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Letter for Publication

Dear Sir,

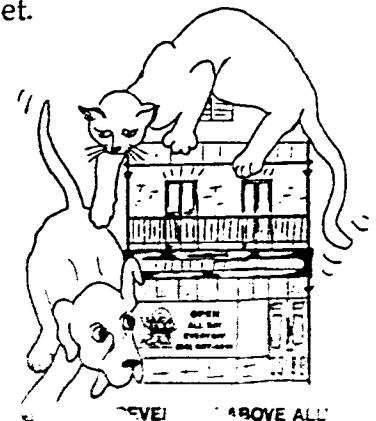
REVITALISING VETERINARY SCIENCE

Scientists employing a reductionist methodology have extracted an impressive range of nature's secrets. The linear, unitary 'cause and effect' model has, at times, seemed almost fail-safe. Gradually this attitude has been displaced in physics with the acceptance of Quantum and the newer Chaos Theories. (Gleick, 1987) Biology used to talk about linear progression and survival of the fittest. Now symbiogenesis gains ground. (Margulis, 1993) Even medical science begins to adopt qualitative research guidelines and accepts that the patient oftentimes knows best. (McCallum, 1994)

Some Australian practitioners protested at the narrow, reductionist veterinary methodology. It was alleged that this methodology supported the artificial feeding of pet animals with the resultant periodontal and other degenerative diseases. At a cost of £3500 a committee was established to investigate and, in part, recommended *'Those investigating small animal health problems should also take diet and diet consistency into account when researching systemic diseases - possible confounding effects of diet and poor oral health must be considered in such studies'*. (AVA, 1994) These recommendations are forthright and the practitioner protests were noisy yet, as the following suggests, researchers are slow to respond.

The case histories of twelve cats suffering from Intussusception presented at the University of Sydney Veterinary Teaching Hospital were reviewed (Bellenger and Beck, 1994). The *'relevant clinical data'* contained no reference to oral hygiene and it would be valid to assume that the cats were not fed a natural diet.

Excluding a twelve-year old cat suffering from lymphosarcoma, the other eleven averaged 6.4 months of age. It should be borne in mind that kittens shed their primary and simultaneously gain their secondary dentition between four and six months of age. If raised on artificial food during this physiological upheaval they lack the essential gum massage and oral cleansing, and



suffer a resultant gingivitis. This should be perceived as a significant insult to the immature immune system and the collagen supporting the teeth. Cats fed a 'natural' diet pass small amounts of virtually odourless faeces in contrast to the copious, malodorous stools of artificially fed cats. If the eleven kittens suffered these diet-induced burdens, it would be reasonable to expect their collagen-rich bowels to behave in an aberrant fashion.

Absence of diet and oral hygiene information from the case records ensures that they are not considered as part of the possible aetiology and, consequently, cannot be invoked as planks in a preventative platform. Readers are left with the sense that invasive surgery is the only treatment and preventative option. Admittedly this surgery served to revitalise the bowel but by revitalising their methodology the researchers could have extracted much more.

REFERENCES

Australian Veterinary Association News, Feb, 1994. p. 1 & 6

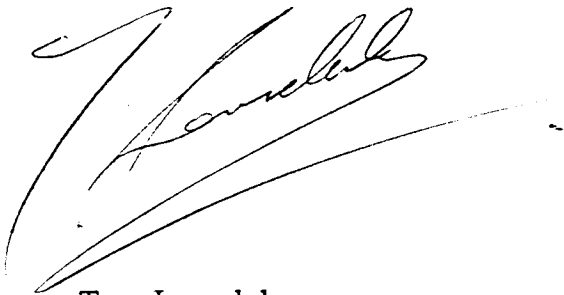
BELLENGER, C.R. & BECK, J.A. (1994) Intussusception in 12 cats *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 35, 295-298

GLEICK, J. (1987) Chaos, Sphere Books, London

McCALLUM, J., SHADBOLT, B., & WANG, D. (1994) Self-Rated Health and Survival: A 7-Year Follow-Up Study of Australian Elderly *American Journal of Public Health*, 84, No. 7

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Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Lonsdale', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Tom Lonsdale