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# pet guide

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## PET GUIDE

# YOUR PET'S HEALTH

Dr. Jyl Rubin adopted Schmedley, an albino boxer, when his owners could no longer care for him due to the extensive veterinary care he required. (Schmedley's delicate pink skin and lack of hair predispose him to sunburn and skin cancer.)



## options abound

➤ Today's pet owners have an array of choices when it comes to veterinary care—everything from traditional veterinary and specialty medicine to alternative and complementary therapies including acupuncture, herbs, massage and chiropractic care. And where they can obtain these services also is expansive: high-tech hospitals and ERs, mobile vet services and species-specific vets in addition to traditional veterinary clinics.

Traditional veterinarians offer checkups, X-rays, blood tests, spaying and neutering procedures, and vaccinations. Most also offer dental care and treatment for major illnesses, such as cancer.

When Becky Farina's 14-year-old Dalmatian, Blossom, suffered two bouts of skin cancer, her veterinarian, Heidi Booth, D.V.M., anesthetized the dog and removed the lesions.

Farina takes all three of her dogs to Country Oaks Veterinary Hospital in Galt, where Booth works. "My vet gets down at the dogs' level," says the Galt resident. "She greets them, pets them, just like she's one of their buddies. She starts the exam on the floor and plays with them, which is totally cool." Farina says her dogs have no problem going to the vet. "They just go prancing on in there: 'Hey, we are going to see our buddy.'"

While most people take their pets to traditional vets, a growing number are turning to veterinarians who use nontraditional therapies such as acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and therapeutic massage to supplement their pet's health care. Some local vets employ both traditional and non-traditional medicine, taking a holistic approach to caring for their patients.

"I really do think they both bring something to the table," says Kris Dailey, D.V.M., whose uses traditional and non-traditional approaches at her Davis-based practice, Animal Wellness Center. "They aren't mutually exclusive. The nice thing about the integrative [approach] is that you have more weapons in your arsenal. So



# fish facts

Yes, your fish need to see a vet, too.

We spoke with Bronwyn Szignarowitz, D.V.M., who specializes in fish medicine and surgery, about caring for your pet fish.



**WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FISH?** Pretty much anything. It's very similar to what you do for a dog or a cat or mammals. They get tumors, they get viral disease. They get bacterial infections.

**WHEN SHOULD PEOPLE BRING THEIR FISH TO YOU?** The more savvy clients do a yearly checkup.... It's a routine physical and overall look at their pond or aquarium. I check head, eyes, everything. I remove a lot of tumors on the outside. Sometimes we'll have to spay a goldfish or spay koi carp because they get impacted with eggs and aren't able to expel the eggs. The diagnostics we're able to perform are the same as for mammals: X-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans, MRIs.

**ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FISH?** That you buy a fish and you are done. People don't assume they need [the fish's] environment to be clean and they need to test the water and keep on top of their water chemistry. If they were to keep on top of their water chemistry and quarantine their fish, they would eliminate 80 percent of their problems.

whatever tool fits the job, you can use it."

Lisa Chapman-Sorci's cat, Harry (pictured below), was having difficulty walking when she brought him to Dailey for acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments. Months later, Harry was back to normal. "Now he goes up and down the stairs at



work," says Chapman-Sorci, who lives in Fair Oaks.

If you have

a pet that doesn't travel well, mobile vets such as Jyl Rubin, D.V.M., can come to you. Mobile vets are particularly good for animals that wig out at the vet clinic (or in the car on the way to the clinic). "It really does make a difference with some of these animals," says Rubin, owner of Dr. Jyl's Mobile Vet Connection in Sacramento. "They're in their home environment, so they are not scared." Mobile services also are good for large animals that are hard to transport and for households with multiple pets.

The rising popularity of "exotics" as companion animals finds more and more veterinarians treating rabbits, hamsters, birds, iguanas and snakes. Carmichael residents Maria and Dustin Robinson take their 3-year-old rabbit, Bradley, to VCA Sacramento Animal Medical Group, which also treats their two dogs: Cooper, a 4-year-old golden retriever, and Eddy, a 3-year-old beagle. While the dogs have been seen for everything from bee stings to broken noses, Bradley's care has been routine. "He goes once a year for a checkup, and if he gets sick, I guess he'll go more," says Maria, who feels her rabbit is in good hands. "They are really good with [the dogs], so I would expect the same with the rabbit."

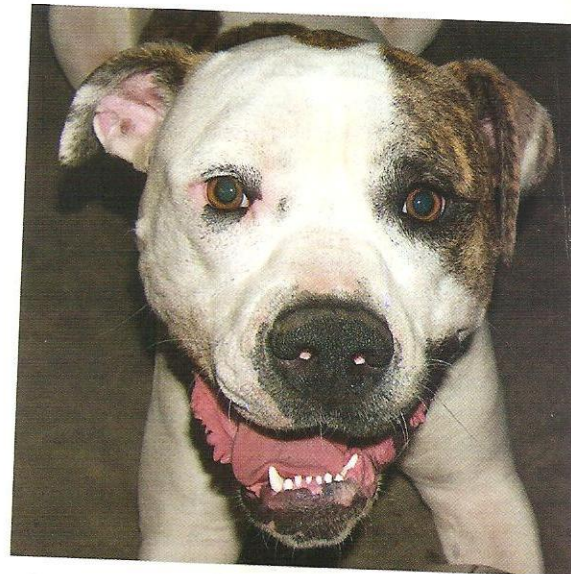
Bradley the rabbit may not mind going to mixed-pet vet, but some finicky felines may beg to differ. For this reason, cat-only vets are popping up. "From what my clients tell me, the stress on the cat is much less than going to a place that has both cats and dogs," says Kari Mundschenk, D.V.M., co-owner of Just for Cats Veterinary Hospital in Elk Grove. "Hopefully, when you go to a cat-only hospital, you have staff who understand the nature of the cat and how they are going to react."

**when there's big trouble**—While veterinarians are equipped to treat a host of maladies, they'll often refer difficult or complex cases to specialists who can handle things such as kidney dialysis, organ transplants, hip replacements and cataract surgeries.

When Ilene Henely's poodle/Pomeranian mix, Chelsea, started experiencing bladder problems, her regular vet sent her to the William R. Pritchard Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital at UC Davis. It turned out Chelsea had an enlarged kidney and a small liver. The staff at VMTH decided against surgery, fearing complications. Instead, they prescribed medication and put Chelsea on a special homemade diet. While she's still being treated for the condition, there is an upside: "She loves the food I make for her," says Henely, a resident of El Dorado Hills.

Sometimes, pets eat something they're not supposed to: poison, chocolate, a pair of underwear. Georganna Sedlar's American bulldog, Sadie, ended up with a perforated intestine and

a nasty infection after chowing down on a pair of running undies Sedlar had left in her gym bag. Treated at VCA Sacramento Veterinary Referral Center, she's now good as new. That medical emergency cost the Sacramento resident more than \$7,000 but doing nothing was never an option. "I couldn't imagine saying, 'Oh, no, let her go,'" says Sedlar. And while she can laugh, somewhat, about the incident now, the ordeal was heart-wrenching. "It was truly one of the most stressful times of my life," Sedlar says.



After Sadie recovered from a perforated intestine (and owner Georganna Sedlar recovered from the \$7,000 vet bill), she's doing fine.