



PROMOTING PARASITE PREVENTION IN PRACTICE

Kelly Soldavin



Madeleine Womble

Each interaction a veterinary team has with a pet owner is an opportunity to provide vital information about a number of wellness issues, one of the most important being parasite prevention.

However, today's world of economic hardships and Internet "dependence" has made the veterinary practice's role in promoting parasite prevention much more challenging.

- Pet owners are looking for less expensive products—turning to sources, such as online pharmacies, for their pets' prescription fulfillment.
- Many preventive products are now available over the counter, outside of the veterinary practice.
- Owners are making fewer appointments to save money and missing out on important conversations about their pets' health.
- Without a trusted resource, owners are turning to the Internet for facts on pet health; however, is this information correct?

Your approach to parasite prevention may need to change in order for pet owners to:

1. View your practice team as a key source for information
2. Consider your products' quality and pricing in line with competitive businesses.

MEET MADELEINE

Today's Veterinary Practice reached out through several sources to find someone who has helped implement practice protocols that effectively influence owners to maintain consistent, high-quality parasite prevention for their pets.

Therefore, meet Madeleine Womble—the Hospital Manager at Central Veterinary Hospital (central-vethospital.com) in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Madeleine has been with CVH for 14 years, originally joining its team to help with the practice's bookkeeping. Her work grew into a managerial position, launching Madeleine into her current career.

She oversees a veterinary hospital that is open 6 days a week, with 12-hour days Monday through Friday. As her bio on the hospital's website says, "From employment opportunities to special dietary and medicating needs, Madeleine coordinates it all."

IT TAKES A TEAM

The 3 owners of the practice—Drs. Robert Black, William Martin, and Penelope Iannacone—are complemented by 3 associate veterinarians, a licensed veterinary technician, and 10 veterinary assistants who handle responsibilities, such as assisting specific veterinarians, specializing in anesthetic recovery, and caring for the kennels.

At CVH, a client relations manager heads up a 6-member team of client relation specialists who supervise client communication, including scheduling appointments, greeting pet owners, and facilitating prescription refills and check in/out.

In addition to standard veterinary care, the hospital

offers hospitalization, boarding, and grooming. After hours cases are referred to an emergency clinic that is 2 miles down the road.

Clients of CVH are treated to a practice that has the personnel and capabilities to offer the best care for their pets. The question is—with so many team members and such a busy schedule, how does CVH implement effective parasite prevention strategies for their patients?

GETTING A HEAD START

At CVH, parasite prevention begins as soon as the patient comes in the door. When the owner checks in, the client relationship specialist asks:

- In addition to the reason for the visit, are there any other concerns the client has about his or her pet?
- What medication or products need to be refilled (specifically parasite prevention)? These refills are then prepared and ready at check out.

If the client declines refills on parasite preventives, the specialist makes a note, alerting the veterinarian that prevention needs to be discussed during the examination.

MAKING TIME TO TALK

The appointment schedule at CVH allows veterinarians ample time to talk with clients. The technician or assistant provides support by sharing their own experiences, helping clients realize that the veterinary team understands the challenges of choosing preventives, consistent administration, and budgeting cost.

Much of the conversation about parasite prevention can be covered in the patient's history. Common questions include:

- How is the current preventive(s) working? Are there any questions or concerns?
- Has a parasite-related disease or situation, such as a flea infestation in the home, occurred?
- How often is the preventive administered?
With new clients, additional questions include:
- What is the pet's preventive history—what has been used and is the pet currently receiving any preventive?
- When was the pet's last heartworm test?

COMMUNICATING KEY POINTS

Madeleine shares, “One of the key things our veterinarians, technicians, and assistants convey to our clients is the fact that we live in an area that is highly endemic for parasites, but that they can easily be killed and repelled by preventives.”

She goes on to say, “Many clients are concerned about the cost of preventives, but our team points out that cost of treatment for diseases caused by these parasites is much higher than the cost of prevention. In addition, we discuss the current challenges with obtaining adulticide, which could jeopardize treatment if the owner's pet were to become infected with heartworms.”

HEARTWORM TESTING—PART OF WELLNESS CARE

CVH's wellness testing includes blood analysis for heartworms (for cats, it's included in the test for FeLV). By including heartworm testing as part of the wellness examination, the hospital elevates the importance of parasite control, demonstrating to clients that parasite prevention is integral to wellness care.



Madeleine adds, “Thankfully, we have had no issues in securing medication for treatment of heartworm disease.”

TAILORING THE PLAN

Madeleine highlights a critical point in CVH's approach to pet owners: compromise. “We offer all prevention and treatment options to clients; then let them decide how they would like to proceed. Each pet has a customized plan developed that addresses both the pet and owner's needs.”

“What we want to avoid,” Madeleine says, “is making a client feel ‘bad’ if he or she is unable or chooses not to follow our recommendations. Instead, we make a note to revisit the topic at the next appointment, hoping that the client will decide to follow our advice then.”

CVH offers a selection of 3 to 4 parasite preventives. “No one preventive works for every case. Discussing various options emphasizes that most preventives address more than one parasite and assures clients that they are making informed decisions,” notes Madeleine.

With regard to heartworm disease treatment, Madeleine says, “Of the pets that test positive for heartworm infection, most are new patients. And the majority of clients choose to treat their pets.”

FINDING FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

When a client finishes an appointment at CVH:

- The veterinary team has discussed parasite prevention, diagnostics, and/or treatment and developed a plan with the client that addresses the pet's specific needs.
- The client relations specialist is aware of the plan and confirms the preventive chosen and the amount the client would like to purchase.

With CVH's emphasis on client compromise, the

hospital works with each client to make prevention affordable. Madeleine shares, “Clients can purchase 1 dose at a time or a year’s worth. While we had concerns about whether 1-dose purchasers would return regularly, we have found that these pet owners are very dedicated to buying preventive each month and keeping their pets protected, despite financial challenges that prevent purchase of a 6- or 12-month supply.”

CVH also has several protocols in place to keep the hospital competitive with stores and online suppliers that offer prescription and OTC preventive products.

- CVH’s prices are competitive with pharmacies, stores, and other local clinics; this competitive pricing is enhanced by manufacturer coupons and rebates.
- When clients request written prescriptions, client relations specialists explain the hospital’s competitive pricing, and point out that CVH can often offer a better “deal” on preventives.
- All rebates and coupons are processed in the clinic and mailed for the clients—one less thing clients have to worry about.

Madeleine says, “At the end of each day or week we print reports for the coupons/rebates collected and mail them to the manufacturers in weekly batches. Once a system is established, it’s a straightforward process and one that our clients very much appreciate.”

OFFERING EDUCATION & RESOURCES

Madeleine notes that CVH’s relationships with manufacturer representatives are valuable when it comes to providing employee education. “A representative who does his or her job well is always willing to help. When we need education about specific topics or products, these representatives provide this information to our team.”

CVH also provides ongoing training for personnel, with parasite preventive protocols discussed on a regular basis.

For both hospital personnel and clients, Madeleine ensures that there are plenty of handouts—often provided by manufacturers for specific products—and printed materials available in the waiting and examination rooms that can be shared, discussed, and sent home with clients for further review.

The CVH website also offers several resources that help promote wellness care, including parasite prevention:

- A **Topic of the Month** page provides information on a specific health topic and special incentive



THE POWER OF 12 AT CVH

Last year, 12.12.12 became the mantra for an initiative focused on increasing, by 12%, the number of year-round (12-month) doses of heartworm preventive sold in 2012.

Madeleine shared how the program impacted CVH: “12.12.12 reminded our team that we really should be encouraging clients to buy 12 months of preventive at a time. This recommendation was backed up by the great rebates offered by Merial—it was an incentive clients couldn’t pass up.”

She added, “Clients didn’t always understand that year-round prevention is needed in our area. 12.12.12 helped educate our employees on this topic, which allowed them to educate our clients. The program’s measurement system showed that our sales of 12-dose heartworm preventive products increased.”

“The best part was finding out that the hospital was above average when compared to national statistics with regard to percentage of clients purchasing year-round prevention. I really gained a new appreciation for our team, knowing our patients were reaping the benefits of a job well done by everyone at CVH.”

pricing for products or services related to it; parasite prevention is addressed at least twice a year.

- **Petly accounts** (petly.com; private website that allows pet owners to directly access and manage their pets' health care) allow clients to request appointments, check wellness history, and order prescription refills.
- **Links** to further information on topics of interest for pet owners are available.

The existence of these resources is highlighted on the hospital's Facebook page and monthly client newsletter.

IN SUMMARY

Madeleine's thoughts on implementing a successful and effective parasite prevention program made it obvious that a process of simple steps can result in big changes.

1. **Define each team member's role** in helping pet owners make the right decisions about parasite prevention for their pets.
2. **Have honest conversations with clients** about what does or does not work with regard to their pets' parasite prevention.
3. **Integrate parasite testing and prevention into wellness visits**, reinforcing its importance as a key to having a healthy pet.
4. **Develop a preventive program** that works for each person and pet, which increases compliance and decreases the possibility a client will purchase products elsewhere.
5. **Become THE source for client questions on pet health care**—pet owners should come to you and your clinic for advice rather than relying on dubious Internet information.

"Our hospital is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care for our patients," Madeleine says. "By making sure our employees share that vision, our clients are offered a full range of options for their pets' health care, and the hospital team works with clients to implement best care in light of each individual's situation." ■

IVERHART MAX®

(ivermectin/pyrantel pamoate/praziquantel)

Chewable Tablets

CAUTION: Federal (US) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

BRIEF SUMMARY: Please consult package insert for complete product information.

Indications: For use in dogs to prevent canine heartworm disease by eliminating the tissue stage of heartworm larvae (*Dirofilaria immitis*) for a month (30 days) after infection and for the treatment and control of roundworms (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonina*), hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum*, *Uncinaria stenocephala*, *Ancylostoma braziliense*), and tapeworms (*Dipylidium caninum*, *Taenia pisiformis*).

WARNINGS: For use in dogs only. Keep this and all drugs out of reach of children. In safety studies, testicular hypoplasia was observed in some dogs receiving 3 and 5 times the maximum recommended dose monthly for 6 months (see Animal Safety). In case of ingestion by humans, clients should be advised to contact a physician immediately. Physicians may contact a Poison Control Center for advice concerning cases of ingestion by humans.

PRECAUTIONS: Use with caution in sick, debilitated, or underweight animals and dogs weighing less than 10 lbs. The safe use of this drug has not been evaluated in pregnant or lactating bitches.

All dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection before starting treatment with IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets, which are not effective against adult *D. immitis*. Infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms and microfilariae before initiating a heartworm prevention program.

While some microfilariae may be killed by the ivermectin in IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets at the recommended dose level, IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets are not effective for microfilariae clearance. A mild hypersensitivity-type reaction, presumably due to dead or dying microfilariae and particularly involving transient diarrhea, has been observed in clinical trials with ivermectin alone after treatment of some dogs that have circulating microfilariae.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: In clinical field trials with ivermectin/pyrantel pamoate, vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours of dosing was rarely observed (1.1% of administered doses). The following adverse reactions have been reported following the use of ivermectin: depression/lethargy, vomiting, anorexia, diarrhea, mydriasis, ataxia, staggering, convulsions and hypersalivation.

ANIMAL SAFETY: Studies with ivermectin indicate that certain dogs of the Collie breed are more sensitive to the effects of ivermectin administered at elevated dose levels (more than 16 times the target use level of 6 mcg/kg) than dogs of other breeds. At elevated doses, sensitive dogs showed adverse reactions which included mydriasis, depression, ataxia, tremors, drooling, paresis, recumbency, excitability, stupor, coma and death. No signs of toxicity were seen at 10 times the recommended dose (27.2 mcg/lb) in sensitive Collies. Results of these studies and bioequivalence studies support the safety of ivermectin products in dogs, including Collies, when used as recommended by the label.

In a laboratory safety study, 12-week-old Beagle puppies receiving 3 and 5 times the recommended dose once weekly for 13 weeks demonstrated a dose-related decrease in testicular maturation compared to controls.

HOW SUPPLIED: IVERHART MAX Chewable Tablets are available in four dosage strengths for dogs of different weights. Each strength comes in a box of 6 chewable tablets and in a box of 12 chewable tablets, packed 10 boxes per display box.

STORAGE CONDITIONS: Store at controlled room temperature of 59°-86° F (15°-30° C). Protect product from light.

For technical assistance or to report adverse drug reactions, please call 1-800-338-3659.

Manufactured by: Virbac AH, Inc. Fort Worth, TX 76137

NADA 141-257, Approved by FDA
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EASOTIC®

Otic suspension

(hydrocortisone aceponate, miconazole nitrate, gentamicin sulfate) Anti-inflammatory, antifungal, and antibacterial

For Otic Use in Dogs Only

CAUTION

Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

BRIEF SUMMARY: Please consult package insert for complete product information.

INDICATIONS

EASOTIC® suspension is indicated for the treatment of otitis externa in dogs associated with susceptible strains of yeast (*Malassezia pachydermatis*) and bacteria (*Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*).

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not use in dogs with known tympanic membrane perforation.

EASOTIC® suspension is contraindicated in dogs with known or suspected hypersensitivity to corticosteroids, imidazole antifungals, or aminoglycoside antibiotics.

WARNINGS

Human Warnings: Not for use in humans. Keep this and all drugs out of reach of children.

Humans with known or suspected hypersensitivity to hydrocortisone, aminoglycoside antibiotics, or azole antifungals should not handle this product.

Animal Warnings: As a class, aminoglycoside antibiotics are associated with ototoxicity, vestibular dysfunction and renal toxicity. The use of EASOTIC® suspension in a dog with a damaged tympanic membrane can result in damage to the structures of the ear associated with hearing and balance or in transmission of the infection to the middle or inner ear. Immediately discontinue use of EASOTIC® suspension if hearing loss or signs of vestibular dysfunction are observed during treatment (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**).

PRECAUTIONS

Do not administer orally.

Concurrent administration of potentially ototoxic drugs should be avoided.

Use with caution in dogs with impaired hepatic or renal function (see **ANIMAL SAFETY**).

Long-term use of topical otic corticosteroids has been associated with adrenocortical suppression and iatrogenic hyperadrenocorticism in dogs (see **ANIMAL SAFETY**).

The safe use of EASOTIC® suspension in dogs used for breeding purposes, during pregnancy, or in lactating bitches, has not been evaluated.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

In a field study conducted in the United States, there were no adverse reactions reported in 145 dogs administered EASOTIC® suspension.

In foreign market experience, reports of hearing loss and application site erythema have been received. In most reported cases, the hearing loss and erythema were transient and resolved with discontinuation of EASOTIC® suspension.

To report suspected adverse drug events, or for technical assistance contact Virbac at 800-338-3659.

ANIMAL SAFETY

Aural administration of EASOTIC® suspension to 12 week old Beagle dogs at 1, 3, and 5 times the recommended dose (1 mL/ear/day) for 15 days (three times the treatment length) was associated with alterations of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis as evidenced by the ACTH stimulation results. Other findings considered to be related to treatment include the development of aural hyperemia; the presence of renal tubular crystals and possibly renal tubular basophilia and atrophy; elevated liver weights; the development of otitis externa and media; and elevations in alanine aminotransferase, alkaline phosphatase, total protein, albumin, and cholesterol levels.

STORAGE INFORMATION: Store at temperatures between 20° C-25° C (68° F-77° F), with excursions permitted between 15° C-30° C (59° F-86° F).

HOW SUPPLIED: EASOTIC® suspension is supplied in a polyethylene canister, with a soft applicator canula.

Distributed by:

Virbac AH, Inc.
Fort Worth, TX
76137 USA

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