our house, we would love to have a dog, but I haven't had a dog since I was a kid. We were on the farm. The dogs basically ran around and did whatever the heck they wanted. And they were with us most of the time, but they stayed out of trouble. It's a totally different environment when you're living in town. It's a different set of responsibilities. It's a different set of procedures that you have to learn.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Oh, absolutely. So it does make a big difference. And that's why we wanted to make sure that we had an educational piece for people. And the other part of the concern was once people started to resume their normal lives, which we're going to see faster and faster here, we needed to give them the materials that they needed to help with the behavioral issues. And I don't mean to say anything negative about rescue dogs or dogs that come through your shelters, but they do have a higher incidence, in our experience of, behavioral issues, such as fearfulness and aggression. So that put even more pressure on people who were taking these dogs in and having to rehabilitate them and integrate them into their families to make sure that behaviorally these dogs were sound. So I think part of the reason for that is that they've been moved around a lot.

They haven't been selectively bred, like the purpose bred dogs that we see our breeders here in Wisconsin producing. And I'll tell you, we have some amazing breeders that are doing tremendous work here in the Midwest, raising healthy well socialized puppies, but some of these dogs came through shelters. They were moved into different people's homes, multiple times into shelters, in trucks, all over the place. And so they had a lot of stress. They had a lot of bad experiences and they didn't have the opportunity to really get a good start in life. Even genetically, they may not have been programmed to be as good and as cooperative a dog as the ones that our breeders are deliberately are purpose breeding. So we've had a lot of behavioral issues to work with, and that is addressed pretty significantly in the book. So it goes through both preventing and treating separation anxiety, and it goes through a lot of other anxieties as well.

And basically what I want people to know is that it's okay to call your veterinarian and ask for help. It's okay to work with a behaviorist for behavior modification, but then augment that with medications, if you're not successful with just managing them behaviorally with the behavior mod that the trainers can help you with. And right now trainers and veterinarians are absolutely overwhelmingly swamped with clients that are coming in because we've seen such an increase in the number of pet owners and numbers of dogs in the household, not just the number of families that have them, but the number of dogs in each household. So it's been really great, but it's also been a bit of a challenge. And so clients are frustrated because they call and they want to get in and it takes a long time to get an appointment.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

So it has been a challenge. It has been difficult for people that want good veterinary care and simply are having a struggle getting it, or that need help with behavior and can't find somebody that can really assist them. And the good news is we can help them with those things, but they do need to call us and schedule to come in and schedule enough time realizing that there will be a delay from the time they call to come in and the time that they get an appointment. At almost every veterinary clinic in this state, there's a long waiting list of people to get in. And that's hard for clients, but you want to make sure that you don't get rushed through an appointment. And so you have to realize that there is some lag time in getting those appointments scheduled.

**Nick Rusch:**

And really, if you sit down and think about it, it shouldn't be a surprise, but I think some people maybe weren't ready for the commitment. They had good intentions going in, but it didn't occur to them that when you get a dog it's a lifelong commitment. It's the dog's lifetime.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

It is.

**Nick Rusch:**

That's the commitment.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah. It's a 15 year commitment. And there's nothing more fun than a puppy. I mean, they are a blast. They're so much fun. They entertain you. They get you out on walks. They're social lubricants. They get you talking to people that you would never have talked to. Your kids have fun with them, but absolutely there is a lot of responsibility. There's housebreaking. There's making sure that they behave themselves so that they don't chew up the furniture or the remote, or get into the grapes and end up with a problem. There's a lot of responsibility with that. There's a lot of times that you have to change what you do.

You can't go out and just be gone for 14 hours. You have to think about the dog. Okay. I went to work or I went to school and I had to come home and then I have to let the dog out and then I can go run my errands, or I can go to my PTA meetings or my soccer games or whatever you want to do. But yes, there's absolutely a lot of responsibility. And if you don't get that dog started off on the right paw, it is a much more difficult challenge to raise a dog that gets started off with bad habits than it is to start off with ones that you have appropriately crate trained and appropriately took into obedience classes and taught them the manners that you want them to have, because they can learn it very quickly. They're little sponges, just like little kids. They're little sponges.

**Nick Rusch:**

They are. And it's really important I think that you realize you have to put the work in and the more work you put in early, the less work it's going to be for you down the line.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

For sure. And the one thing I tell people, and I actually did a radio interview with a radio station down in Chicago. And the guy said in the book, there was a line that I had never thought about. And it was a really interesting thought. And that is your dog is learning all the time, whether you mean for them to be learning or not, they are learning all the time. So just like when you pick up the phone or you end up on a Zoom call and you're preoccupied and you can't really pay attention to the puppy, the puppy just learned that. So I've just learned that when you're on a Zoom call or on a phone call, you can chew on the leg of the couch, or you can go potty on the floor or you can go running through the house like a hooligan.

And those are learning experiences that you have to then unlearn. It's a lot easier to make sure that you get ahead of that. So it is hard. It is tricky, but with the right tools, with a crate or a room that's set up appropriately, with the right chew toys, with the right treats, with the right kind of distractions, you can do an amazing job. Even if you work. Even if you have school. Even if you have kids. You can do an amazing job. And dogs bring such joy to our lives. Other than the last days that they have with us, they bring such joy to our lives that they are so worth the time that you put into them. You've got a bed partner. You've got a walking buddy. You've got all of the things that you've thought maybe you got when you had a spouse or had children and turns out they really aren't interested in doing those things, but your dog will. If you say, Hey, let's go walk around the block or run an errand. That dog is like, Ooh, let's go. So dogs are always the ones that are willing to participate in those activities.

Even if your family members look at you, like I'm not really going anywhere today. And when you walk in the door from being at work all day or being at school all day, and your spouse is watching TV and grunts across the top of the

computer or the newspaper at you, some kind of a greeting that might be a hello or welcome home, the dog runs to the door. They're thrilled to see you. They throw their little legs around you. They're so excited you're home. Yeah. You don't get that out of your kids and your spouse.

**Nick Rusch:**

Right.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Let's just face it. Dogs do things for us in many ways that our other family members can't.

**Nick Rusch:**

I just have to ask you, Doctor. What's been the response to the book? I mean, you must have heard from people that have read it, used it, and utilize the advice in it. What's the reaction been like?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

I've gotten really good reviews from clients, especially the ones that I value or the ones that have had dogs for years and years and years and I really consider to be good dog people. There are people that have dogs and then there are dog people. And dog people just get it. They think like their dogs. They can predict what their dogs are going to do. They get it. And those are the people that have been so enthusiastic about the book. As they've said, I just have never seen anything put together like this. It's so good. And Dog Wise is one of the websites that carries only dog books and they're thrilled to have it. Of course it was published by Amazon. So it's available on Amazon. It's only \$20. So it's not an expensive book, but it's a great book as far as going through from before you get the puppy.

So if you're thinking about getting a puppy, get the book. It goes through selection of different characteristics and traits and things that you may want to think about that perhaps you hadn't considered before you got the puppy. It goes through the supply and equipment list that you need. It goes through the housebreaking. It goes through all the behavioral things. It goes through spay and neuter, which we're now saying should be done later, according to the American Animal Hospital Guidelines. And we've been doing this for a long time, pushing it back later, changing the vaccine protocols, all the new flea, tick and heartworm medications. It's very current. It's very up to date and it's gotten really great reviews. So I'm really proud of it because we put it together in a pretty short time period. I have a great publisher out on the east coast that put it together and did a tremendous job with layout. It's a very pleasing book to look at and to hold and to read. And I think that's a lot of books instead of reading it electronically, you can get it on Kindle, but I still like a book in my hands. I still like to have that, that I throw in my backpack and I take with me so I can flip it open when I want to read. I love having that, real book.

**Nick Rusch:**

I'm with you. My wife and I are avid readers. And we have both the Nook and the Kindle. We own both. But we prefer a physical book in our hands and somehow it seems easier to reference. I don't know why. And in this case with your type of book, it is not only a read, it's also a reference material. It's a reference source. It's something that you're going to be looking at again and again. Boy, what was item four on that list? I know she said something I really wanted to pay attention to. So, you're going to be going back to that again and again. So I guess whatever form works for you, but maybe were a little old fashioned. I don't know, but I prefer an actual book.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Maybe, but you can almost see where it is on the page. When you're thinking about, I read that and you know where to find it back in the book, whereas on a Kindle, every page looks the same. And there it's a beautiful piece of equipment. And I have one, but I love my books. So I'm intrigued by that difference in how people perceive information. But anyway, puppies are lots of fun. There's a lot of great things you can do with them. If you are getting one, talk to your veterinarian before you get a puppy. Make sure you get one from a responsible person. Make sure you have all your equipment and supplies. Get your stuff together first. Talk to your veterinarian about what kind of dog might be best suited for your family. If you don't have a veterinarian, this is a great time to get one is before you get the puppy so that

you can get in, in a fairly short time period after you obtain the puppy, because they're going to need a series of vaccinations.

You're going to be seeing your veterinarian every four weeks until the puppy is somewhere between 16 and 20 weeks of age. If they're not already spayed and neutered, you need to have a conversation about that. At what age is it best? Because we're fans of thinking that the AHA guidelines are important. The later you spay or neuter, the better the outcomes for your dog's health. And those are information pieces that are in the book that you can also find online, but it can be difficult to tell when you read online what's reliably sourced. And what's just some person that had a forum on an internet website that they could say whatever they wanted to, but don't have any real experience or real merit in backing it up. So I think it's important that people know that they have these resources of their veterinary clinics and the book so that they are prepared. We don't want to have puppies that chew through electric cords and eat sugarless gum and do all the unfortunate things that puppies do.

**Nick Rusch:**

All the dangerous things. In the 30 seconds we have left Doctor, and always great information. We're always so pleased when you're here. Give us that contact information, so folks can make that contact and have a qualified veterinary opinion on their animal.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Sure. So you can call us at 920-269-4000. You can text us at 920-539-7164. We're at the corner of highway 41 and 49, just south of Fond du Lac at the interchange where Quad Graphics is, and our website is [smallanimalclinic.com](http://smallanimalclinic.com). It's easy to find. We're open seven days a week, so we're happy to help people out and would be very pleased to see you with your new puppy or help you pick out your new puppy and get through the decision-making process, so you make good choices. It is a 15 year commitment.

**Nick Rusch:**

Pet Talk Tuesday With Dr. Marty Greer from Veterinary Village.