**If You Smoke, I Smoke, We Smoke**

Happy Fall! This is Shelby with Antrim Veterinary Hospital. We all know how bad smoking is for humans but have you thought about your pet? Tobacco smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals! Smoke causes harmful changes in your pet’s lungs and airways similar to those of people. Smoking around pets that already have breathing or lung issues will worsen their symptoms.

There are three different types of smoke produced when smoking a cigarette, cigar, or pipe. First hand smoke is physically inhaling the smoke into your lungs. Second hand smoke is produced by the smoke at the end of the cigarette, cigar, or pipe or can be the smoke exhaled by the smoker. Third hand smoke is the smoke particles left behind on your furniture, curtains, carpet, and pet’s fur. Most commonly third hand smoke is ingested by the pets licking their fur.

In addition to the above your pet may get nicotine poisoning from eating a cigarette or cigar butt, drinking the nicotine refill liquid, chewing on the refill canister, or chewing on smoking devices. Nicotine can be toxic even at small dosages and there is no antidote for nicotine poisoning. Even if you are not a smoker your pet still has the danger of eating butts out of ash trays or off the ground.

Cats that live in smoking households are 2-4 times more likely to develop oral cancer. The most common tumor type is squamous cell carcinoma. With this diagnosis less than 10% of cats will survive 1 year after diagnosis even with chemo, surgery, or radiation. Cats living with people who smoke more than 1 pack a day have a three times higher risk of developing a type of oral cancer called squamous cell carcinoma and the typical survival for this cancer is 6 months even with chemo or surgery.

Long nosed dogs are more prone to nasal cancer and short nosed dogs often get lung cancer. This is because the nose has receptors that act like a filter for the lungs. The longer nosed dogs have more receptors where harmful particles can be trapped therefore predisposing them to the nasal cancer whereas short nosed dogs don’t have as many receptors so the harmful particles settle in the lungs. In general dogs exposed to smoke have more eye infections, allergies, and respiratory issues.

They say the eyes are windows into the soul. If looking into the eyes of your trusting companion does not convince you to give up the nicotine habit at least consider trying to decrease the risks to your pet. You can do this by smoking outside away from pets, bathing your pets regularly to remove the smoke residue, and routinely steam cleaning your furniture, drapes, and carpets. We can influence our life span by the choices we make. Our pets don’t have that option so put them first and make choices that will allow them to do their job; be a loving companion as long as possible.