

MECA NEWS



Advanced Training in the ER

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

Here at MECA, we're dedicated to providing the highest level of veterinary care. To accomplish that, we employ specially-trained doctors who've dedicated years of their life to honing their skills and learning the latest techniques.

Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals is unique among other emergency clinics in the area in that an emergency and critical care specialist is present in the hospital seven days a week, consulting with the emergency doctors and managing hospitalized patients. A critical care specialist assists with evaluation, specialized monitoring, and intensive treatment of all hospitalized pets at MECA.

A board-certified emergency and critical care specialist is a specially trained veterinarian dedicated to treating life-threatening conditions. In addition to four years of veterinary school, a critical care specialist has at least three years of intensive training in emergency medicine and surgery, and has passed a rigorous examination to become a diplomate in the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care (ACVECC).

The residency program includes instruction in surgery, internal medicine, anesthesia, pain relief, neurology, cardiology, and emergency procedures like CPR. This program focuses on cutting-edge techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of life-threatening diseases and for management when a pet is recovering from severe illness or injury.

Rest assured, if your pet is in trouble, he or she will be in good hands at MECA.

Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals
Greater Milwaukee's Choice for Prompt Animal ER Care, 24/7

Fight Fear with Food, other Techniques *By Manette Kohler, DVM*

Good parents go out of their way to instill a healthy fear of strangers in their kids, but for pets that can be a real problem.

Take Barkley, for example, a four-year-old (neutered male) sheltie mix. He has a history of extreme fear/panic behavior when handled at the veterinary clinic and a fear of strangers. Adopted from a shelter at fourteen weeks of age, he was past the sensitive period for socialization. Lack of, or improper socialization is a common underlying theme in most, if not all, of my anxiety, fear and aggression cases. Barkley's fear likely includes many factors, such as genetics, socialization problems and other learned experiences. Restraint and manipulation by a stranger and possible painful procedures may have all contributed to form his negative association with the veterinary clinic.

The goal of treatment was to change Barkley's emotional state from one of fear to one of calm anticipation. We paired his fear-provoking triggers, such as strangers and the clinic, with tasty food. Conditioning a new emotion is called counter conditioning. We also gradually increased his exposure to what the dog fears, which is an effective way to treat such behaviors. Barkley's therapy started at home with mock exams and restraint. He progressed to "friendly" vet visits for treats.

Anti-anxiety medications are often helpful for panic behavior. However, the owner wished to avoid these, so we used a massage technique, a snug body wrap that has a calming effect and pheromones, which relieve stress-related behavior.

The owner reports that Barkley is more accepting of strangers and even elicits contact with them now. As for the vet clinic, he still needs work, but is progressing nicely.

Doctor Kohler, of Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals, enjoys preventing and treating behavior issues in pets.

24 HOUR ANIMAL ER
Milwaukee Emergency
Center for Animals



3670 S. 108th Street
Greenfield, WI 53228
414-543-7387

Dog Leads Dr. Frederick Ruhl to Veterinary Medicine Career

By Steve Busalacchi



Dr. Ruhl and his son Grayson.

All it took was an introduction to a white German Shepherd and young Fred Ruhl knew he wanted to be an animal doctor. Ruhl was only three years old back then! As a veterinarian, Ruhl focuses exclusively on dogs and cats at the Chicago Road Veterinary Clinic in Oak Creek, where he has practiced since 1982. He bought the practice in 1987.

Doctor Ruhl says the trick to being an effective veterinarian is not just to know a lot about treating animals. "You need to learn how to deal with people too," he says. "Give people the options and the clients have the major part of the decision-making process," he adds.

Doctor Ruhl enjoys his practice, but says it can be heart wrenching when he sees pet owners struggle with the loss of their beloved pet. "We're allowed to put the pets out of their misery before they die on their own, but it's still stressful to see the owners go through this process."

On a happier note, Dr. Ruhl enjoys participating in a wide variety of community service projects. His 17-year membership in the local Kiwanis Club has allowed him many opportunities to promote reading and scholastic achievement among grade school kids. He's also an avid fundraiser for the high school football team, as well as a church volunteer. Doctor Ruhl attributes his interest in community service to a time when he realized just how fulfilling his practice had become and how indebted he felt to his clients. *I need to start giving back*, he thought to himself. And he did!

Caring for both people and animals works out well for Dr. Ruhl, and for Oak Creek.

Plastic: An Iguana's Nightmare

By Marcus Gordon, DVM



So, did you hear the one about the iguana who ate a bag? Unfortunately, it's no joke. A four foot male iguana ended up at MECA because for several days, it was not eating or defecating. This case was especially challenging because the unique physiology and anatomy of reptiles can make surgery a risky proposition. But our staff has many years of specialized experience and knowledge about these unique creatures that allows us to treat exotic animals with confidence.

Once in surgery, a large amount of foreign material was found within the intestines, causing complete obstruction of the GI tract. The foreign material turned out to be a large white plastic bag, the size of a typical shopping bag. The anatomy of the skin and muscle tissue, as well as blood supply of these animals, makes closure of the surgical site uniquely challenging.

The final phase of the surgery, and sometimes the riskiest part on reptiles, can be the recovery due to their slow metabolism and inability to maintain their own body temperature. Life threatening post-operative issues can arise. As they are taken off of the anesthetic support, it can sometimes take hours for them to recover. Luckily, this patient recovered quickly, with no complications. It will take six to eight weeks for the surgical site to heal, but a full recovery is expected.



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24/7 ER Veterinary Service

3670 S. 108th Street • Greenfield, WI 53228

Phone (414) 543-7387 (PETS)

www.erforanimals.com • info@erforanimals.com



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