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Welcome to the Arapaho Road Animal Clinic Newsletter for January, 2013, the first of a new year.

For those new to the newsletter, all of the old ones are archived on our [news page](#) on the website.

Also we keep up a fun and informative facebook page, so drop by and Like us on [Facebook](#) .

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Vaccines

Dr. Wesley Sperry



Vaccines are an important part of any dog or cat's life. They help prevent diseases, many of which are hard to treat or incurable once contracted. Vaccines are started when your pet is a puppy or kitten, and continue through adulthood. Vaccines are a vital component to keeping your pet healthy. We have noted, however, that there is a lot of confusion among pet owners as to what diseases are being vaccinated for, how long the vaccines last, and when vaccines are needed. Hopefully, this will help clear things up.

First Point- This article is about the vaccines given at this clinic. This may vary from clinic to clinic.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines are usually made up of parts of the disease causing organism (usually a virus) or the organism itself. Rabies vaccines are a Killed Virus Vaccine, meaning the vaccine contains dead Rabies viruses in them. Many vaccines are modified live vaccines, meaning the vaccine contains a live virus that has been modified so it is not infective. Other vaccines have just parts of the virus or bacteria in them, but they are the parts the body responds to. The body's immune system detects the virus or particles and begins to try to fight it off. This immune reaction creates antibodies against the actual disease. This means that when the body comes into contact with the real disease, it is already ready to defend itself against something it might otherwise not be fast enough to fight off.

When to vaccinate

Most people know that puppies and kittens need vaccines. They also know that when adopting an adult dog, vaccines may be needed. People also seem to realize that with puppies and kittens, multiple vaccines are needed. All of this is true, but there are more factors to it than just "my puppy needs 3 sets of vaccines". Age plays a role, as well as how long between each set of vaccines.

Why do we give multiple sets of vaccines? With everything but rabies, it takes multiple sets of vaccines to grant your pet sufficient immunity to fight off the diseases for which we are vaccinating. Here's what that means. We give your dog the DAPP (distemper/parvo vaccine). It creates a strong immunity, but the immunity caused by only one vaccine lasts for only 4-6 weeks. If we give a booster of that vaccine in 3-4 weeks, that immunity is boosted to last one year. However, timing is important. If we give the first vaccine, then wait 3 months for the booster, then we are back to square one. The first vaccine was wasted, and the second one will only last for 4-6 weeks, and we need a booster in that time. The takeaway here is that you can't just say my pet got 2 vaccines if they were months apart. This all goes for puppies/kittens and adult dogs and cats with unknown vaccine histories (strays, rescues, shelter adoptions, etc).

Puppies and kittens get more than 2 sets of vaccines, usually 3 or 4. This is because they need to booster just like adults, but we are also fighting against the maternal antibodies. When puppies and kittens nurse for the first time they receive maternal antibodies in the colostrum (first milk). These antibodies help the puppy/kitten's immune system fight off disease while the young one's immune system develops. Since the vaccines are made to look like diseases to the body, the maternal antibodies fight off the vaccines as well. The amount of maternal antibodies a puppy/kitten receives depends on the health and vaccine status of the mother, as well as how much colostrum was taken in. Some puppies/kitten's antibodies wear off at 6 weeks, others at 12 weeks. There is no way to know, therefore we start vaccinating at 6-8 weeks and continue. Most experts recommend the last vaccine come after 14 weeks of age. It is also state law that Rabies not be given until at least 12 weeks of age.

One last note on this: The vaccines do not cause an immediate immunity. It takes the body 5-7 days for the body to respond to the vaccine. This means that with a new puppy/kitten, you should limit exposure potential- No dog parks, no walking on pet store floors, etc. It is

ok to go into a controlled environment (fenced in backyard, etc) provided you have not had an outbreak like parvo there. This also is why we can't just give all three boosters at once. We must wait for the body to respond before boosting the vaccines.

What do we vaccinate for?

Rabies:

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the nervous system in all mammals. There is no cure for rabies, and it is always fatal. Rabies is also highly transmittable from one host to another, and can be transmitted from animals to humans. Because of the threat to humans, Rabies is the one vaccine that is mandated by law. The confusion comes with people wondering if the vaccine is for 1 year or 3 years. The answer to that question is different for dogs and cats.

Dogs- In dogs, whether or not the Rabies vaccine is a one year or three year vaccine is a matter of state law, not the vaccine. If it is the dog's first vaccine, then the state recognizes it for only 1 year. This is the same for new puppies and for strays. If you have a dog with unknown vaccine history (even an adult, age does not matter), the rabies given is considered its first. The next booster after that is recognized for three years. Note: We use the same vaccine in dogs whether it is the first vaccination or a booster, we use the vaccine required by law. It is state law that decides whether it is recognized for 1 year or 3 years. Again, it is not dependent upon age, but upon vaccination history. Also, each state is different on their rabies law. This article refers to Texas State law. If you would like to know about a different state, you may need to contact a veterinarian practicing in that state.

Cats- In cats, there is a difference between the 1 year and 3 year vaccines. The additive that makes the vaccine last for three years is called an adjuvant. Several years ago, there was an outbreak of injection site sarcomas, or tumors caused by injections, in cats. While the outbreak was very small, it was still a concern. The initial thought was that the vaccines were related to vaccines only, but it has been shown that any injection could lead to them. It was theorized that the adjuvant in the vaccines caused increased reaction at the injection site, and therefore the cat experts recommended using non-adjuvanted vaccines. This means the Rabies vaccine in cats only lasts one year. The scientific evidence has shown this

theory about the adjuvant to be debatable if not inaccurate, but the experts still recommend non-adjuvanted vaccines when possible. Therefore, even though the risk is extremely low for a reaction using the longer vaccine, we follow the expert's advice and use one year Rabies vaccines in cats. If you would like to have a three year vaccine for your cat, then just ask, we are happy to do it.

Final Points: Rabies vaccine is the only vaccine required by law. In both dogs and cats, one vaccination will grant a year of immunity for the first vaccine; there is no need to booster a rabies vaccine 3 weeks later. There is such a thing as a rabies titer (measuring how much vaccine is in the system), but the state will not accept it as a substitute for vaccinations.

"Boosters"

Both dogs and cats need an annual vaccine besides Rabies. We call these boosters. Others call these the 7 in 1 vaccines, or something to that effect. There is confusion on whether these are 1 year or 3 years, and like Rabies; the answer is different for dogs and cats.

Dogs- DAPPL (Distemper/Parvo vaccine)



This is the "7 in 1 vaccine", or the Distemper/Parvo vaccine (those are the diseases in the vaccine most recognizable). Here is what is in the vaccine:

Distemper- A viral disease that is highly contagious. It is seen mostly in young dogs. It attacks the respiratory system, GI system, skin, and CNS

(Central Nervous System). It causes eye and nasal discharge, coughing and sneezing, and can lead to seizures and tremors. It is very often deadly, and there is no treatment. Dogs that survive it often have underdeveloped teeth, tremors, and thickened skin on pads and nose. Distemper is prevalent in the environment, and any unvaccinated puppy is at risk.

Adenovirus type 2- This virus is a major cause of Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis. This causes irritation in the trachea, leading to a severe cough. This also protects the dog against Adenovirus type 1, which causes Canine infectious Hepatitis.

Parainfluenza virus- Not to be confused with canine influenza (see below), this is another cause of Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis.

Parvovirus (Parvo) – Parvo is a virus that destroys the lining of the intestinal wall, and can also attack the heart and bone marrow (although not as common). Common signs are profuse vomiting and bloody diarrhea. This disease is commonly seen in unvaccinated puppies, but can also be seen in unvaccinated adults. The treatment for this disease is expensive, the disease is very hard on the puppy, and even with treatment the puppies often die. Parvo is very prevalent in the environment. It is passed through the stool, and can stay in the environment for years.

Leptospirosis- Lepto is a bacterial disease passed in the urine of wild animals (raccoons, opossums, etc.). While this was once considered a rural disease, it is now prevalent in urban areas. Lepto can cause kidney and liver disease/failure, muscle weakness, GI signs, as well as sudden death. The big concern with Lepto is that it is Zoonotic, meaning it can be transmitted FROM YOUR PET TO YOU.

Final Points: While studies have shown that the Distemper and Parvo components of the vaccine may last up to 3 years (depending on the vaccine), the Lepto, Adenovirus, and Parainfluenza virus only last for 1 year, no matter the vaccine. Therefore, we give this vaccine yearly. It does not hurt your dog to get this vaccine yearly. There are titers for the components of this vaccine, but each component must be measured separately, and can be quite expensive (some over \$100 apiece). Furthermore, not all places requiring vaccines will recognize titers.

Cats- (FVRCP)



Like the DAPPL in dogs, this is a vaccine with multiple components. They are:

Rhinotracheitis- Also known as Feline Herpes Virus, this causes upper respiratory disease. Signs are runny eyes, nasal discharge, and sneezing. It is highly contagious. With the viral disease, it can often become recurring over the course of its life, affecting the cat several times a year. This is especially common in shelter situations. While the vaccine does not provide complete immunity, it does reduce the symptoms for those cats that contract the disease.

Calicivirus- Another virus that causes upper respiratory disease, it is also highly contagious, and is commonly seen in places with large cat populations (shelters, etc.). It can occasionally cause muscle stiffness and weakness. A new strain of Calici causes severe ulcerations on the tongue and nose.

Panleukopenia- The name says it all, assuming you speak Latin. Pan (all) Leuko (White Blood Cells) Penia (destroy or kill). Panleukopenia is also called the Feline Parvovirus, as it caused by a virus in the same family as Canine Parvovirus. It invades the bone marrow, and destroys the cat's White Blood Cells, thus destroying its immune system. It can also affect the GI system and lymph nodes. It is highly contagious, and is passed through nasal secretions. Treatment, like Canine Parvo, is supportive and often unrewarding.

Chlamydia felis (used to be *psitacii*) - The name changed, the disease stayed the same. This is a bacterium that causes upper respiratory disease and eye discharge. It is highly contagious.

Cats- Leukemia

Feline Leukemia is a viral infection in cats that causes immune suppression, and can lead to malignant cancers like lymphoma and sarcoma. The immune suppression leads to a cat that gets sick very easily. This disease is prevalent in the stray cat population. It is transmitted through the saliva, usually in grooming and playing, but can be transmitted by using the same food/water dish. This vaccine is especially important if your cat goes outside. This vaccine can be combined into the same vaccine as the FVRCP, allowing for one injection instead of two.

Final Note: Just like the Rabies vaccine, we use adjuvant free vaccines to reduce the risk of injection site sarcomas. Therefore, these vaccines (at our clinic) are for one year.

Boarding vaccines

There are two canine vaccines you may need in boarding and grooming situations. They are:

Bordetella (Kennel Cough) - Most people who board or groom their dogs have heard of this vaccine. The majority of boarding and grooming places (including us) require this vaccine. There are two versions- and injectable and an intra-nasal (squirt up the nose) vaccine. The one we use often depends on whether the dog will allow us to squirt something up his nose! The vaccine is generally recognized to last for 6 months, but there are a few places that will recognize it for a year (this all depends on your boarding place. We here recognize it for six months as that is what the science supports). One thing to note, the Kennel Cough vaccine is like the flu vaccine in people. We can only vaccinate for certain strains of kennel cough. Vaccinated dogs are protected from the most common and severe strains, but they can still contract kennel cough. It just means that it is a strain that cannot be vaccinated for.

Canine Influenza- This is the dog flu. It does not spread to people. Just like Kennel Cough, it produces a dry hacking cough. Like people, most dogs that get the flu recover with supportive treatment (make sure eats and drinks, etc.), and is treated like Kennel Cough. Dogs that are immune compromised (elderly, sick) can develop more serious clinical signs, even death. The prevalence of Canine Influenza in our area is still being debated. Check with your boarding facility to see if they require it (we do not). If you need the vaccine, please call first. We keep a limited number of the vaccine on hand, and may need to order some.

Other Vaccines

There are other vaccines out there that are not routinely given, but some awareness is needed.

Dogs

Coronavirus- Corona is a virus that attacks the GI system, especially in puppies. It was once included in the DAPPL vaccine. Studies have shown that Corona does not cause a problem unless the puppy is also suffering from parvovirus. Since we routinely vaccinate for parvo, the corona vaccine is fallen out of favor and is not routinely given.

Lyme- Lyme disease is a tick borne disease that can also be transmitted to people. We do not have Lyme disease in this area, but if you go hunting with your dog in West Texas, it may be beneficial to have this vaccine. Please call for availability.

Rattlesnake- There is a vaccine that gives some protection against Rattlesnake venom. This vaccine is sometimes given to dogs that hunt in areas where there are lots of rattlesnakes, like West Texas. Please call to check on availability, as we do not routinely keep this vaccine in stock.

Cats

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) - FIV, or feline AIDS, is a virus that attacks the cat's immune system. A cat can live with FIV, but will get sick much easier than a normal cat. FIV positive cats tend to present with recurrent upper respiratory infections, etc. This disease is also prevalent in the stray population. It cannot be transmitted to people. The vaccine for

FIV does not grant very strong immunity to the disease, and is associated with a higher percentage of vaccine reactions. Because of this, we do not give this vaccine.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) - FIP is a viral disease that causes a cat to have fluid buildup in its body cavities. It is caused by a virus that most cats have been exposed to. In some cats this virus spontaneously mutates, going from benign to disease causing. The cause of this mutation is unknown, and the disease is not considered contagious. FIP is usually fatal. The vaccine for FIP is not 100%, and is not recommended for routine cat vaccines. This vaccine may be beneficial in shelters and areas with large cat populations.

We hope this helps you understand what vaccines your pet receives, and why. Again, this is a representative of the vaccines at our clinic, and this can vary from clinic to clinic (mostly in how long they last). If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call us.

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Quality of Life Considerations for Your Aging Pet

-Dr. Jacky May

One of the most difficult decisions to make is when it is time to put a beloved pet to sleep as they reach the end stages of their life with you. As upsetting as the loss of pet may be, sometimes the complication and stress of having to make the decision of when to euthanize can be even more distressing. The decision is much easier to make with a sudden unexpected decline in the pet's well being, but if they develop a more chronic illness, then you should consider the question of when and how sooner in the process rather than later. It can help to have preset in your mind the boundaries that your pet can be expected to endure.

Briefly, the purpose of this article is not to discuss 'hospice' care for pets. There are a great many options for handling the nursing care, medication, nutritional needs, mobility and pain management options for elderly and ill pets. With so many care choices, simply allowing them to suffer to death in 'benign' neglect is never a reasonable or humane option any longer. We as their caretakers need to do everything possible to keep

them comfortable and well cared for until such time as we lose them. The scope of this current article is purely how to evaluate their quality of life properly.



There is nothing easy about having to make the decision about bringing your beloved pet's life to an end, but, though we may wish otherwise, they cannot live forever. We as their caretakers can make a rational, thoughtful choice on how much they will or will not have to suffer through until that end. It is a very difficult choice, but they have relied on us their entire lives to make decisions regarding their welfare and care, and this is no different or less important to them.

First be sure that you properly educate yourself on what to expect with the progression of your pet's disease or terminal condition. Ask questions of your veterinarian as to what to expect in the course of disease, what signs and symptoms you can expect to see, what signs and symptoms you can expect to alleviate with medication, what side effects you can expect from medication, etc.

The answer as to when to euthanize a pet is often one only the owner can answer best because it can be a combination of factors which contribute to the 'quality of life' overall. Sometimes there are set points that are red flag moments – they no longer enjoy their most favorite activity, or they no longer will eat, or they can no longer get up and down on their own when they are a large dog. Other times you will need to evaluate their situation overall and decide when the bad days are consistently outweighing the good ones.

Consider the following factors when gauging your pet's quality of life :

Pain :

This can ruin a pet's quality of life all alone if not managed properly or if the condition progresses to the point that the pain simply cannot be controlled. However, **we have to be able to recognize that pain exists in order to attempt to control it.** First, if you are not sure, then bring

them in so that we can assess them fully and advise you as to the level of pain and our ability to control it or not.



Unfortunately, dogs and cats do not always vocalize or show obvious signs when they are in pain. Signs of pain externally on the body or limbs are : limping; shifting weight off a limb consistently while standing (just barely leaving a toe touching the ground for balance); turning to look at you, yelping, or biting when an area is palpated or manipulated; panting; trembling; pacing and reluctant to settle and rest as if cannot get comfortable; stiffening or bracing against your attempts to manipulate or palpate an area. If their belly is uncomfortable then often when you try and feel or palpate it they will stiffen their belly muscles tight against your hands.

If you are unsure if the response you see is pain then check again and see if the response is repeatable. You can also check their heart rate before and after testing an area for pain, if the heart rate is higher after you palpate an area then likely it was painful for the animal. In cats especially it can be difficult to assess pain as often they simply withdraw from their usual activities and do not choose to move if it can be avoided.

If pain cannot be controlled adequately, so that your pet can be comfortable then this factor alone may be the one that determines the lack of quality of life that signals it is time for a decision to be made.

Pain is the most often thought of factor, but absence of pain alone does not necessarily imply a good quality of life. There are numerous other factors to consider :

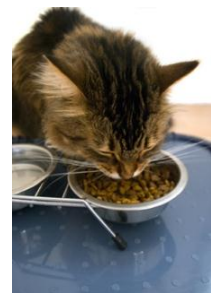
Breathing :

Not being able to breathe ranks extremely high on the pain scale for humans actually. **Few things upset an animal more than being unable to breathe properly.** Evaluate them for labored breathing if they have a condition that may be affecting their heart or lungs. They should not be

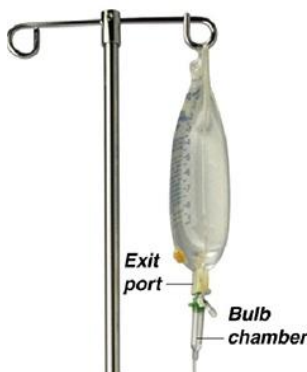
struggling or making obvious effort to pull a breath in. Do they seem generally tired, easily fatigued, or low on energy? Does the slightest exertion seem to take them a long time to settle down and catch their breath? Are they coughing constantly or uncontrollably? Trouble breathing can easily outweigh all other concerns just as easily as severe pain.

Appetite and body weight :

Is your pet consistently eating? Can they maintain an adequate body weight? Are they constantly nauseated or vomiting? There are numerous things to try depending on the cause of the loss of appetite or weight loss, but if your pet is no longer eating consistently and/or continuously losing weight despite a normal appetite, then this factor must be considered as an important quality of life factor as well. **Slowly wasting away due to malnutrition and hunger are not pleasant things to endure.**



Hydration :



Sometimes illness and mobility issues can keep your pet from being able to maintain a normal hydration status. Serious dehydration can result in nausea, weakness, lethargy, and lack of appetite, even progressing to organ failure and death. Certainly there are numerous ways to supplement hydration and correct dehydration, but if your pet routinely becomes dehydrated and you are not able to provide enough fluid supplement to them, then this is a serious negative quality of life issue.

Grooming and Elimination :

Animals do not like to lay in their own urine and feces any more than we do. Being unable to control bodily functions due to illness or mobility compounded with being unable to move themselves away from their own eliminations can be extremely distressing to some animals. Your own stress levels as well as your ability to handle the cleaning and



nursing needs of the ill pet must also be considered. If you are not able to keep them brushed, clean, dry, and rotated if they are lacking that level of mobility then bedsores and infection will quickly drag down their quality of life even further.

Mobility :

Can your pet get up and down without assistance? Can they walk without assistance or do they stumble and fall? Can they get to and from food and water on their own without assistance? Mobility issues are often very relative to the size of the dog. There is a world of difference in caring for a large dog that is unable to move on its own versus caring for a small dog or cat that is easily moved from one place to another. **Each animal is an individual regarding how important its mobility is to its overall quality of life.** If the dog lives to play ball and can no longer get up, well that may be a defining moment versus for a small lap dog that seldom ever left its owner's arms when it was still mobile.

Behavior and Enjoyment :

Has your pet's behavior changed significantly? Does it still express interest and enjoyment in the people and things surrounding it? Are they responsive to their usual positive stimuli like toys, other pets, treats? Has it become unusually irritable about being disturbed or touched? Changes in your pet's normal daily routines are almost always significant and may indicate an unaddressed problem with one of the other factors discussed above. Are they bright eyed and attentive when awake or have they become dull, reluctant to pay any attention to anything around them and barely responsive to routine interaction? **If their days have lost any 'happy' defining moments, then this is a significant negative quality of life factor.**



Overall Picture :

There are always fluctuations in the days of an aged or chronically ill pet, some good and some worse than others. It is important to keep the overall picture in mind. Are there still many more good than bad? Or is the scale tipping toward more bad than good? Bad days are filled with all the unpleasant things – pain, vomiting, nausea, difficulty breathing, diarrhea, frustration, falling down, seizures, etc. **When the majority of your pet's days are no longer good then that is an important quality of life consideration.**



All these factors are important to consider. **Sometimes the sum of them all equate to a poor quality of life even though there are only moderate changes in each of the areas mentioned. Sometimes a single factor is so severely compromised that it overshadows all else to result in a negative quality of life.**

Talk to others that know you and your pet. Bring the pet in to the office and we will be happy to help you evaluate where they are in the spectrum and offer what we can to improve the comfort and quality of life for your pet as long as is reasonable to do so. It is a hard decision to be faced with, but you do not have to make it alone because we are always available to help guide your decision.

Our pets have depended on us to make the best decisions on their behalf for their entire lives, and they always deserve our most careful consideration when it comes time to make a final decision for them.

A common guilt fueled worry is that one has been selfish or premature in the decision to euthanize a pet. Very seldom is that ever the case, more often those that worry the most about not having done enough for the pet are the ones that have gone far above and beyond anyone's expectations in caring for their beloved animal. It is far more selfish to prolong a pet's suffering needlessly purely to postpone your own loss and grief. We can help you make that decision calmly, rationally, without judgment and with only the best interests of your pet in mind.

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For those that prefer more defined numbers based evaluations the following scales are from the [Pawspice Palliative care program](#) :

[Pawspice Canine Quality of Life Scale](#)

[Pawspice Feline Quality of Life Scale](#)

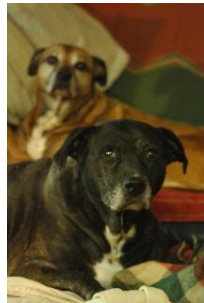
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Moving Through Grief

Losing a pet is never easy and can be difficult to work through especially when compounded with the other variable stresses that life pitches to us on a routine basis. Penny van der Westhuizen is a client here who recently lost both of her dogs within a few weeks of one another, and she is a professional counselor. She graciously agreed to write about that process for us, and provide her contact numbers for those in need of a pet friendly ear to talk to about their similar losses.

Loving and Letting Go

- Penny van der Westhuizen, M.Ed. LPC



Five months have passed since my beloved 'twins', Maddi & Tyra, left this earth.

Born together, small comfort resides in the releasing of these cherished beings, within two weeks of each other.

I believe they are together again.

DELIGHT - The incredible adventure of loving these delightful angels began unsuspectingly in 1999. While volunteering at a dog adoption event, I had no intention of taking one of these beautiful creatures home, until ... my wonderful friend, Helen, placed a tiny, shy boxer/pit mix into my hands. She was so small & sensitive. I fell in love instantly. All the motherly protective instincts erupted within me & from that time, my priorities were dramatically rearranged, little Ms. Tyra easily the main consideration in all I did.

Several months later, dear Helen arrived at my apartment with a smiling, carefree, Ms. Maddi. This cute, chunky pup was Tyra's litter mate. I agreed to keep her overnight, as her 're-homing' needs were resolved. Well, apparently she was already home!

The need to buy a house with a yard for these athletic, extremely active girls became my focus. All for the love of my delightful pups!

Amazing devotion, joy and the thrill of relating to these treasured beings, filled many days and directed essential decisions. Trials came and went. Yet, ever present and so special in their respective contributions, the presence of each lovely twin enriching and motivating my life in unimaginable ways. People came and went, circumstances changed, cancer, loss, surgeries.

DREAD.... DELIBERATION - Each day was cherished, until the looming, dreaded inevitability began lurking, as age & inescapable illness began to manifest in my precious girls' bodies – invading those once fabulous, muscular, strong, vigorous physiques. Time to say goodbye ... but how, when, and then what?

DECISION.... DESPAIR – *“The overwhelming grief of facing the unavoidable outcome was gripping my soul at levels I knew would be inevitable ... No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.”* C.S. Lewis, **A Grief Observed**

My frequently breathed preparatory prayer became: *“Dear God, please do for me, what I'm unable to do for myself, as I do for these beautiful 'gifts' You've entrusted to my care, what they're unable to do for themselves”*. Our time together was far too short, yet their contribution to my life has been immeasurable & indelible. Forever changed!

DAWN.... DAYLIGHT - Abandoned, scarred & starved - little Zoe Kai arrived. A new & different love affair has begun.



Helen Meyer and I ADORE 4 (3)-legged friends! Many of life's greatest joys have come from loving our animal companions. Our deepest pain has been felt at their loss of life. We've each know the crushing heartbreak of anticipating, then saying our final farewells – followed by the struggle to hold a shattered heart together, feeling as if part of our very self has died.

Recently, the wonderful veterinarians & staff at the Arapaho Animal Clinic, tended one last time to my precious girls, in their final moments on this earth. Initially, so numb, lost and devastated, I clung to the words of their personalized sympathy cards: *"Rest assured that you made the best and kindest decision on her (Tyra's) behalf ... let the thought of her (Maddi) bring you joy in remembrance, rather than dwelling too long on the sadness of losing the presence of both her and her sister, Tyra"*

The cards remain cherished keepsakes, enabling me to borrow strength from their affirmative guidance - reminders of profound loss and grief, only bearable with such sincerely expressed heartfelt presence. Helping with focus, reassurance and directing my thinking towards cherished memories of those treasured relationships, they have been an invaluable gift.

Helen and I have bonded over many years, in friendship forged largely by our mutual passionate love and advocacy for animals. As Licensed Professional Counselors and animal 'parents', we also understand how to respond to those of us who have to confront the agonizing parting from our beloved animal companions. We're available to walk with you through this process.

For an appointment, please contact either of us via phone at **(469) 387-6094** and feel free to visit our [website](#) for more information.

Helen Meyer, M.Ed. LPC

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Holiday Photo Contest Winner

The winner of the holiday photo contest is Zoe Joplin, the star of the Christmas tree in the picture below :



She gets a free office visit to use at her leisure during the year and all the bragging rights to having been voted the cutest of all. Her mom told us that the tree was absolutely her most favorite toy and that little Zoe had mourned it being taken down this year. She provided us with some more pictures of Zoe in the tree and we posted those on the [Facebook page](#), come join us there and have a look!