

Newfie News



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Veterinary Staff Deserve Our Support

Many are Suffering from Debilitating Stress

December 9 is International Day of Veterinary Medicine, a great time to consider all that the staff of veterinary clinics do for our pets. Veterinarians provide critical care when our beloved furry family members are sick or injured, and also preventative care to ensure their patients live the longest, happiest lives possible. They often love our pets as much as we do and truly want to improve the lives of all animals.

It sounds like a dream job for anyone who loves animals – playing with cute puppies and kittens all day and helping animals feel better. Yet, veterinarians have a higher suicide rate than the general population and are under a tremendous amount of stress from varying factors.

A [2021 survey](#) from Merck Animal Health revealed that 12.5 percent of surveyed veterinarians described themselves as “suffering,” yet only half of these respondents were getting mental health care. Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated 17 percent of veterinarians had considered suicide; male vets are 1.6 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population and female vets are [2.4 times more likely](#). Increased suicide rates for veterinarians are not new; studies that examined obituaries as far back as 1947 concluded that veterinarians had a greater suicide rate than the general population.



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Why are veterinarians suffering?

There are many factors in the veterinarian field that can lead to increased mental health concerns and suicidal depression. Some of the most critical include:

- Many veterinarians struggle with work-life balance, working long work hours, nights, and weekends which leads to burnout. The current shortage of veterinary professionals adds to the problem; The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation as veterinary staff worked increased hours to care for the thousands of animals adopted as “pandemic pets” as well as

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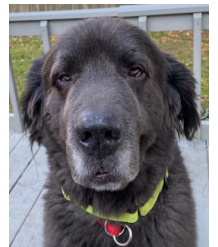
Who's at TNP?

Boo arrived at TNP on November 2 due to family hardship. This 7-year-old girl has some health concerns and is continuing to be evaluated before she will be available for adoption. Watch for updates on the TNP Facebook page and future issues of the newsletter!



Four-year-old female **Zoey** arrived at TNP on November 5 from a puppy mill/backyard breeder. She recently had puppies and was very scared when she first arrived but after some exploration, she began to show her sweet personality. Zoey was severely anemic which has delayed her spay surgery. As soon as she is healthy and healed from surgery, she will be ready for her new home. Watch for updates on the TNP Facebook page and future issues of the newsletter!

Blue arrived at TNP on November 5 after being rescued from a puppy mill and spending his first month in TNP care with TNP Staff Nancy Weaver in New Jersey. He was neutered and also tested positive for heartworm. He is currently on antibiotics and will be under treatment for at least another four months.



Six-year-old Blue arrived at Faith Ferguson's home on November 19 in Cromwell, Connecticut and will remain in foster care with her until mid December. Faith is an experienced Newfie owner, mostly rescues, for 25 years and especially likes senior dogs. "He's a remarkable fellow," Faith said of Blue. She describes him as being "in constant motion."

Many experiences are completely new to Blue. Faith is working with him on potty training, and he has mastered the stairs outside. Faith notes that Blue loves affection. He doesn't have a large startle reaction to loud or unfamiliar noises, but does go to Faith for reassurance at times, in the form of scratches behind the ear. He also loves food, and has caused Faith to be creative in hiding treats as he is a bit of a counter surfer.

Watch for updates on the TNP Facebook page and future issues of the newsletter!



Ellis arrived at TNP on November 30 due to family hardship. Five-year-old Ellis has been vetted and this very sweet Landseer boy is being evaluated by TNP to determine the perfect home. Watch for updates on the TNP Facebook page and future issues of the newsletter!

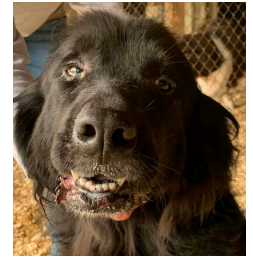
Interested in adopting from TNP?

All dogs are placed only in APPROVED homes. Email Nancy for an application: nancy@thatnewfoundlandplace.org. Home checks are also required (virtual or in person).

Keep in mind that TNP places dogs in homes that are in the best interest of the dog, but welcomes applicants to express interest in dogs through TNP Facebook posts.

Recently Adopted

Ceil Poirier and Gerry Hripak of South Hadley, Massachusetts adopted their second "puppy mill" Newf and first TNP rescue on October 10 when they brought home 5-year-old **Mazy May, formerly Blackberry**.



Gerry noted Finnegan, who is a year older than Mazy and rescued from a puppy mill in Pennsylvania when he was 4-months-old, "was a little put out when we first brought Mazy home but he's getting used to her." As far as Mazy is concerned, "She's doing well and fitting in well."

Meals have gone smoothly as well. Gerry remarked that the dogs eat together, including Rohna, the 13-year-old Havapoo (Havanese and Poodle), who Gerry calls "the boss." Gerry has also noticed that Finnegan gets along better with Rohna since the addition of Mazy.

Gerry grew up with St. Bernards and loved them, but Ceil was new to big dogs when they got Finnegan in 2016. Gerry always wanted a big dog as an adult and after research was drawn to Newfoundlands because of their temperament and reputation as a "people dog." Finnegan did not disappoint, and loves to be close to his people, even though he is not a cuddler. Mazy, however, is a lap dog, much to the delight of Ceil.

Daughter Emily, 15, also lives at home and Sarah, 23, is at school in Rochester, NY, but has been home a couple of times to meet Mazy. Finnegan has a strong bond with Gerry but also checks in on the girls. In fact, he hopes to train Finnegan for drafting, after winning a draft cart from the raffle at the TNP Reunion and Fundraiser in October. The rest of the family is happy to cozy up next to Mazy. "She can't please you enough," Gerry said of Mazy; The family is more than pleased that she's part of the family.

Maddie went to her new home with Rachel and Jakob Tanchak on October 22.



"She settled in right away," Rachel said. That has been evident by Maddie sleeping on her back, a sign of trust and comfort. "We love how she sleeps with her belly up," Rachel said.

The Tanchaks have discovered that 4-year-old Maddie loves playing with balls and fetch with toys outside. She's also good on walks, remaining calm with barking dogs and loose dogs running up to her.

Still, she began basic training classes after Thanksgiving for socialization and to teach "real life manners" such as refraining from begging at the table, which Maddie has been known to do.

Maddie has shown some curiosity about Spike, the 2-year-old black and white guinea pig. "She likes to watch him," Rachel said. "She thinks he's a puppy or a toy." Either way, Maddie has remained gentle and Spike is closely supervised when not in his enclosure. Willow, a 14-year-old female cat, also shares the Rochester, New York home. "I've caught her cuddling with Maddie," Rachel noted. "I think she realized Maddie is warm."



Rachel and Jakob have rescued all their pets, including their Catahoula Leopard dog Bruno, who passed away from cancer in June at age 10. Rachel has been interested in rescuing a Newfoundland for a while and has been following TNP online. She is very familiar with the breed; her grandmother was a breeder and her mother showed Newfs.

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Recently Adopted continued

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The wait for rescue was shorter than anticipated. Rachel and Jakob visited family in Germany in September, and when they got home, they decided to put in an application. "We thought it would take a while," Rachel said. The next day, they got a call to set up a home visit and shortly after that a call telling them there was a dog available for adoption near them (being fostered by TNP staff Lori Babcock). They brought Maddie home the same week.

The quick turnaround time simply brought them joy sooner than expected.

Cannoli, now Finley, is settling in with her new family, Linda and Steve Ulias of Holyoke, Massachusetts. Finley arrived at TNP on November 5 due to family hardship and was placed with the Ulias's less than 2 weeks later, on November 18.

"She seems to be settling in," Linda said. "She's getting into the routine with us." Linda and Steve have been working on leash training in their fenced backyard and Linda described Finley as very mellow and well mannered. They have a crate set up for her so she has a safe place to go. They are also working on room boundaries, preventing Finley from climbing the stairs - which can become an issue as she ages - and to keep her from dashing out the door, which she was known to do in her previous home.



Three-year-old Finley shares the home with Linda and Steve's son, daughter-in-law, and 2-year-old grandson Kellan, and their cat, who are temporarily living with them. The cat stays upstairs, but has interacted with Finley once, with affable results.

Linda noted that spending time with the family is Finley's favorite activity and said that Kellan and Finley are both gentle with each other. Kellan likes to say hello in the morning to Finley, especially when she is in her crate, and goodnight when it's his bedtime. He also likes to pet her and read his books to Finley, who has been an attentive audience.

The Ulias's were first introduced to Newfoundlands about 15 years ago when they adopted Darby, a Newf/Golden Retriever mix at a shelter in Springfield, Massachusetts. "He was wonderful," Linda said. "Everyone loved him." She researched Newfoundlands and discovered they were a great choice for her family of five children, who were living at home at the time. Their first purebred Newf was Tessie, whom they bought from Dingle Newfoundlands. She passed away around 4 years ago. It was their breeder, Kathy Luce, who suggested TNP for their next Newf, as Kathy's Newfs were not breeding as much and were having smaller litters. The recommendation worked out well not only for the Ulias's, but for Finley as well.

December is National Cat Lover's Month

If your household includes felines as well as Newfs and other canines, take a moment this month to celebrate the purring furballs that are friends to many dogs. Even if they aren't best buddies, your cat deserves some loving too!



Expert Excerpts

What to Expect in Your Dog's Golden Years

With Dr. Lauren Flanagan of Pepperell (MA) Veterinary Hospital

Last month we discussed some of the health ailments and physical needs of senior dogs. This month we consider ways to make your dog's senior years more comfortable.

Adjusting your dog's environment to their needs as they age is very important. Many older dogs have difficulty with stairs so if your home has staircases, you may need to add gates to keep your dog from trying to climb the stairs themselves and potentially falling. Hardwood and tile floors can be very slippery for older dogs. You can place throw rugs or even nonslip yoga mats strategically so they have a little trail to walk around the house. Remember older dogs are definitely less tolerant of extremes of temperature. In hot months, keep them indoors or in the shade and allow them plenty of access to water. In the cold month be careful of slippery iced walkways and be mindful they are not getting too cold when outside – even Newfs.

Many people ask me as their dogs age about changing their diet to a senior diet. It is my opinion that making a blanket change based on age is not correct. Many older dogs require more protein than others to maintain their muscle balance. Although many dogs as they age require fewer calories, there are some dogs that do not. Diet change for an older pet is best left for an individual discussion with your veterinarian. I do

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being short-handed at times because of staff illness/isolation or time away to care for family.

- The cost of the average veterinary medical school in the US exceeds \$200,000 yet veterinarian salaries are 2.5 times lower than physician salaries (on average) despite a similar level of educational debt. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, half of vets make less than \$100,000. This makes repaying the debt incurred at graduation burdensome.

- Veterinarians have deep empathy to help animals in need. They have learned the highest levels of technology to save lives. Yet every day they face moral dilemmas in euthanizing animals with treatable conditions due to financial reasons. This is unique to the medical field as physicians must provide treatment regardless of a person's ability to pay.

- Veterinary staff often care for our pets from infant hood, watching them grow and mature. If the pets suddenly falls to disease or illness, veterinarians



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must now have an end-of-life discussion with the pet owner. They will likely have to euthanize the patient they have cared for, as well as comfort a grieving owner while also managing their own grief.

- A typical day at work can lead to a range of emotions, often within a very short time span – giving a grave diagnosis to an animal in it's prime; then a well check for a new puppy; followed by a euthanasia for a pet they have worked with for years. This daily roller coaster of emotions can take a toll and lead to compassion fatigue, in which one feels emotionally numb at the end of the day with nothing left to give.

- Many veterinarians also see pets who have been abused and mistreated. With animal cruelty a felony in all 50 US states, veterinary forensic pathology is taught at conferences. Veterinarians are collaborating with law enforcement by sharing signs of animal abuse in their patients. Some

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veterinarians have to euthanize large numbers of animals in overpopulated shelters or abuse cases. The emotions involved can be especially triggering.

- Expensive medical treatment can lead to angry clients. Equipment, medications, and lab tests are costly for the veterinary practice, yet the profit that's generated is nominal. And, with less than 10 percent of pets in the US being insured (and even those animals are not covered for every procedure), the situation can be very stressful to pet owners who are already upset over a sick animal. Yet, misplaced anger on the staff is very unhealthy for their mental health when they are trying to heal the pet. In fact, A 2014 study by the American Veterinary Medical Association found that 1 in 5 veterinarians had been a victim or worked with someone who has been a victim of cyberbullying in the workplace.

What's being done

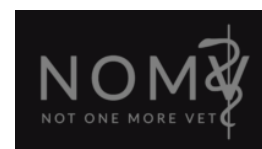
The veterinary profession is trying to better understand the current stressors, the results of the stressors and responding by developing prevention programs to target the problem. Last year, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) held their first-ever roundtable discussion to address veterinary suicide prevention and goals, including increasing veterinarian staff's ability to recognize symptoms and providing resources such as suicide prevention hotlines to those in crisis. The AVMA offers a free one-hour online training course that helps veterinarians identify and refer at-risk colleagues.



The [Veterinary Mental Health Initiative](#) (VMHI), which is part of the Shanti Project, is the only program in the US to specifically address the mental health crisis in the veterinary profession. Expert clinicians provide free support groups – where peers share concerns and learn tools for managing them – as well as one-on-one help to veterinarians and their clinical staff via Zoom across the US.



[Not One More Vet](#) provides suicide prevention support for the veterinary profession. Founded in 2014 by a California vet who struggled with euthanasia, the non-profit organization provides Facebook forums, student support and mentorship programs, crisis hotlines for any countries, and other resources.



Banfield Pet Hospital, one of the nation's largest employers of veterinary professionals, offers a training and awareness program for its more than 17,000 veterinary clinic staff. Resources include a 30-minute online course available to anyone in the veterinary industry that teaches employees how to recognize warning signs of suicide among colleagues and the best ways to help them.



Veterinarian staff are encouraged to look out for themselves and each other by developing healthy techniques for dealing with stress, maintaining appropriate work and non-work balance, and consulting a financial planner to manage debt and reduce stress. Employers can foster a work culture that promotes teamwork, a high degree of trust, open communication, and sufficient time to provide high-quality care. It's also important for employers to acknowledge the mental health issues in the profession, provide resources and support, and an Employee Assistance Program and health insurance that covers mental health treatment.

What you can do to help

Pet owners can practice understanding and support with veterinary staff. It's not an easy job, but they truly do have your "four-legged children's" best interests at heart. There are some tangible ways you can help as well.

- **BE KIND.** It is stressful when your pet is sick. Try to work with the staff and check any anger you may have at the door.
- Show your appreciation with some baked goods, a heartfelt thank you card, or grateful words during your visit. Give compliments and share positive experiences. Words of gratitude can far outweigh complaints and brighten their day.
- Plan ahead for veterinary expenses. This can be difficult, especially with rising inflation (and the medical expense of a Newf), but establishing an emergency pet fund and contributing regularly will provide you with piece of mind when your pet is sick or in an emergency situation.
- Don't ask for free veterinary advice from acquaintances. With work-life balance being a challenge, questions about hot spot on your dog's paw or why your cat isn't eating can be exhausting. Call your own veterinarian to see if you can triage at home, set up a telehealth visit or need to go into the office for a more thorough exam.

If you know someone in the veterinary profession, make them aware of the resources available to them and their colleagues. They deserve compassion from us, equal to the compassion they show our pets.

Sources: see below

There are many resources and articles on the important topic of mental health and suicide in the veterinary profession, including:

<https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/researchers-try-to-understand-high-suicide-rate-among-veterinarians>

https://www.merck-animal-health-usa.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/02/2021-PSV-Veterinary-Wellbeing-Presentation_V2.pdf

<https://www.avma.org/blog/preventing-suicide-new-guide-free-profession>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/04/08/1086091339/its-not-just-doctors-and-nurses-veterinarians-are-burning-out-too>

https://hanfordsentinel.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/ask-dr-kait-why-is-the-a-disproportionate-suicide-rate-among-veterinary-professionals/article_e0e837e3-522b-5bdb-af9a-340a71c95427.html

<https://www.wisfarmer.com/story/news/2021/05/26/alarmed-suicide-rates-reflective-stresses-felt-veterinarians/7361193002/>

<https://time.com/5670965/veterinarian-suicide-help/?fbclid=IwAR2cptmrq4ZY9Y2i5R9wjQN HvDdAm9rKVIW52akF6wGJ06gzQL4XlnNphE>

<https://springbranchvet.com/ask-the-vet/the-mental-health-crisis-in-veterinary-medicine/>

Articles and Resources for Mental Health and Suicide in the Veterinary Profession continued from page 7

<https://www.aaha.org/publications/newstat/articles/2022-03/a-free-mental-health-resource-for-veterinary-staff/>

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/wellbeing>

<https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/personal-wellbeing/supporting-emotional-and-mental-health-in-the-veterinary-profession/>

<https://www.nomv.org/2021/09/12/the-veterinary-mental-health-crisis-part-1-of-2-the-root-of-the-problem%E2%80%8B/>

<https://www.nomv.org/>

<https://www.mvh4you.com/ask-training-resources/>



Are you are shopping at Amazon this month for Christmas gifts? If so, please consider using Amazon Smile: <https://smile.amazon.com/> and selecting That Newfoundland Place as the charity recipient.

There is no cost to you or change in your shopping experience, and TNP gets a percentage of your purchase.

Thank you!

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find it helpful for an elderly pet to see them every six months. Dogs age faster than us so there can be significant changes in health status in as few as six months that the sooner we address the better.

Sadly, we must also discuss cognitive decline in our older patients. Just like in people, dogs can develop dementia as they age. There is no cure, but there are a lot of suggestions on how to delay or slow the progression. Keep your dog's brain active by teaching them new tricks, taking them new places, and trying new activities. There are nutritional supplements and diets designed to support brain health. Omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil supplements) are recommended for our patients, providing the same health benefits that they do for people.

We can't stop the aging process, but with a little effort you can make your dog's golden years truly golden.

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That Newfoundland Place Inc. is a nonprofit corporation organized and operated exclusively for charitable purposes. Specifically, this organization has been formed to prevent cruelty to animals. Our mission is to offer quality of life to senior dogs of various breeds, to assist in rescue, rehabilitation, and re-homing of dogs in need, with a focus on Newfoundland dogs, and to provide humane education as related to care and life quality. of animals. Cathy Derench, President Newsletter editor and publisher Joanna Dumas: joanna.l.dumas@gmail.com