

Holistic veterinarian prescribes hope and healing

SIXTY-THREE PERCENT of all U.S. households own a pet, which equals an estimated 140,000,000 pets. That's a lot of love! Many pet owners consider their pet as much a part of the family as any other person in the home. So, what would you do if your pet was given 24 hours to live?

Dr. Shawn Messonnier, DVM, is the author of *Unexpected Miracles: Hope and Holistic Healing for Pets*, a collection of true stories about some of his most inspiring patients. With chapters such as "Miracles Really Do Happen" and "Old Age is *Not* a

Disease," the book offers pet owners hope when all seems hopeless.

Skin allergies sparked Dr. Shawn's interest in alternative medicine. He said it is the number one disease in our area, and while protocol is to treat allergies with steroids, antihistamines and antibiotics, those are only temporary fixes.

"Over the years, I was getting frustrated because as soon as I pulled the drugs away,



Veterinarian and author **Dr. Shawn Messonnier** is the proud owner of this Cavalier King Charles Spaniel named Rita, as well as two cats, Dysa and Willow, and a fish. Profile photo

the problem returned," said Dr. Shawn. "I wasn't curing anything; I was basically putting a Band-Aid on the problem. Pet owners were getting frustrated, too, because they were spending more money on drugs."

Dr. Shawn began researching natural approaches—herbs, supplements, homeopathics, laser therapy, and acupuncture. He learned that the goal of conventional medicine was to treat the disease (and lessen the symptoms), while holistic therapy focuses on healing the pet. The more Dr. Shawn learned about holistic therapy, the more he began incorporating it into his practice. "Now, my patients don't need as many drugs," he said.

Dr. Shawn opened Paws & Claws Animal Shelter in Plano in 1991 and sees more than 3,000 animals a year, including dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, snakes and other exotic animals. Not only does he focus on healing sick pets, but he also focuses on preventing problems in healthy pets—which brings us to why pet owners should *not* vaccinate their pets every year. "The current recommendation for most vaccinations is every three years," said Dr. Shawn. "With the exception of rabies, most pets in my practice will get a vaccine every five years, maybe 10, depending on their titer tests."

A titer test is a blood test that measures your pet's antibodies, or level of immune defenses. (Antibodies attack and remove foreign substances.) If the titers are normal, your pet doesn't need a vaccine that year.

"The vaccines we have now are really good and can induce immunity for years. So to give your pet a vaccine every year doesn't make sense," said Dr. Shawn. "It's not going to do anything positive and it can actually cause side effects."

Another proactive measure to consider for optimal pet health is natural pet food. Dr. Shawn encourages pet owners to avoid by-products. "When I was at A&M, I was an animal science major and one of our classes was meat science, where we prepared animals and plants for pet food. What I learned was *nothing is wasted* in the food processing industry. When the USDA inspects food and condemns it for human use—they find a cancerous tumor in the animal, for example—they can legally make it into pet food. So when you see the word *by-product*, say to yourself, That is something unhealthy that I couldn't legally eat."

Dr. Shawn is passionate about changing the way pet owners care for their pets. He believes the more we are aware of our options and the more willing we are to try different approaches, the healthier our pets will be.

"I want people to understand that they have choices when it comes to healthcare," he said. "If

you've got a pet that has some chronic disease, like allergies or epilepsy, and you want to reduce the amount of medication for your pet—maybe it's too expensive; maybe there are side effects—there's another option. If your pet is given only 24 hours to live, don't give up. Do not give up on your pet when all seems hopeless. There may be some hope."

Unexpected Miracles: Hope and Holistic Healing for Pets is available on amazon.com and at Legacy Books in Plano. Dr. Shawn is also the author of the award-winning *Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats*, and he writes a column for *Dog World*, *Animal Wellness*, *Dog Fancy*, and *Body & Soul*. Additionally, more than 5 million satellite radio listeners tune in to "Dr. Shawn, The Natural Vet" every Tuesday night from 7–8 p.m. on Martha Stewart Radio, Sirius 112/XM 157. His new iPhone app is available at pawsforpeace.com/iphone/. To learn more about natural pet care, visit petcarenaturally.com. — BRIT MOTT

excerpt

From *Unexpected Miracles: Hope and Holistic Healing for Pets*

Every holistic doctor has favorite cases that defied logic and seemed to exhibit what can only be called miraculous healing. Whether a true miracle occurred from intercessory prayer on the part of the owner who wants a pet to heal, or simply a random act of God, or just the miraculous ability of each patient's body to heal when treated with the right therapies, there are those memorable cases when recovery is even better than expected. This story is an example of such a case....



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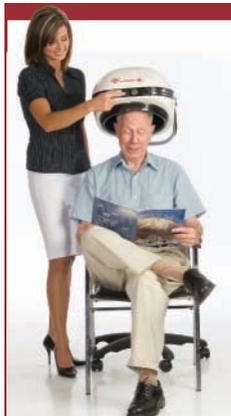
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