

## Pet Talk Tuesdays – 9/7/2021

**Nick Rusch:**

8:36 at the source, joining us via the telephone: our friend, Dr. Marty Greer from Veterinary Village in Lomira, it's time for our Tuesday Pet Talk. Dr. Greer, how are you?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

I'm doing great. But can you believe its fall already?

**Nick Rusch:**

No, I cannot believe it. I cannot believe it. Yeah.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Holy cow.

**Nick Rusch:**

Summer, I've had this discussion with so many people, I'm sure it's been the same for you, summer typically goes pretty fast for whatever reason. But this year, for some reason, I think particularly fast. And it's been a weird year.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yes. It has been weird in so many ways. I would completely agree.

**Nick Rusch:**

So here we are. Well, the good news... I'll say this, doctor, I've noticed this a lot, and I know people are out with their animals every day because they have to be, there's certain calls of nature that have to be answered. But, I have been seeing more people out walking their dogs in the last couple of weeks here that I've seen in a long time, for whatever reason. I don't...

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah. I think you're right. People have changed their patterns, and it's going to change again here at this time when everybody's going back to school.

**Nick Rusch:**

Right. So what are we discussing today? What topics did you want to hit on today, doctor?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Well, that's what I really do want to talk about. It's the change in the routine, the patterns, that the dogs are experiencing. And cats, of course, we don't want to leave our little kitty friends out. So it's been a big change for the last year and a half with people's work schedule and school schedules changing. And now the kids are back in school, which may also impact people's return to work. There may be parents that are going back to the office now that the kids aren't going to be home anymore. So there can be some pretty major upheavals in the lives of our pets, so we need to help them adjust to this new period.

**Nick Rusch:**

And how do we do that? I mean, I know we chatted before about kind of ahead of time, trying to get the animal used to what the new procedure is going to be. Obviously, that's something that you'd probably still recommend if we can still do it, right?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Right. And for some pets, we may not have realized that we were going to have the adjustment period. We thought the pets were just going to fall right back into the old routine, and you might be caught off guard by that. So the first thing we need to do is make sure that they're safe, and they're comfortable emotionally and physically at home. So that means, if they're used to being in a crate, that you can still crate them. If they're not used to being in a crate, there may have to be a training period over the next few weeks, that the dog have a longer and longer periods of time in a crate or in a room that's secure, so that they're safe.

Because your pets, it may be a young dog, it might be an older pet, but you may have assumed that they were great, because during the day when you're home, they didn't chew anything up, they didn't go potty on the floor, everything was great. And now, the routine has changed, and they're stressed. You're not there like you have been. Maybe the cats are happy about that. They're like, "Finally, I'm back, I can finally get some sleep during the day." But a lot of the dogs are used to the social interactions that we've had with them during the last year and a half of being at home from school and from work.

And so, some of them will have a difficult time adjusting, and my concern is that they're going to be destructive, either because they're stressed or they're bored. Both of those can lead to some pretty serious destruction. And sometimes, the destruction could also lead to their own safety issues. So if they eat socks or underwear, kitchen towels, or remote controls, those are all very dangerous things. And people don't think about it because you just leave them in your environment.

**Nick Rusch:**

Right.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

They're sitting there, the dog was fine when you were home. But now that you're gone, they're going to pick out the things that smell most like you or their favorite person. So that is remote controls and cell phones, the things our hands touch, that is socks and underwear, and that is dish towels and dish cloths. The tasty things, as well, it's getting into the garbage and all the other various and sundry things dogs do.

**Nick Rusch:**

Those are the obvious things. I mean, when something like that happens, we know there's a problem. And we probably know what the problem is, it's that they're just missing us. Are there more subtle signs to watch for, so we catch it earlier?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah. That's a very insightful question. It may be that they start to get a little panicky. They seem a little nervous when you're putting on your shoes, because you have fun shoes and you have work shoes, right? And the dogs know the difference. So if they're starting to get a little panicky, they're getting a little clingy. Maybe they won't eat when you're getting ready to leave. And people think, "Oh, that's really cute. They don't know that they're not going to be able to get outside. So he doesn't want to eat now that he can't go out?" That's really not true. Most of the time that's from separation anxiety. And during that time period that you're gone, many pets won't eat because they're nervous, and that's stressful to the pet.

And as you start to pick up on their signs, that they're following you around, being a little clingy, acting a little funny when they know you're starting to get ready to put your stuff in your backpack or your case or whatever you do when you get your morning routine going, they're going to start picking up on those things. And they're starting to get nervous. And instead of just saying, "Oh, you'll be okay." There's a couple things you can do. You can certainly do some training. There is a book called I'll Be Home Soon written by Patricia McConnell that's a very useful book on managing separation anxiety, but some of our pets are to the point that their anxiety is severe enough and the destruction might be bad enough that you might need to talk to your veterinarian about prescription medication to help them get through that transition period. It's not meant to be forever, but it sure can reduce their anxiety during those time periods.

**Nick Rusch:**

Yeah. And you're talking about using it as a tool, not as a panacea, not as something, "Oh, no problem. We'll just put the doggy on the doggy downers and we'll be all good." It's meant to be a short-term thing, right?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Absolutely. Yes. It's meant to help them transition, to learn, to realize that they can soothe themselves, that they can okay by themselves at home. And then there's some other things you can do to, I mean, I don't want to reach for drugs for everything, but you may have a neighbor that says, "don't really want a full time commitment of a pet, but I would love to take your dog out for a walk everyday, middle of the day when you're at work or at school." So, tap on your neighbor's doors and see if anybody in your neighborhood is home, retired during the day, not working for whatever reason. And they're just looking for an excuse to get out and walk. And it's always more fun to walk with a dog than it is to walk alone. So you can do something like that.

There's also a website, Care.com. Care.com has two sides to it. One of it is for finding personal care for children and for elderly people that need in-home care, but they've also got a pet side. So you might be able to find someone to walk your pet during the day and get them out, let them go potty and let them get a little bit of exercise, some attention, throw the ball a few times, get them a little something to eat and drink and go just relax a little bit. And then they can go back to their sleeping on the couch until you get home at night, but those are really great tools that people can use, and you don't have to just suffer through this. There are lots of people that are out there that are willing to do that kind of work.

**Nick Rusch:**

That's a great idea. It's almost like a play date. Isn't it?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

It is, it is like a daily play date. Your pet, they pretty much have an internal clock. They know within 15 minutes of the time, if you have a routine, of what time you're going to get home. They start looking for you. If you put your security cameras, or you put in cameras for some other use, you can certainly buy them inexpensively enough now. We have those at our house and it's really pretty fun to be able to go onto the computer and take a look, see how your pet is doing.

There's also a device called Furbo, that you can actually talk to your pet and it dispenses treats. So you can kind of freak them out a little bit. They can be watched, you can dispense treats. You can talk to them, they can respond to you. So there's some really neat electronic devices that are out there right now. You may not want to see what your dog is doing while you're at work, but it's a good idea. And of course, now you see all the commercials on TV that talk about preventing a break in or all the other things that you can see. So you can see if your pet is home and they're safe and they're comfortable, or if they're having anxiety. And if they are, you can start to respond to the anxiety by helping them.

But if they're comfortable and safe, you're going to be a lot happier at work. So just, grab your cell phone, flip on the security camera, take a quick look. Don't spend too much time looking or your boss isn't going to be happy, or your teacher, whoever you're interrupting the time that you're supposed to be devoting to them. But it's a really useful tool. And there are people who have reported things like they caught a break in, or they found a fire that was starting in their house and they were able to respond and save their pet or their pet saved them. So there's some really great tools out there for techniques and devices and options that you have to make your pet more comfortable.

**Nick Rusch:**

And that's a good quick and easy way too, to diagnose that anxiety. Maybe it's like you say earlier, maybe you thought everything was fine. And using that device, you can kind of check on Scruffy there, to see what he's up to before he gets into something destructive or worse.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly, exactly. And then the other thing to remember is kids' backpacks. They come home now, they haven't had a year and a half of carrying backpacks, so they bring their backpack and they throw it on the floor. Or your purse, or your tote bag, or your groceries, or whatever. Don't forget that there can be things in those bags, those packages that can be dangerous or toxic to our pets. Don't forget grapes and raisins. Those are nice snacks to send to school with the kids, but they're toxic to dogs, so don't let them get into those. Ibuprofen has a sugar coating on the outside of those tablets. Some dogs will eat an entire bottle of it, and that is highly toxic to a pet, so be careful of that. And of course the Xylitol-containing sugar-free gums and candies that are safe for kids and good for their teeth can be very dangerous for our pets to ingest. So be aware that you should not have those products in backpacks, bags, whatever might be laying around the house, so we need to make sure that our pets are safe.

**Nick Rusch:**

And as we've noted before, too, if there's a way for them to get at something they're not supposed to have, they will find it. They will. They will somehow get into it.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Oh yeah.

**Nick Rusch:**

Whether we know it or not. It's like you've said before, they've got plenty of time to think about it. It's like planning a jailbreak.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly. You spend 10 minutes a day, undoing it. And they spend the next 23 hours and 50 minutes trying to figure out a way to get into trouble. So they are full-time trying to figure out how to be naughty.

**Nick Rusch:**

And I always get a kick out of when people say, "He's so glad to see me when I get home." So glad to see you? Look, he called out to an APB on you about 10 minutes after you left. By the time you got home, are you kidding?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly.

**Nick Rusch:**

He dialed 9-1-1 before you were at the end of the driveway, looking for you. Of course he's happy to see you.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Yeah, I don't doubt that. I mean, you would be surprised what our pets can do. Thank goodness. They don't have an opposable thumb and a credit card, or else it'd be a pizza delivery every day at your house at lunchtime.

**Nick Rusch:**

I know there's a lot of, I don't want to turn this into a shameless plug, but I know that a lot of what we've talked about this morning too, doctor, you brought up another book, but you've covered a lot of this in your book, *Your Pandemic Puppy*. Tell us a little bit about that, because I think that's another useful volume for folks, because we're not through the pandemic yet. And a lot of the things that we're talking about today certainly relate directly to it, with getting back to, quote-unquote, "normal."

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly. So, yeah, another book, *Your Pandemic Puppy*, is available on Amazon for \$20. We have it at the clinic as well. So if people don't want to buy from Amazon and want to pick it up, we've got it at the front desk, and it is a great tool. It goes through about 50% medical and about 50% behavioral. So it goes through housebreaking. Sometimes we have to rehouse break our pets when we go back to work or school. So that might have to happen. It's got uses of how you use crates safely, what kind of treats you can use, feeding your pet, a lot of different aspects, leash walking, all the things that you want to practice. And then it also goes through medical, it goes through vaccinations, heartworm, medication, spaying, and neutering.

In fact, the American Animal Hospital Association is now recommending a later spay and neuter for our pets than what we were recommending before. So for many years we said six months or younger, but now that's being pushed back to where they are skeletally mature, meaning that they're done growing, males and females both, and females stop growing a little sooner than males. So we want to make sure that we're pushing out those procedures to as late as possible for their general health and their safety.

So that's all covered in the book. It's really useful information and, of course, we pride ourselves at Veterinary Village on educating our clients that we're not in there to cram vaccinations and medications that you. We are there to educate you, to help you understand the rationale, the logic, the reasons behind all the decisions that we make with your pet's care. My doctors, my staff, they're all amazing at teaching. So if you are uncomfortable with the kind of care that you're getting, please give us a call. That being said, almost every vet clinic right now is looking out a few months. So don't expect to get in right away unless you have some urgent needs. But absolutely, positively, we are all about educating our clients, making sure that you are informed and involved in your care decisions, and that we are not just there to paternalistically, hand you a treatment plan. It is customized to your own pets needs and your financial needs as well.

**Nick Rusch:**

And I think what's interesting too, doctor, is that the perspective that you come from, not only have you spent your life in veterinary medicine, but on top of that, you are a multi pet owner yourself. You have been involved in breeding. There's not a lot of behavior or a lot of angles of this thing that you haven't been privy to at some point.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

That's true. We have had the opportunity to have so many dogs and cats over the years, but almost anything that you can have go wrong, we had happened to one of ours. So it doesn't matter, you name it, if you've had a problem with it, we probably experienced it firsthand. I have an outstanding set of doctors that are also just tremendous at this kind of work. I have one doctor that loves to do cats. I have one doctor that loves to do the exotic furry little creatures, like ferrets and rabbits. I have doctors that love dermatology, and love surgery. So we have a pretty great depth of fields. Dr. Griffith does chiropractic and pain management. So across the board, we can pretty well cover most of the needs that your pets are going to have.

And it's really a lot of fun to have the experience of meeting all the doctors, and knowing that you've got someone on your team that can help you out with whatever particular needs you have. So yes, we've been breeders, we've shown our dogs, but we've had lots of our own personal pets that we've loved dearly and have had the opportunity to spend a lifetime managing their care and taking good care of them while they've taken good care of us too, because they're so important to our family.

**Nick Rusch:**

I want to make sure that we get your contact information before we close today.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

So our contact information for our website is [VeterinaryVillage.com](http://VeterinaryVillage.com), or if you can't spell that, [smallanimalclinic.com](http://smallanimalclinic.com). So we're that website. Our phone number is (920) 269-4000. And you can text us at (920) 539-7164. You can give us a call. You can stop in and see us. We're across from Quad Graphics at the highway 41 and 49 interchange. And we're there seven days a week.

**Nick Rusch:**

And we should mentioned again, that's something that you mentioned earlier, with the way things are right now as with so many other businesses, if you try and, unless it's an emergency, if you try and get in to make an appointment for a Wednesday or Thursday this week, it's probably not going to happen. So a plan ahead, if you possibly can, and I know you guys were there for emergencies as well, but certainly plan your vet visits ahead of time so you can make sure and get the best care, and get in because boy, this day and age, everything's hard, right, Doc? Everything.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Exactly. And make sure that you're really nice for the veterinary team. The receptionist, the rest of the team, the people in the exam rooms and the surgery. They're struggling to get everybody in there. They're exhausted. They're working really hard. It doesn't matter what vet clinic you're talking about. They're all just swamped, busy emergency clinics, routine care, so be really nice to the staff and they will be really nice to you. They're trying to help everybody, but it's just been a real challenge. Every vet clinic I know of is just overwhelmed. So be kind, be patient, and they will take good care of you as best they can.

**Nick Rusch:**

In the 60 seconds we have left doctor, any other words of wisdom you can give us as we come into fall? Anything else that we should keep an eye out for?

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

Oh yeah. Don't forget your flea and tick medications. People think this time of year, as it starts to get cooler that they're done with it, but ticks move in the spring and the fall, and fleas are worst in October and November. When it starts to get cold out, they jump off the little rabbits and onto your little furry friends that live in your house. So be sure you continue your topical or your oral flea and tick meds so that there is no lapse in coverage. We don't want to find out in November, just before you have family in for Thanksgiving, that you have a flea infestation on your little friends. So be sure to keep those going.

**Nick Rusch:**

All right. Excellent. Doctor, it's always a pleasure, we always learn something, and it's always fun to talk about the critters because I know we all love them, even those of us that aren't pet owners. I get in a lot of dog time in the average day, because I have a lot of neighbors with dogs.

**Dr. Marty Greer:**

You're a lucky guy.

**Nick Rusch:**

My wife calls me The Dog Whisperer. I don't know if that's true or not, but we'll take her word for it. Dr. Marty Greer, Veterinary Village in Lomira. Dr. Greer, thanks so much. Always a pleasure.