

## Pet Care



DR. JEFF NICHOL  
For the Journal

# Cat only has eyes for them

**Q**: Help! We are being held hostage by the neighbor's cat — he won't go home.

About once a week we crate him and take him home. He stays there until they can't stand his wails. He's back in our yard immediately. We DO NOT feed him or encourage him in any way. We have chased him, taken the water hose to him, sprayed him with canned air. We have two indoor/outdoor cats who can't enjoy their own yard — he chases them back in the house.

**Dr. Nichol:** Is this guy's name on the deed? He's chosen your yard as his own, and he wants your kitties gone. It's not rare for cats to bond more to their territories than to their people. It's similar to cats showing up at their old homes after they've moved with their families to a new house.

There are effective ways of discouraging this boy's adventures. Having him neutered, if it hasn't been done already, could make a big difference. Your yard can be made unfun for this interloper with booby traps like a Scare Crow (motion-activated sprinkler) or Cat Stop (high-pitched sound). An Invisible Fence (474-7387) would be highly effective. Your feline party crasher can wear a collar that would give a beep and a static-electricity-strength shock when he ventured near your property line. Your cats will laugh heartily.

On the other hand, you could talk to this local warlord's owners about adopting him into your home. I'd be happy to advise you on assimilating him into your household.

## Canine Influenza

By now we're all aware of the H1N1 swine flu. Canine flu (H3N8), while not contagious to humans, is also on the upswing. Fortunately, New Mexico's dog population has so far been spared.

Dog flu has been around since 2004, a likely mutation of the equine influenza virus. What's new is the vaccine, released by Intervet/Schering-Plough in June of this year. According to Cynda Crawford, D.V.M., Ph.D., professor of shelter medicine at the University of Florida, "Canine influenza is a highly contagious respiratory infection that has a significant impact on dogs housed in shelters, kennels and communal facilities. The vaccine can help prevent the medical,

financial and emotional costs associated with this new virus."

Getting its start with racing greyhounds, canine influenza has been detected in 30 states and the District of Columbia.

So far this isn't a huge problem, but most New Mexico dogs, having never been exposed, lack any kind of natural immunity. If it enters our state it could spread quickly.

Diagnosis can be tricky.

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The mild form causes a soft, moist cough similar to kennel cough, that may continue for as long as 10 to 30 days. Many infected dogs also have thick, sometimes greenish, nasal discharge. Pneumonia and high fevers are hallmarks of the severe form. Dogs with rapid, difficult breathing can die from canine flu. These pets are treatable but, like any infection, early diagnosis is the best defense.

New Mexico veterinarians are carefully monitoring this disease. Wholesale vaccinations are not recommended at this point. I'll keep my ear to the track and share updates as they become available.

Dr. Jeff Nichol provides medical care for pets at the Petroglyph Animal Hospital in Albuquerque (898-8874). He treats behavior disorders at the Veterinary Specialty Centers in Albuquerque and in Santa Fe (505-792-5131). Contact Dr. Nichol on his Web site [www.drjeffnichol.com](http://www.drjeffnichol.com) (click Submit a Question?) or 6633 Caminito Coors NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120.

