



SPRING 2009

Companion Animal Hospital  
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## Willow: Strength with Flexibility



*Willow*—her name says it all—beautiful, patient and oh, so flexible! This sweet, playful Cairn Terrier spent more than half of 2008 at CAH battling a serious condition of her “tush” that caused repeated anal sac infections and draining tracts from her rectum to the skin around her anus. How she maintained her wonderful personality and spirit, in the face of multiple surgeries and pain in that sensitive area, is hard to imagine.

Willow developed infections in her anal sacs in April, August and November of 2007. Typically, surgical removal of the sacs resolves this problem—but not for Willow. After her January 2008 surgery, Willow developed deep fistulas (holes) from inside her rectum to the skin around her anus, and her whole tush was as red as a beet. From March through June, Willow lived at CAH, receiving cleaning and treatment under her tail three times daily. She underwent six surgeries attempting to close the fistulas. Despite intense post-op therapy with cleaning, flushing, antibiotics and special diets, the tracts always returned.

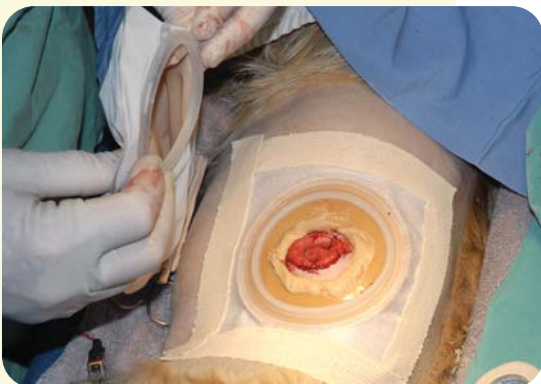


Could it heal without stool passing through the area every day? With the guidance of specialists in Washington and North Carolina, we decided to divert the stool from the rectum to see if healing could occur. This was done by performing a colostomy in June. Willow would then have BMs into a bag or diaper on her side (see photo). This surgery has only been documented seven times in dogs but seemed her only hope. She remained a guest of CAH into the fall, with our caring staff providing intensive care of both her colostomy and her anal area. At times Willow was very sore, lost weight and was subdued but she always bounced back with changes in therapy or diet.

In late August, her fistulas finally appeared to be healed so we reversed the colostomy, once again allowing her to have BMs in the normal manner. The surgeries went smoothly and she was a trooper. Unhappily, the fistulas returned again. So, while Willow's problem didn't end as well as we hoped, medical therapy keeps her a bright, happy, personable companion to her owners.

Willow, her owners and the entire staff at CAH should be commended for their patience, persistence and dedication to the ongoing efforts to make this adorable dog as healthy and happy as possible despite her incurable disease.

At Companion Animal Hospital, we offer cutting-edge medicine and surgery through continuing education, consultation, research and technological growth.



Photos left from top: Willow at home. Marking the colostomy site. Willow's colostomy opening and bag.



# Ear Mites

Your cat has been scratching at his ears, shaking his head, and now you notice an odor and a dark secretion. Ear infection? Maybe not. The most common cause of ear problems in cats is mites. Ear mites are highly contagious, tiny eight-legged parasites that actually feed on the oils and wax in cats' ears. There are several types of mites that can infect both dogs and cats (humans are rarely susceptible), but the problem is more prevalent in cats.

Ear mites will create irritation and inflammation, and left untreated they can cause serious skin and ear infections. Severe cases can lead to such discomfort that the cat's scratching and head shaking may result in an aural hematoma (rupture of blood vessels in the ear), which may require surgery to repair.

Visit your veterinarian at the first sign of problems with your cat's or dog's ears. It's important to identify the cause of the problem to ensure proper treatment. If mites are indeed the culprit, all your pets may require treatment, and it will be necessary to thoroughly clean their regular sleeping areas as well.



## Recalls

Pet food, beef, spinach, chicken jerky treats and peanut butter...if you're having trouble keeping track of what food is safe to feed both your family and the pets, you're not alone. Fortunately, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration makes information about recalls readily available on its website. Go to [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) and select **Recalls and Safety Alerts**, where they list both human and pet food items. In addition, the Humane Society of the United States updates related information on its website, at [www.humanesociety.org/petfoodsafety](http://www.humanesociety.org/petfoodsafety).

# Delivering Smiles

A growing body of research has confirmed the remarkable benefits animals can provide, even during a relatively short visit. From reduced heart rate and blood pressure, decreased anxiety and stress, to enhanced feelings of well-being, scientists continue to document and confirm the value of not just pet ownership, but of animals visiting with people in nursing homes, hospitals and other facilities.

Some refer to them as "therapy dogs," others use the term "animal assisted activities" or "visiting pets." Regardless of what it's called, the goal is the same: to bring a few moments of happiness to someone special. If you're interested in volunteering, there are a number of organizations that can help. These groups can provide training, testing, registration and identification, which helps to assure the facilities you'd like to visit that you and your pet have demonstrated suitability for the task.

Some organizations focus only on dogs and their handlers, while others will evaluate cats and other pets as well. They all require your pet to be up-to-date on core vaccinations and in good health as certified by a licensed veterinarian.

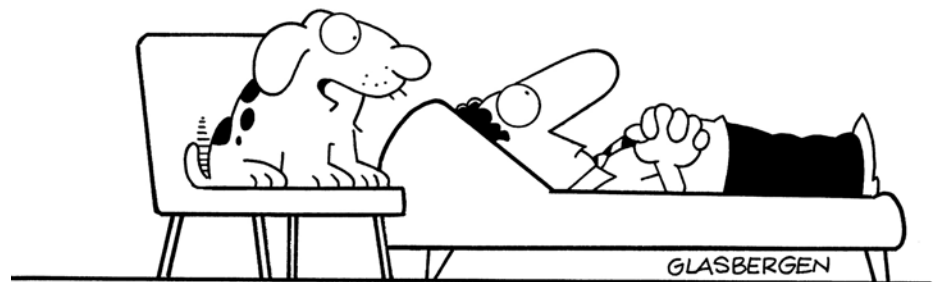
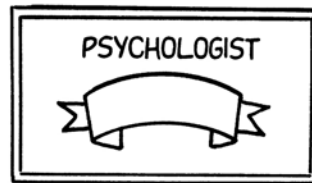
For more information, contact:

- Therapy Dogs International at [www.tdi-dog.org](http://www.tdi-dog.org)
- The Delta Society at [www.deltasociety.org](http://www.deltasociety.org)
- Therapy Dogs, Inc. at [www.therapydogs.com](http://www.therapydogs.com)



Photo courtesy of The Delta Society

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**"My therapy is quite simple: I wag my tail and lick your face until you feel good about yourself again."**

# Too Much Snail Mail?

In the coming years we'll be trying to soothe that stuffed feeling your mailbox has. Newsletters, health reminder cards and special offerings can be sent via email. Just go to [www.tlc4pets.com](http://www.tlc4pets.com) and click on *Newsletter sign-up* or send your request for email correspondence to [contact@tlc4pets.com](mailto:contact@tlc4pets.com). We promise not to give your address to any other business or individual. And we won't bombard you with frequent mail – just the important stuff!

# Tough Times Call for New Solutions

In difficult economic times it's especially important to plan for adversity. Unexpected injury or illness can be hard to tackle. The best care for your beloved pets gets more costly every year.

Pet health insurance is a cost-effective way to give your best friends the quality care they deserve. The American Veterinary Medical Association Health Insurance Trust has endorsed **PetsBest Insurance** based on many common sense criteria that benefit you and your pets. Visit [www.petsbest.com](http://www.petsbest.com) for details. Also visit [www.healthypet.com](http://www.healthypet.com) for pet insurance companies endorsed by the American Animal Hospital Association.

Another way to deal with bills for extensive treatment is with the **CareCredit** No Interest Payment Plan. It's a reasonable way to get the best possible care for your pet now but pay for it over time with low monthly payments that fit your budget. For more information about CareCredit, talk with our pet care counselors at 449-9800.

## PRISTINE BOARDING FACILITIES

LUXURY CONDOS FOR CATS • DOGS ENJOY MULTIPLE DAILY WALKS • 24 HOUR ATTENDANT

*Stop by and see for yourself!*

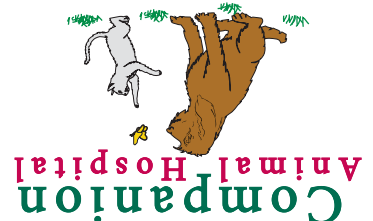
**CAH is proud to announce Dr. Earl Mummert has been elected to represent New London County as a director on the executive board of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association.**

NO PETS? Give your friends, family or neighbors this valuable info!



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