

MECA NEWS



UPDATE FROM MARLA

Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, DACVECC
Owner, Board-Certified in Emergency & Critical Care

Welcome to MECA's first newsletter. Our success as a new animal hospital hinges not only on providing superior care for sick pets, but in skillfully informing our clients about how to keep their animals healthy. That's what this quarterly newsletter is all about. It's just one more reason for those of us at MECA to be excited.

Since the hospital was established a year and a half ago, it has grown from 3 doctors to 7 doctors, with a staff of 30 to 40 professionals. Dr. David Brdecka, our new board certified surgeon, has expertise in orthopedics and soft tissue surgery. Dr. Carolyn Jochman and Dr. Kristen Temo work in the critical care department, overseeing ICU and referral cases with me seven days a week. The specialists work with the ER veterinarians who cover the evening shifts so that there is perfect continuity in the cases. We work with enthusiasm to exceed client and referring veterinarians' expectations because we love animals and are dedicated to helping them. In addition to our emergency and referral cases, we offer emergency care of all exotics. This is our special interest and many of our doctors have extra training in exotics care.

Our goal is to gradually become the largest and best referral practice in the Milwaukee area, and we are here to stay. In fact, we recently purchased our building and land, with the intent of opening the second floor to other specialties. MECA's success is based on our relationship with the referring veterinarians, whom we are committed to serving. In that spirit, the open communication we strive for extends from our hospital staff to our newsletter. We hope you find it useful in maintaining the good health of your pet.

Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, DACVECC

Doggie Nightmare

Apparently, people aren't the only ones who overindulge during the holidays. A sick, nauseous, Yorkshire Terrier named Darby was in such bad shape that his owner thought it best to get the 10-year old dog to the ER right away.

"I kept watching Darby while I was eating," said Karin LaFreniere. "He looked terrible. I pushed my plate aside and took him directly to MECA without a second thought." After LaFreniere rushed to the ER in the middle of the night, just before Thanksgiving, Darby was started on pain meds and intravenous fluids.

It turns out the dog had gotten into a diet rich in bones, and everything was down hill from there. He started to vomit and not want to eat or move, which are signs of acute pancreatitis. "In this disease process, the pancreas becomes inflamed, allowing digestive enzymes to spill into the abdominal cavity, resulting in secondary damage to the liver, bile ducts, gall bladder, and intestines," explains Dr. Marla Lichtenberger, who treated Darby.

The diagnosis of pancreatitis is normally based on clinical signs, laboratory tests, and the results of x-rays and/or ultrasound examination. Nausea, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea typically are associated with the disease. "If the attack is severe, acute shock, depression, and death may occur," says Dr. Lichtenberger. The mild form of the disease is best treated by resting the pancreas from its primary role in digesting food, with the only way of doing that is to withhold all oral fluids and food.

The successful management of pancreatitis will depend on early diagnosis and immediate medical therapy, which is why Darby responded so well. "We got him there in the nick of time," recalls LaFreniere. In advanced cases, the presence of systemic shock necessitates the immediate and aggressive use of intravenous fluids and shock medications. Medicines are administered to blunt the intense pain pancreatitis often causes. Most dogs recover from it and need to remain on a special low-fat diet for life.



Darby spent Thanksgiving with the MECA staff, but did go home feeling well after the holiday. Most dogs with pancreatitis are hospitalized for two to four days while intravenous fluids are administered and food is gradually re-introduced.



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Home-Grown Vet Skates to the Rescue



Dr. Troy Semandel, a former Badger Hockey player, is a Wisconsin boy through and through. Born and raised in West Allis, he returned

to the state after his veterinary training and bought the Spirit of 76th practice in 1987, where he used to work in the early days. He's a case study in moving up the ranks. "I was a kennel worker there, receptionist and a technician," Dr. Semandel explains. He traces his love for animals to the fact that his family has always owned dairy farms, so he was routinely exposed to and loved animals. In his practice, he has a special interest in orthopedics, "pocket pets" and reptiles. And when he's not skating in hockey league, Dr. Semandel enjoys playing with his chocolate lab, Killian.

"I love being the home grown vet in the area," says Dr. Semandel. "And, I'm really excited that we have a great referral institution like MECA so close," he adds. "It's about time."

Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals (MECA)

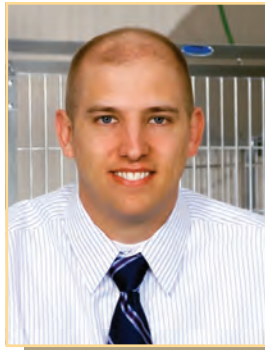
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Work or Hobby? Animal Surgeon not Quite Sure

by Steve Busalacchi

The skills Dr. David Brdecka taps for his wood working hobby fit rather precisely for what he does during the day, too. A board-certified small animal surgeon, Dr. Brdecka repairs orthopedic problems, and performs soft tissue surgeries.

"I enjoy the instant gratification of going in there and fixing problems for animals," says Brdecka, of his surgical career. "For me, veterinary challenges are almost like a hobby, too because I enjoy working with my hands so much."

Dr. Brdecka also enjoys spending time with his family, which includes playing with their cat and dog. He is a native of Northern Illinois, having attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign for both his undergraduate degree and his doctorate in veterinary medicine. Dr. Brdecka completed his small animal surgery residency at the University of Georgia, and has been in private practice for almost five years.

Exotic Animals Welcome at MECA

MECA got the call last spring when hundreds of mistreated reptiles were discovered in a Milwaukee home and warehouse. Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, actually treated one of the crocodiles at MECA and many of the other reptiles at the Milwaukee Domestic Animal Control Commission.

"That rescue case may be an extreme version of our exotics care, but we see the gamut, from snakes, macaws, rabbits and turtles to Komodo dragons and other exotic species," says Dr. Lichtenberger.

There is so much interest in exotics ownership today, Dr. Lichtenberger says veterinary medicine now offers specialty training for doctors. And MECA has a team of veterinary experts with a special interest in exotics care.

But the overall health of a snake, turtle or guinea pig depends as much or more on informed responsible owners as it does on veterinary staff. "These pets can be very challenging to own, as their nutritional and other needs may be much different than for a typical pet like a cat or dog," says Dr. Lichtenberger. She advises that potential exotics owners do their homework before buying such a pet so they know up front if such an animal is right for them.

