

### Animals as Antidote—Part 2 of 3



## Mended Fences

By John J. Haburjak, DVM, Diplomate ACVS

With the final weeks before the school year starts now upon us, perhaps this would be an excellent time to consider all that the dry summer days had in store for us? For our family it was Tahoe, gymnastics camp, Karate, shopping for big-kid beds, a trip to grandma's, a visit from another, a birthday, an anniversary, the fair...

and another animal for the Haburjak household!

Yeah, it's true. I truly thought I had escaped a bullet when my family went on its annual trip to the county fair and we made it through the entire day without adopting a single feather, scale, or hoof. I was ecstatic. At one point in the day, I even whispered to Aimee "Please let this be a July that we do not bring home another animal!" She laughed as I reminded her that last year it was chickens, the year before a rabbit, the year before another rabbit, and the year before my son Ian (Ian's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday was this past July)! She seemed, on the surface anyway, to be in complete agreement, and to my great glee we left the fair without a new animal for our household.

Well, as I was to find out, there were several more weeks in the month of July. Their opening seemed to arrive only a week later when my two older daughters were invited to ARF for a birthday party. The brilliance of the marketing move of ARF to host birthday parties on-site was somewhat lost on me – at least initially. After all, I had thought that my firm position on new pets was being viewed seriously. Then while at home, and with the party in full swing, I began to receive texts from my team of cats needing a home. In addition to these lovely photos of various adoptees, there were sweet invitations from the entire group of female Haburjaks imploring me to come down and see for myself. As the story goes, I refused and remained firm

– *no more animals for the Haburjak's!* Let's just say, upon their arrival home, I was received rather coldly, and with a great deal of emotion from the entire clan. What difference would one more animal make after all? Tears, hurt feelings and emotional expressions of their frustrations with my policies on animal procurement were simply not enough to sway me; I was firm. Eva, my oldest daughter, was particularly distraught over my stance.

Somehow after a goodnight's sleep, the morning brought cooler heads. As a family, we discussed the need to curtail animal adoption, and it really seemed to clear it all up. Or so I thought. Yet that very afternoon, with all that we seemed to resolve, they somehow talked me into going to ARF "just to see the facilities." Do I really need to say what happened? We came home with Ginger Cookie. How do you not cave in?

Later that night, we were all lying on our large master bed. I on my back, with Eva curled into my side, Ginger Cookie purring and kneading on my chest, Aimee and Ian on the end of the bed and Emery kneeling beside us stroking the kitty's chin. At this point Emery, the decided barometer and ambassador of Haburjak family equilibrium, put the widest, most cherubic smile on her face and gently pronounced "Papa, you like this kitty don't you?" At that point, all was well, all fences mended – especially with my oldest daughter Eva.

Sure, it's clear to me, there are times as a parent when no is the right answer, however this was truly one of those times where it just felt so good to say yes. After all, what's one more animal?!

If you would like to share your thoughts or comments, feel free to email or call at any time.

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## NOTABLE NEWS

### PETS Referral Center Joins the Veterinary Care Foundation



The Veterinary Care Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation created to offer financial support to veterinary practices

that provide no cost or low cost care to sick and injured animals.

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Because foundation operating expenses are funded entirely through membership dues paid by veterinarians, 100% of every dollar donated to the Veterinary Care Foundation is used to treat pets.

Donors can direct their donations to a specific veterinary practice or to the Good Samaritan Fund, which assists wherever most needed.

The Foundation's criteria for use of donated funds are generally restricted to the following:

- Funding for Good Samaritan cases
- Assist pet owners in financial crisis
- Care for police/fire and service animals
- Funding for pets harmed or displaced due to local disaster (such as weather, fire, etc.)

For more information, or to make a donation to PETS Referral Center or the Good Samaritan Fund, please call toll free 888-929-4799 or visit their website at [www.vetcarefoundation.org](http://www.vetcarefoundation.org).



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## THE SURGEONS OF VSC



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Tracy N.  
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Andrew M.  
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Mark L.  
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## Featured Medical Case

# Foxtail Migration and Foreign Bodies in Dogs

By Andrew Grange, BSc, BVetMed, DACVS



Foxtail plants are found mainly within the Western United States and consist of barbed seed heads specifically designed for mammal dispersion in the wild. The seed head contains multiple barbs that attach easily to an animal's fur and in shorter haired grazing mammals become dislodged from the fur and fall to the ground aiding dispersion of the plant. In animals with longer hair coats (such as dogs) foxtails can be extremely troublesome. Instead of dislodging, the foxtail can bury itself deep in the fur and penetrate the animal's skin to enter the subcutaneous space. Muscular movement and the caudally pointed spines of the seed head force the foxtail deeper and deeper into the tissues.

Foxtail migration can be a major hazard, penetrate vital organs, and cause serious infections. VSC has performed many thoracic and abdominal surgeries to remove migrating foxtails. Some of these have been major surgeries to remove lung lobes, liver lobes and even remove foxtails migrating toward the heart.

The most common scenario we see is a dog that is limping on one limb and that has a small open tract between the toes that is draining either a blood or pus like discharge. Often times these tracts are probed under sedation and a foxtail is identified and removed.

Recently I had a patient called Finn who is a 5 year old male neutered Doberman Pinscher who presented to me for assessment of a draining tract between his two middle digits on his right front leg and a mild weightbearing lameness. Physical examination also identified a soft flocculent swelling on the dorsal aspect of the proximal metacarpal region. A migrating foxtail was suspected and a contrast fistulogram performed to identify if the proximal swelling communicated with the draining tract, or if this was a separate area of pathology.

The fistulogram is shown in Figures 1 and 2. By infusing radio-opaque contrast material into the draining tract between the toes we were able to identify the entire draining tract, the course the foxtail took through the tissues, and its origin in the region of the proximal swelling. Finn was taken to surgery and the tract explored



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

guided greatly by the pre-operative imaging we obtained.

Deep within the swollen soft tissue proximally a foxtail seed head was found and removed (Figure 3). The incision was closed routinely and Finn went on to make a full recovery. The fistulogram in this case illustrates nicely just how far foxtails can migrate from the original draining tract.

Other areas that we have found foxtails have been the nasal cavity following inhalation, eyes, ear canals, and even the urethra in both male and female dogs. Prevention of penetrating foxtail injuries and migration can be difficult but mainly hinges on early detection and removal of the seed head from the fur after every walk where foxtail plants are encountered.

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At left: Brenda and Teddy  
Below: Teddy, Kaedin & Odie



### Teddy's Story

## A Triumph of Compassion

Meet Teddy, a cute 1 year old pit bull/boxer mix. He is a sweet boy who loves dogs, cuddling with his favorite people and playing. Teddy was very fearful when he first arrived at the shelter, probably because he didn't get the training or socialization he needed early in life. Teddy wasn't adjusting well to life in the shelter and needed a calmer, more stable environment.

Brenda, the Administrative Coordinator at PETS Referral Center in Berkeley, is also a shelter volunteer. Brenda and her fiancé Mark began fostering Teddy to see if that would help. Teddy did great in the home with his foster parents and the other dogs in the house. Due to a series of unfortunate events, Teddy acted inappropriately during a visit to the shelter and was not allowed to return to his foster home. Brenda was given two options for Teddy—try to get him accepted to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah or let him be euthanized. After five weeks of foster care, Brenda and Mark were very attached to Teddy and couldn't stand to let him

be euthanized, so Brenda immediately began the application process for Best Friends. They needed videos of Teddy meeting dogs he hadn't met before—one through a fence, one on leash and one off leash. The shelter supervisors were happy to help, as were shelter dogs Cheesecake, Dexter and Buster. Teddy did great during the videos, which is in large part due to the great dog socialization he received in his foster home from Kaedin and Odie.

Due to space restrictions, Best Friends was initially reluctant to take Teddy, but ultimately decided to accept him into their program. They have large enclosures for the dogs with indoor and outdoor sections. Each enclosure houses a few dogs so they always have company. The dogs are walked and socialized by staff and volunteers. Best Friends has animal behaviorists on staff to help work through Teddy's fear issues. Animals can stay at the sanctuary as long as needed while they look for their forever homes.

Once Best Friends decided to accept Teddy,

they were able to get him released from the shelter and Brenda arranged a foster agreement through Best Friends so he could unwind in his foster home until Brenda was able to make the 750 mile drive to Utah. Brenda spent the first morning at Best Friends helping Teddy acclimate and then spent the rest of that day and the next day volunteering with other dogs at the sanctuary.

Brenda continues to get updates on Teddy's progress. He currently lives with a female dog named Ramona and enjoys pool time and golf cart rides. He still has some behavioral issues but they love him unconditionally and work on his training every day to help him with his issues.



Teddy and Ramona at Best Friends

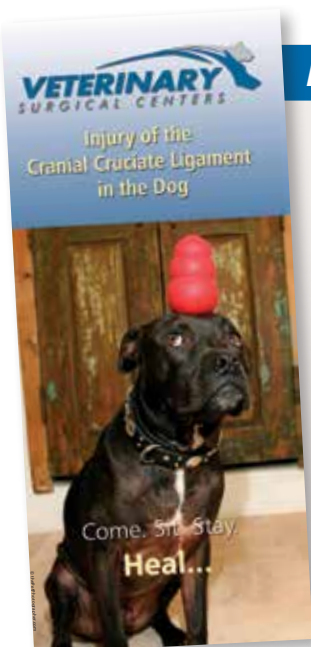
### FEATURED BROCHURE

#### Injury of the Cranial Cruciate Ligament in the Dog

This issue's featured brochure is our most commonly-requested pamphlet, describing the all-too-common cranial cruciate (CCL) injury of the dog and its potential surgical treatment options. These surgeries produce very high success rates, returning the vast majority of patients to good to excellent function after recovery. In this pamphlet you will find:

- Review of the anatomy and function of the CCL
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- Visual aids (photographs of radiographs and other drawings) to further explain these issues
- Post-operative expectations and care.

This is an excellent tool to supplement the information and materials you already provide your clients. Furthermore, many hospitals are using this brochure internally, to help their staff achieve greater understanding of this condition as well as to develop a common language to use with their clientele. This and other brochures can be found at and downloaded from our website [www.vscdsurgerycenters.com](http://www.vscdsurgerycenters.com) by clicking the "Resources" tab. For complimentary copies of any of our brochures or business cards, email us any time at [contact@vscdsurgerycenters.com](mailto:contact@vscdsurgerycenters.com).



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This newsletter is dedicated to “Ripley” Wettstein. Ripley, a Basset Hound Dalmatian mix, was a beloved family member of the Wettstein family. Ripley passed on this May at 14 years of age. She became part of the family seven years ago when Erin, our Technician Manager adopted her from Save-a-Spot Dalmatian Rescue. Ripley spent her full life bringing cherished memories to her family who will always have a fond place for her in their hearts.



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