

WESTERN MONMOUTH

House calls



PETER ACKERMAN/Asbury Park Press

● Veterinarian Jean Oberg, owner of Veterinary Mobile Service, examines Ginger, a German shepherd owned by Barbara and Michael Krefsky of Millstone Township.

Veterinarian service goes mobile

By **MELANIE E. EVERSLEY**
PRESS STAFF WRITER

ONCE UPON a time, a visit to the veterinarian meant a big headache for the DeRosas and their pets.

"I would have to borrow a friend's pickup truck and sit in the back with the dog, in case she upchucked," Ferdinando DeRosa said with a laugh. "Believe me, it's a pain in the neck."

Then, the family would arrive at the veterinarian's office with their two dogs and four cats, said DeRosa, Howell Township. "I'm 52 years old, I don't want to run all over the place with the cat and the dog. Sometimes you have to sit there and wait. Then, by the time you get taken care of, you're an hour and a half in the vet's office."

Less than 1 percent of all veterinarians in the country operate house-call services for small animals.

These days, a visit to the veterinarian means only a telephone call for the DeRosas, one of 300 clients of Veterinary Mobile Service.

The Freehold Township-based business is most likely the only small animal house-call service in the region, according to the American Veterinary Medicine Association in Schaumburg, Ill.

"My wife and I work hard, we have meetings, we're always on the go," DeRosa said. "It means a lot — people are

busy in this day and age."

Veterinary Mobile Service, which operates out of a white Chrysler owned by veterinarian Jean Oberg, generally serves towns in western and northern Monmouth County. Oberg said she started the service about two years ago when business began to slow at the Hazlet Township animal hospital where she worked. But her service became so much in demand, she decided to pursue it full time.

"One person told the next person, then the next person said, 'Do you have cards?' Then I realized there is a real need for this," said Oberg, 37, from her Freehold Township condominium, which doubles as home base for the business.

According to the American Veterinary

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Have vet will travel: Veterinarian Jean Oberg unloads gear for a house call in Millstone.



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Warm welcome: Hobby gets a snack from Jean Oberg as Ginger and Brandy stand by.

Mobility

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Medicine Association, less than 1 percent of all veterinarians in the country operate house-call services for small animals, said Deborah Binder, research assistant. While the practice has been around for some time, it has largely been veterinarians who practice on farm animals who travel to

their clients, she said.

However, the practice appears to have become more common in recent years, reported the American Animal Hospital Association in Colorado.

Oberg, who has two dogs and two Australian finches, said she has wanted to be a veterinarian since she was 2 years old. She grew up on Long Island with a slew of pets, from goats to horses, from a bunny to a baby alligator.

"I guess it's the companionship; the warmth you get from a pet," said Oberg, sitting on a sofa, facing a cab-

inet of animal figurines given to her by clients. "They would never do anything to hurt you. They're like your best friend."

After graduating in 1988 from the Tuskegee University veterinary medical school in Alabama, where she won an American Animal Hospital Association award for clinical proficiency, Oberg worked in Florida for two years, then came north to New Jersey.

While she said she performs the same surgical duties as done at animal hospitals, she enjoys the fact that her work gets her out and about.

"You get to meet not only the pets, but the whole family — the grandmothers, the children," she said. "When I go to the house, I come in not as a vet, but as a guest."

Oberg's clients — human and animal — appreciate the service. Brandy and Ginger, two German shepherds,

leaped and ran around the veterinarian as she paid a routine house call to the Millstone Township home of Barbara and Michael Krefsky. Along with the two dogs, Oberg had also come to examine Hobby, a quarter horse, and Smooth Encino, a thoroughbred whom Oberg sold to the Krefskys but is still allowed to ride.

Clients said they appreciate having certain procedures performed in the home, such as putting a pet to sleep or having them neutered or spayed.

Oberg believes she will soon have to expand the business or begin limiting her clients, with her schedule now up to about nine calls each day and 60 hours a week. Her next goal, she said, is to open a clinic and use that as a base for the mobile service.

"This is all something new," she said. "I think this is the wave of the future."