



April 10, 2020

An Emergency Contraceptive Option for Cats During COVID-19 Delayed Surgery

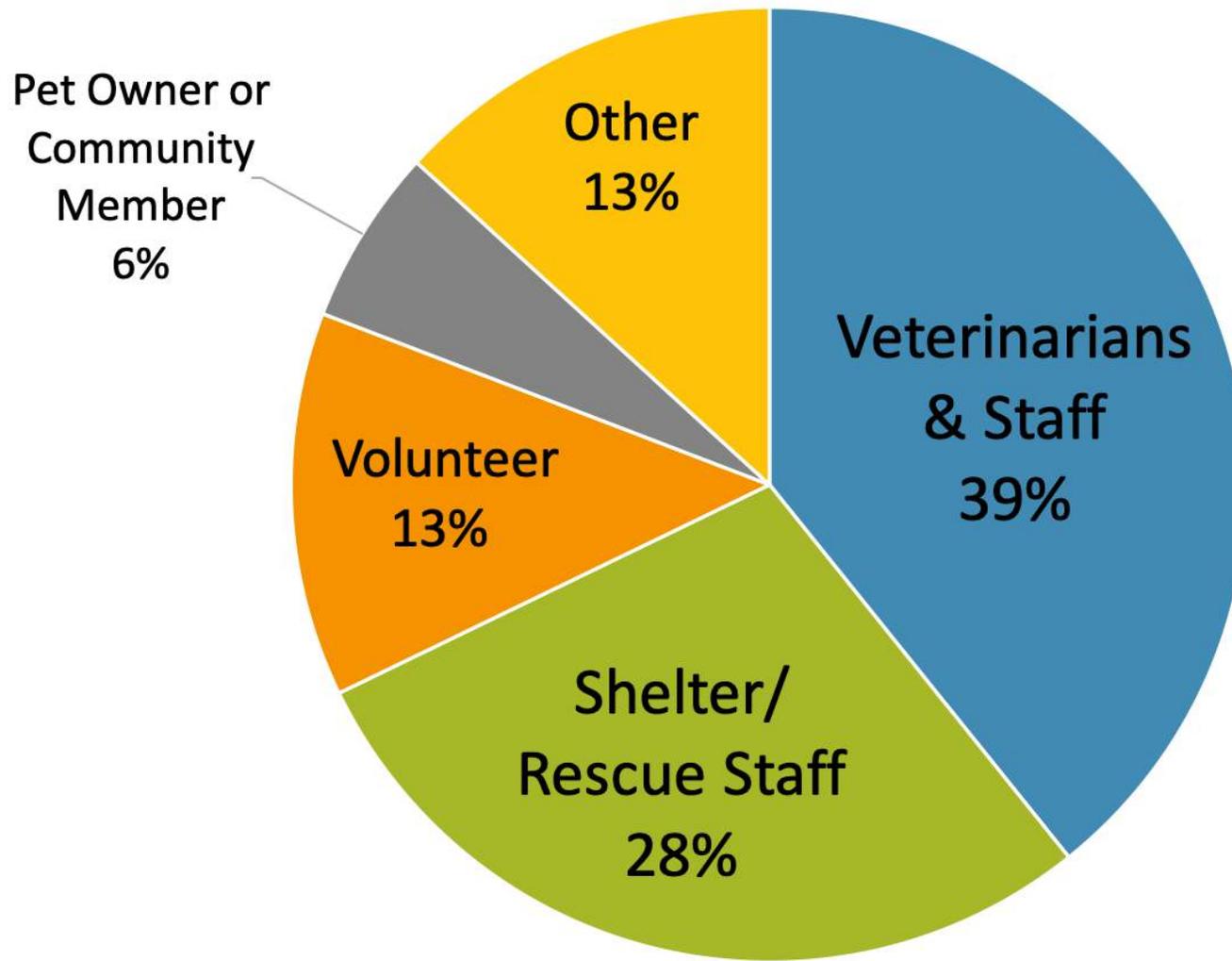
Joyce Briggs, ACC&D

Dr. Michael Greenberg, Maddie's Fund

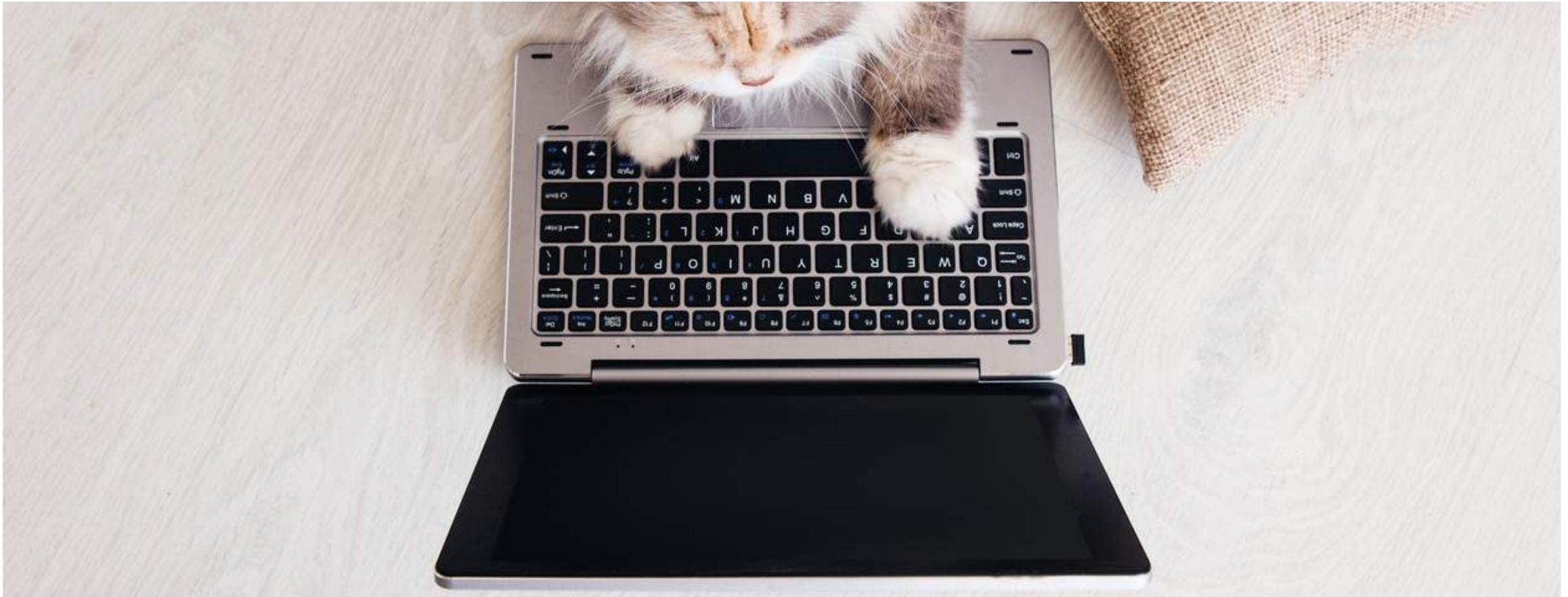
Dr. Julie Levy, Shelter Medicine Education,
Univ of Florida

with Dr. Michelle Kutzler, Oregon State University
and Dr. Linda Rhodes, Consultant





This webinar's audience



But first, a quick poll





SAVING COMMUNITY CATS
**OPERATION
CATNIP**

COVID-19 Update





Alyssa Burks

last Wednesday

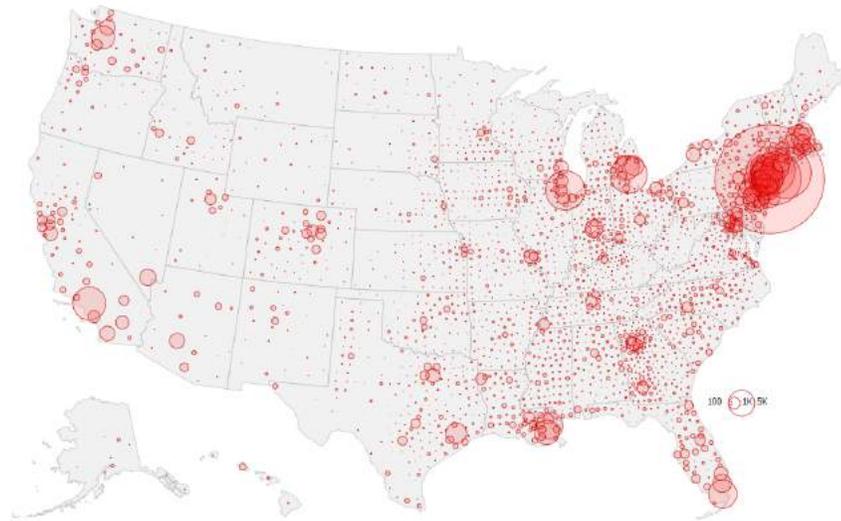


Look who we finally got to see today! Not going to pretend that I didn't bawl like a baby when he left to go back to work. We miss him, but we are doing what we have to do. 🥹❤️

Count your blessings. That's what's getting us through this!

I've had a few people message me asking if they can share this. Of course you can. Maybe it'll encourage more people to stay home.

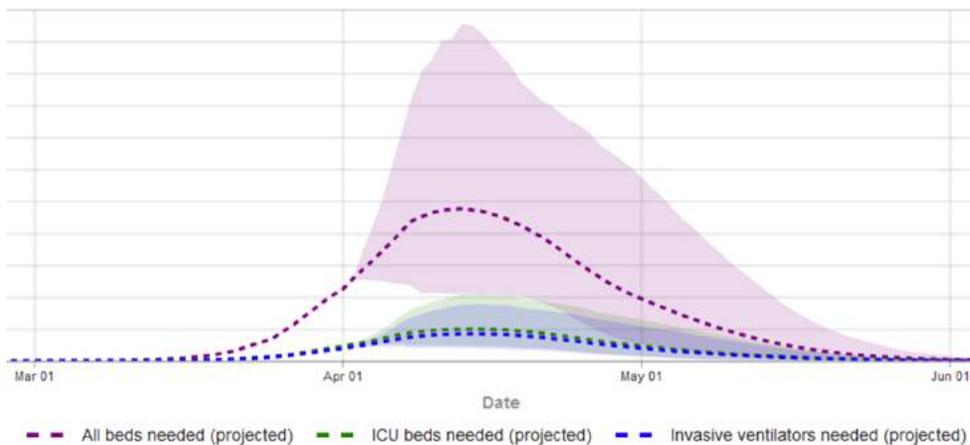
COVID-19 status 4/10/20



Last updated: April 10, 2020 at 9:45 a.m. ET
Source: Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering

Cases: **466,396**
Deaths: **16,703**

All resources All beds ICU beds Invasive ventilators



People without symptoms are fueling coronavirus



New estimates show 25% to 50% of virus carriers can infect others blindly. It's prompting US officials to rethink who should wear masks.

<http://covid19.healthdata.org/united-states-of-america/>

<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-us-maps-and-cases/>

5 critical responses for shelters in the COVID era

1. Preserve critical functions

2. Suspend non-emergency functions

3. Reduce shelter populations

4. Preserve lifesaving practices

5. Handling COVID-19 exposed animals

Critical functions

- Designate animal control, animal shelters, and veterinary clinics as essential services
- Law enforcement assistance
- Injured and sick strays
- Cruelty and neglect complaints
- Dangerous dog complaints
- Protective custody

<https://www.nacanet.org/naca-statements-on-covid-19/>

“The time for half measures is over. History will not forgive us for waiting an hour more.”

Non-emergency functions

- Non-aggressive stray pickup
- Leash law and licensing complaints
- Barking and nuisance complaints
- Conflict mitigation scenarios
- Trapping and transporting community cats
- Public spay/neuter and wellness clinics

<https://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/>

www.nacanet.org

“There is so much we don’t know, but that doesn’t mean we can’t act.”

Sample decision tree on veterinary emergencies (NJ VMA)

- Is this procedure necessary to save the animal's life?
- Is it necessary to alleviate pain or suffering?
- Does it prevent zoonotic disease?
- Could it be managed in a way that mitigates COVID risk?
- Does it require use of scarce resources needed for critical human medical care?
- Or can this patient safely wait until resources are less scarce and human health risks are lower?

<https://njvma.org/page/QuestionstoConsiderMakingDecisionsonElectivevsNon-ElectiveCare>

“Human beings remain the greatest risk for transmitting new infections.”

“We were all making fantastic strides and this is a punch to the gut.”

Spay/neuter is non-emergency

- Essential surgery is for
 - Life-threatening, rapid deterioration, permanent dysfunction, relief of suffering
- Spay/neuter must be paused to preserve resources, protect personnel, relieve burden on healthcare system
 - Neuter before adoption → adopt/foster with agreements
 - Trap-neuter-return → leave cats in place for now
 - Do not euthanize or hold animals in shelter pending spay/neuter
 - Temporary exemption from NBA laws
 - Replace with telemedicine for foster rechecks, medication refills, etc
- Thousands of intact cats have been placed in adoption and foster homes and community cat TNR programs are suspended

<https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Releasing-Unaltered-Pets-from-Animal-Shelters-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

Stronger together: This is an unbelievably sad and frightening time. We need our vets, staff, clients, and trappers to stay safe, shorten this crisis, and be ready to come back to caring for our communities, animals and spay/neuter at levels that have never happened before.





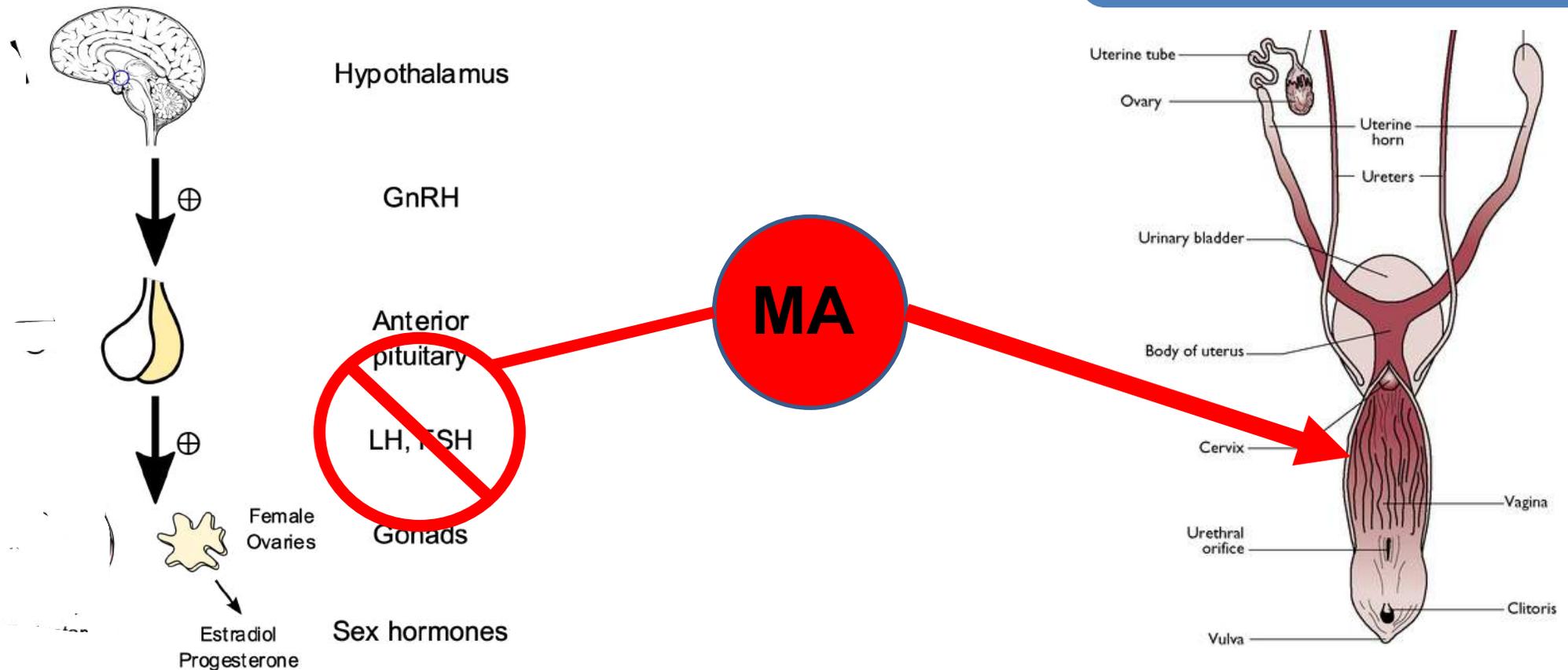
Megestrol Acetate

A Possible Adjunct to Spaying Female Cats During COVID-19 Crisis

Synthetic Progestin

Stops ovulation

Thickens uterine lining



Uses & Availability

Cats

- Not registered in US, but is in other countries
- Decades of off-label use for fertility control

Dogs

- *Ovaban*[®] FDA approved in US for postponing estrus

People

- Currently used for other conditions, but no longer birth control

Available Formulations

- Veterinary prescription
- Liquid less expensive
- Liquid compounded
- ~180 day shelf life*
- 10 mg/ml = “sweet spot”
- Very affordable



“Low Dosing”* for Individual Cats

One cat. One dose. One week

0.625 mg/kg = ~2.5 mg/cat/week

If cat is in heat: 5mg/dose/3~~first~~ week; then 2.5 mg/cat/week/safter

Maximum 30 weeks

*Romagnoli, S. [“Progestins to control feline reproduction: Historical abuse of high doses and potentially safe use of low doses”](#) Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery (2015)17 :743 - 751

Efficacy

- Decades of widespread usage with reported success but.....
- Very little hard data
 - Oen 1977*
 - 244 cats
 - 30 weeks
 - Two litters
 - 21 with signs of heat
- Check out Romagnoli 2015 for more references

What about....?



- Male cats
- No fertility control



Kittens < 4mo
Avoid due to
uterine changes



Pregnant cats
Reports of stillborns
Kitten masculinization

Microdosing* for Managed Cat Colonies

- 0.1 to 0.2 mg/kg/cat weekly*
- *Caution* to prevent unequal distribution
- No peer-reviewed data
- VCPR concerns – check!



*Greenberg, M., D. Lawler, S. Zawistowski, and W. Jochle. ["Low-dose megestrol acetate revisited: A viable adjunct to surgical sterilization in free roaming cats?"](#) *Veterinary Journal* (2013) 196:304-308.

Side Effects

Micro

0.1 - 0.2
mg/kg/week

Increased appetite
Weight gain
Haircoat changes

Low

0.625
mg/kg/week

Transient diabetes
Adrenocortical suppression
Haircoat changes

Intermediate

0.625
mg/kg/day

Mammary tumors
Uterine lesions
Pyometra

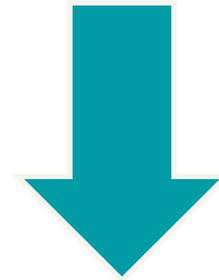
High

> 0.625
mg/kg/day

Megestrol Acetate



Fear



Hypothesis

#StayHome
#Flatten
The Curve

What is a VCPR?

- The Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship must be established during an in-person visit and is required for the practice of veterinary medicine
- Some states are waiving requirement for in-person visit to establish a VCPR during COVID pandemic
- Presents challenges for pets lacking a current vet or for community cats

“We are turning our communities into shelters.”

What is telemedicine?

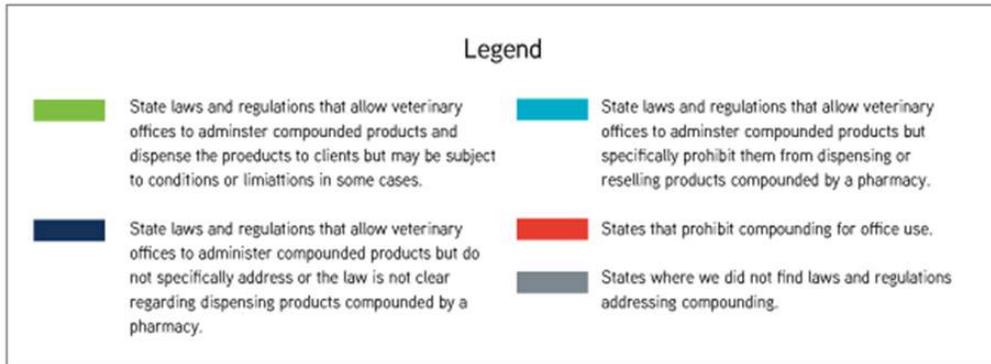
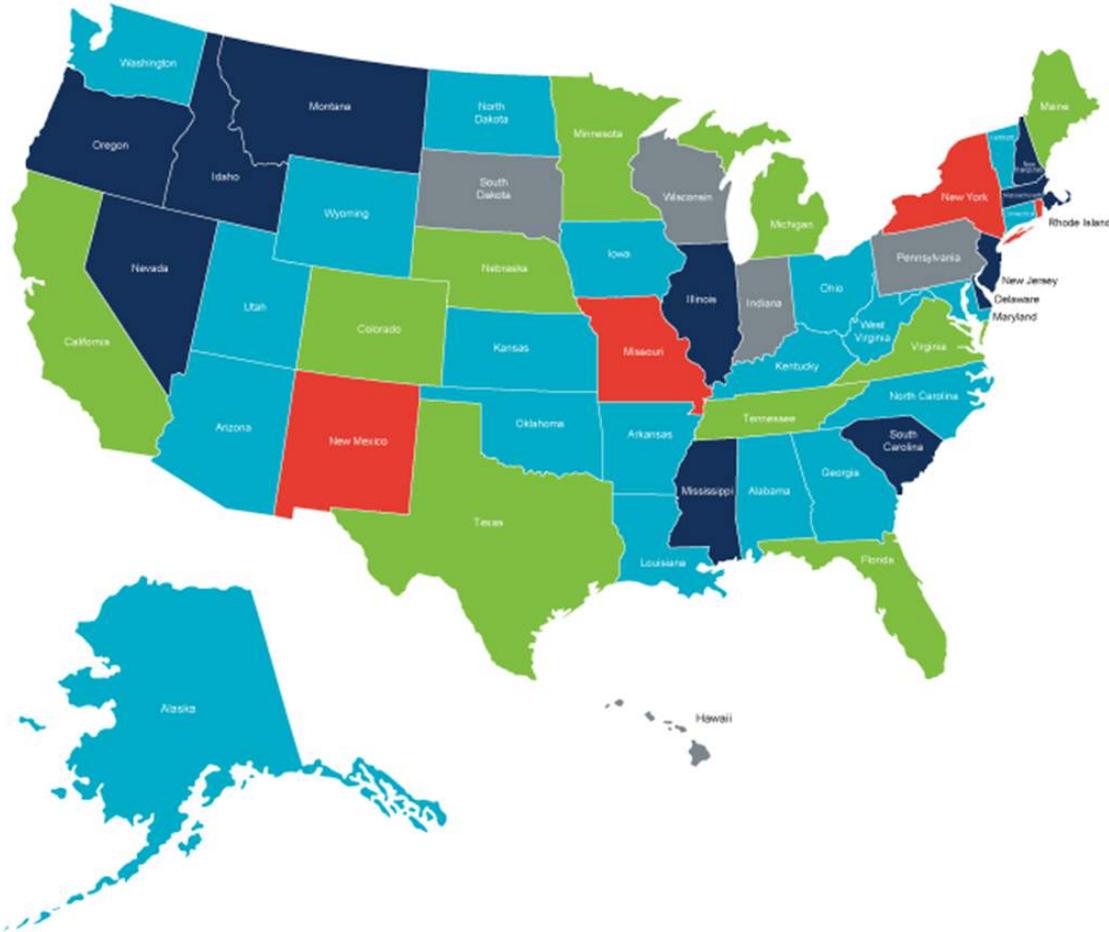
- Telemedicine is the practice of medicine using technology to deliver care at a distance. A physician in one location uses a telecommunications infrastructure to deliver care to a patient at a distant site.
- Practice of veterinary medicine includes diagnosis, prognosis, treatment.

What is compounding?

- The customized manipulation of an approved drug(s) by a veterinarian, or by a pharmacist upon the prescription of a veterinarian, to meet the needs of a particular patient
 - Mixing 2 medications
 - Making oral suspensions from tablets
 - Adding flavoring
 - Transdermal gels

“We must move faster and be braver than ever before.”

U.S. COMPOUNDING LAWS



Regulation

Compounding laws vary by state

- “Office stock” can be used for pets owned by the shelter (including fosters)
- Individual prescriptions needed for privately owned animals and community cats

Compounding pharmacies can help navigate in each state

<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/US-Map-Compounding-Laws.png>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Helps Facilitate Veterinary Telemedicine During Pandemic

“In order to help veterinarians utilize telemedicine to address animal health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the FDA generally does not intend to enforce the animal examination and premises visit portion of the VCPR requirements relevant to the FDA regulations governing Extralabel Drug Use in Animals and Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) drugs. This will allow veterinarians to prescribe drugs in an extralabel manner or authorize the use of VFD drugs without direct examination of or making visits to their patients, which will limit human-to-human interaction and potential spread of COVID-19 in the community.”

Best Friends Vet Access App



Sign up your fosters for FREE access to a veterinarian 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through Best Friends Vet Access mobile app.

#ThanksToMaddie, this service is now available for FREE to fosters working with any animal shelter or rescue group in the country (while licenses last)

Call, video, or text chat and the veterinarian will advise if the foster can handle at home or requires an in person vet visit. For more information, visit: <https://bit.ly/BFVAFoster>

www.facebook.com/groups/VeterinaryTelemed/





Community cats

- MA generally used as a stopgap while awaiting TNR and for hard-to-trap cats
- Has been fed to individual cats in canned food weekly or as a bulk mix divided into plastic dishes 1-2x weekly
- VCPR: Who is the owner? How to adapt “herd” health concepts?

Community cat case study

- 20 acre government housing complex in Florida
- 1999 to present: managed with TNR and adoption
- MA for new cats (even if sex unknown), hard to trap cats
- One un-trappable cat had 9 litters, then treated successfully with MA 2008-2013
- Colony peaked at 135 and currently at 20 cats
- *“The only side effect from the medicine is a positive one: the mom cats start to look healthy.”*

Animal Welfare

DAILY DIGEST



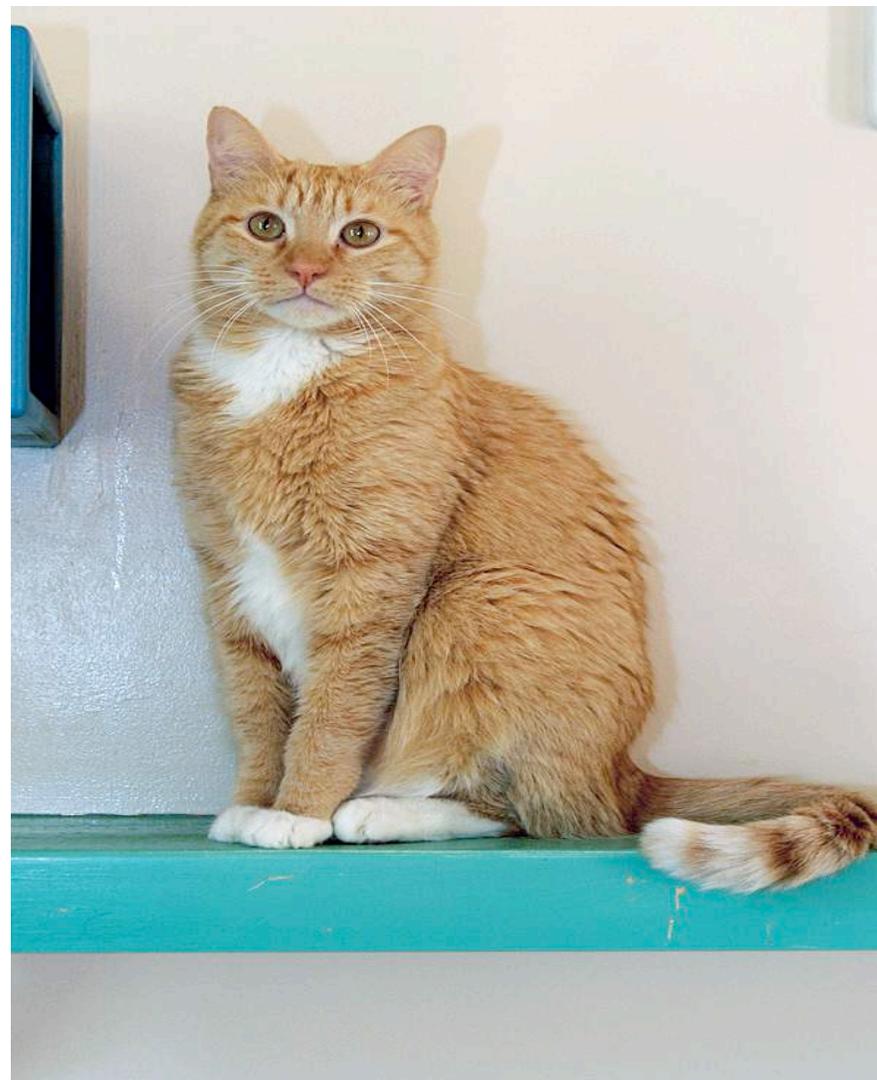
**Everything you need to know about animal welfare
and COVID-19 TODAY...from your friends at:**



<https://mailchi.mp/animalwelfaredigest/subscribe>

Learning from this response

- Understand this emergency tactic as crisis management, and as innovation
- In general
 - Who uses/their results
 - Prescriber/Cat owners/caretakers
- In depth
 - closer look at some dedicated efforts with strong ability to evaluate
- Separately, modeling results of a gap in services.



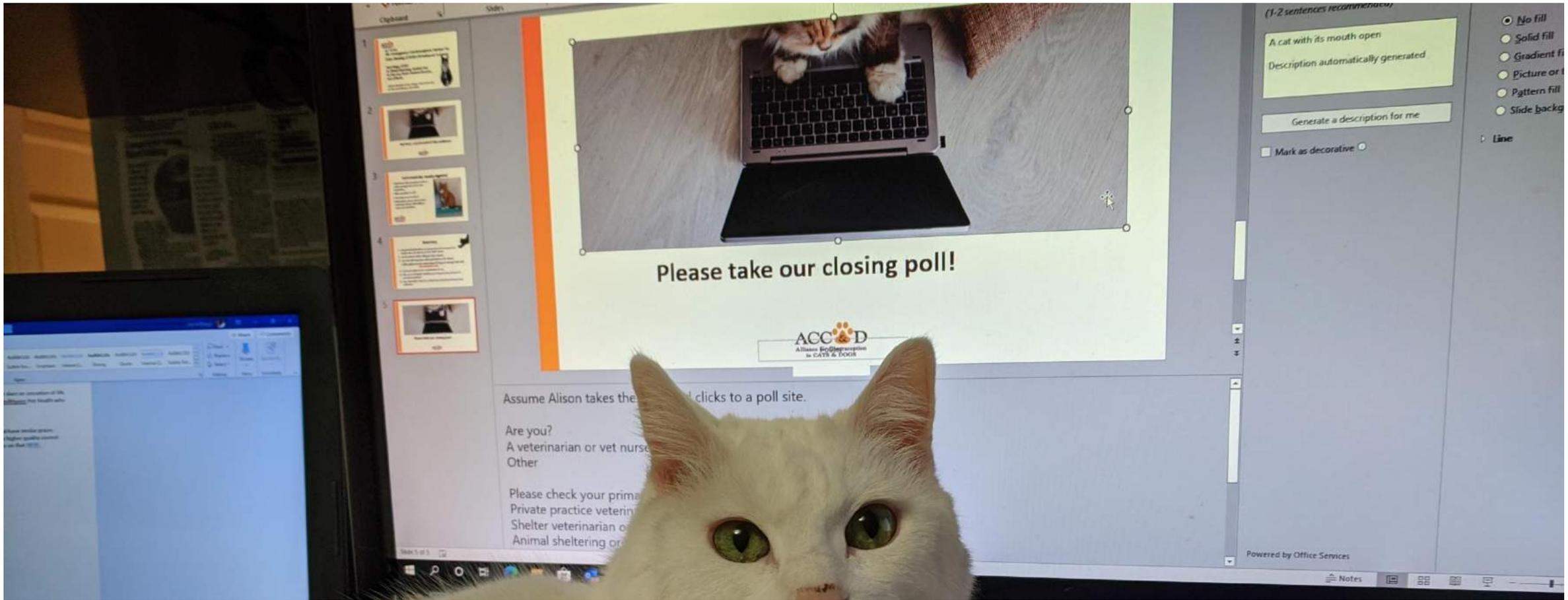
Summary



1. Megestrol acetate (MA) can prevent heat and pregnancy in female cats. Can also “halt” estrus at higher/more frequent dose.
2. “Buy time” while waiting for spay surgery
3. Low dose MA maximizes efficacy/minimizes side effects:
0.625 mg/kg once per week (about 2.5 mg per average adult cat)
ONE DOSE ONE CAT! – weekly up to 30 weeks (hopefully less!)
4. Veterinarian Prescription and VCPR
5. “off label use;” common in veterinary medicine, guidelines to follow
6. Affordable compounded liquid formulation - especially w/ office stock

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, showing its eyes and fur. The dog has dark fur around its eyes and lighter, possibly grey or white, fur on its muzzle. The word "Questions" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Questions



Please take our closing poll!





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Questions: info@acc-d.org

For more information: www.acc-d.org

