

Caring for pets well into their dog years

By Brandon Bosworth

Regular visits to a medical professional are important not just for people, but for their pets as well. Annual check-ups for Spot and Kitty can help keep them healthy and living longer lives. And during those times when emergencies or serious health issues arise, especially in older pets, specialized care is needed.

Kahala Pet Hospital focuses on providing just that kind of care. While the facility does offer general services, from wellness exams to sterilization, a major part of its work consists of more difficult cases, many of which involve older animals.

The facility's efforts to fulfill this niche in animal services are led by chief surgeon and practice director Dr. Patrick Leadbeater, who has been practicing veterinary medicine in Hawaii for more than 30 years. A native of England, he arrived in the Islands in 1979 to work at an emergency animal hospital on Kapiolani Boulevard. When he took over Kahala Pet Hospital in 1992, he strove to find ways to better the field.

"We set about modifying and improving it," said Leadbeater. "We're always trying to raise the standards of veterinary medicine and surgery."

Tending to aging pets is one way the hospital achieves this goal, as Leadbeater points out that many of the animals he sees have been turned away by other veterinarians who will not work on elderly animals. "I will operate on an 18- or 19-year-old animal for several hours if need be," he said.



Patrick Leadbeater

Common afflictions for older pets include arthritis, hip dysplasia and other joint problems. To relieve the pain and inflammation resulting from these issues, Kahala Pet Hospital utilizes an advanced form of regenerative stem cell therapy. As the first veterinarian in Hawaii to offer the treatment, Dr. Leadbeater explained, "We do a type of stem cell therapy no one else does." The animal's own stem cells are harvested from fat tissue, processed and injected into



Photos courtesy of Kahala Pet Hospital

The hospital practitioners cater to man's best friend, and other pets too, regardless of age or condition.

the afflicted area. The process takes about three days, and within one week to two months after treatment, most animals will have improved mobility and reduced pain.

For pets with particularly severe hip dysplasia, Kahala Pet Hospital offers hip replacement. The team uses a prosthetic hip made of titanium, cobalt chrome and ultra high molecular weight polyethylene to implant in the animal, thereby replacing the painful arthritic joint.

At one point, hip replacement surgery was mostly available for larger animals only, such as big dogs. However, recent technological advances have resulted in a greater range of implants in varying sizes, which the facility takes advantage of to make hip replacement surgery available to small dogs and cats as well.

Staff members at Kahala Pet Hospital are adept at dealing with time-critical cases. For example, they frequently treat spinal injuries in which timing is key. "Sometimes we only have four to six hours to help," described Leadbeater. After that, there is a good chance the animal will be paralyzed. "We will work the case even if we have to assemble a team in the middle of the night."

Much of Kahala Pet Hospital's success is reflected by the positive word-of-mouth it garners. In addition to receiving many referrals from other vets, it isn't unusual for clients to fly their pets in from neighbor islands for treatment at this top-notch facility.

If you wish to have your company featured in this section, contact Patrick Klein at pklein@staradvertiser.com.

Where furry friends age gracefully

With a wealth of treatments for older animals with serious health issues, Kahala Pet Hospital realizes the importance of prevention. To keep aging pets happy and healthy, the hospital has a special senior pet wellness program for animals ages 12 and older.

Dr. Patrick Leadbeater, chief surgeon and practice director, believes that helping elderly animals with a full scope of services is an integral part of Kahala Pet Hospital's mission. "Age is not a disease," he said. "We cater to older pets."

During an animal's first visit, hospital staff will perform a full physical exam. Afterwards, pet owner's receive a personalized program geared to manage any problems.

Since older animals need additional monitoring to stay in good health, further appointments are scheduled every four months instead of the usual annual or biannual veterinary visits.

► The 411

Name: Kahala Pet Hospital

Address: 4819 Kilauea Ave. Ste. 7
Honolulu, HI 96816

Phone: 735-4433

Website: www.kahalapet.com

Chief surgeon and practice director:
Dr. Patrick Leadbeater

Employees: 12

Founded: 1992

Benefits: Employees receive medical, vacation and care for their own pets.

Noteworthy: Kahala Pet Hospital offers free exams for kittens and puppies, as well as free second opinions and examination of existing test results.