

# Beware of vets who try to manipulate clients

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By Michael W. Fox

June 25, 2014

**Dear Dr. Fox:**

I recently had an appointment for my old dog, Rusty, to get a distemper vaccine, but I canceled. Rusty is 14 years old, and I had a bad feeling about going through with it.

My veterinarian's receptionist told me I would not be able to get Heartgard Plus for Rusty because I didn't get the vaccine or his annual checkup. Can Rusty get by without Heartgard?

Also, whenever I take in Rusty, my vet always wants to clean his teeth. I realize this is important, but when Rusty was 13, I was told he has a heart murmur. I think that his age makes it too risky, so I have refused to have it done. My vet told me he had cleaned the teeth of a dog who was 15.

Am I wrong in not getting the teeth cleaned, and is there somewhere else I could get the Heartgard Plus for Rusty? Do I have to get it from the vet? Can Rusty do without it?

Rusty is deaf, almost blind and has a weakness in his back legs.

**P.E.S., West Long Branch, N.J.**

**DF:** I occasionally receive letters such as yours that make my blood boil. Most veterinarians are ethical and do not resort to this kind of emotional blackmail or client manipulation.

Many veterinarians are aware of the urgent need for proper dental care, and some can do a good job without having to give anesthetic to at-risk animals.

Consult with another veterinarian for the heartworm blood test and preventive medication. If there is any question about the need for a distemper vaccination first, ask for a blood titer test to determine whether it is needed.

**ELIXIR OF LIFE**

**Dear Dr. Fox:**

We had to have our 23-year-old cat euthanized yesterday. I credit her longevity to drinking water from the kitchen faucet all these years. You've written many times that fresh water is vital for cats' good health.



5/16/2016 Source of cats who try to manipulate clients - The Washington Post  
sleeping beside you under a light blanket or towel.

Make sure he's not hungry before bedtime. He might enjoy some catnip or melatonin before turning in. As cats age, some develop a pattern of night restlessness that can be associated with chronic pain from arthritis or dementia. A few drops of fish oil in his food might help both conditions.

### **TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?**

**Dear Dr. Fox:**

Do you have any information on a new product called Pet Protector? It's a metallic disc worn on the collar that is supposed to provide chemical-free tick and flea protection.

I have used brewer's yeast as well as PetzLife's Complete Coat, but my dog still gets a few ticks and has contracted Lyme disease.

If this product works, it would seem to be a good solution.

**E.R., Bowie**

**DF:** There is no 100 percent effective way of keeping fleas and ticks off our animals.

I am leery of most oral treatments that can kill these insects only when they get the drug from feeding on the treated animal's blood. This is not, therefore, going to stop flea-bite-allergic reactions or stop some tickborne disease such as Lyme disease or Powassan virus.

As for your query about the so-called electromagnetic field and energy Pet Protector for cats and dogs: I did a quick Internet search, and there are several sites claiming that it is simply a moneymaking scheme. A study by M.W. Dryden published in the Veterinary Parasitology Journal concluded that the "Cat and Dog's Tag" (as this device was known at the time) failed to prevent flea infestation, inhibit flea reproduction or repel existing flea infestations on cats.

### **HEALING TOUCH**

**Dear Dr. Fox:**

My 5-year-old Labrador mix, Will (a.k.a. "Won't"), has been a surprising companion as I recover from recent back surgery. He's a goofy, happy pup who is usually immersed in whatever he is doing, be it chewing a toy, watching the world outside or snoozing.

When I returned from the hospital, he seemed to know every time I was about to stand up, and he would suddenly appear and "brace" so that I could use him for support. This is in spite of the fact that he has only three legs!

Now that I'm doing physical therapy, he appears every time and gets right up to me as though he's trying to help. It makes me laugh and takes my mind off the exercises, so I find I'm doing more repetitions and also more often just to see what he will do.

Will is a certified "touch therapy" dog from Support Dogs Inc. in St. Louis, and I know he's brought much happiness and healing to others, but he's never been trained for any of the things he's done for me. Animals bring us such joy!

### **S.B., Town and Country, Mo.**

**DF:** Your letter joins many affirming that the empathic nature of dogs enables them to know when we are suffering and need help, and this ennobles them in our eyes.

This is not to ignore the fact that some dogs and other animals, including humans, simply become fearful and avoid coming close when a particular person is suffering.

It is notable that cats, in particular, will lie against a person's injured or painful body region. Their warmth and purring might help the healing process, especially the mending of broken bones.

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