

# Vetting pet peeves part of job

BY JIM BAWDEN

*City Vets* is the closest to *ER* Toronto may ever get in a TV series. And the real-life dramas that go on in this one-hour special are every bit as challenging as *ER*'s wholly scripted ones.

In fact, some of the stories may induce tears because many of us are closer to our pets than our families. For years we've been watching all those wonderful actuality shows from Britain about country vets or vets in training. Now it's our turn.

Three downtown veterinary hospitals let us inside their consulting rooms. How were patient consent forms signed, that's what I first want to know? With a paw print or mere bark of approval?

As one who has recently trudged through an animal emergency clinic in the wee hours, I empathize completely with these emotionally distraught owners. I also admire the doctors who emerge as considerate care givers.

Imagine having to diagnose a patient without being able to talk things over with him/her/it. Simple questions like "Where does it hurt?" remain unanswered.

Since these hospitals are mainly downtown, we see in the first hour an array mostly of dogs with cameo appearances by a feline or two. Which means to me that lizards, birds, mice, turtles and fish don't seem to thrive in the great concrete towers of downtown.

We start with an aged poodle's dental



A canine patient at one of Toronto's busiest animal clinics on the new Animal Planet special *City Vets*. It's the conversations between the veterinarians and with pet owners that makes the hour

problems. Her caring vet inspects the rot and decides at least 14 teeth must come out or poison will soon set in. The owner is phoned and consulted, and the vet is told to proceed despite a very steep price (well over \$1,000).

Then there's the tiny daschund who keeps throwing up. A scan is done to make sure she doesn't have pancreatitis. It's negative. But the nausea persists. This

patient must be booked for future study. Then there are the lumps on the head of a venerable dog. Cutting them off is messy and gooey, but they thankfully prove to be benign nodules.

We watch an ace orthopedic vet examine dogs in crisis - he's an expert at preventing arthritis in older dogs and getting them back on their feet (in one case there are just three feet left for this dog). One

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returnee must be operated on for the removal of gallstones. Exploratory surgery is needed to determine the cause. One 11-year-old pooch collapsed at home and gets immediate attention. It's discovered there's an inoperable tumour on a heart ventricle, and the vet must brace herself to tell the owners.

A miniature collie has a tumour right beside her heart - it will be expensive to remove but the owners opt for surgery. Then there's the nipper with an oral hematoma (on his ear).

By the end of the first hour I lay on the floor totally exhausted by the number of emergencies I'd been watching. Alas, there was nobody nearby to take my temperature or even offer me a dog bone.

Listening in to the vets talk back and forth makes the series. Conversation is brisk because of the time restraints. In many cases decisions must be made quickly and be explained thoroughly to the owners. There is a constant sense of crisis. Yet all of the vets profiled come across as articulate and considerate, able to handle almost any emergency.

Expert editing puts us right into the middle of the action and the stories jump back and forth. There isn't a moment of slackness here.

Made by Discovery Channel's Exploration Productions it was directed and produced by Barry Davis and narrated by Jesse Collins. Rating: 3 paws up.

9 p.m. on Animal Planet.

## Changes, changes

Over the next month, the U.S. network

guest star on the premiere as a surprise for one contestant, offering some advice. *Deal or No Deal* airs weeknights at 8 p.m.

Other contestants from outside the U.S. include Lenny, 37, a trading company owner from the former U.S.S.R., and Sean.

## Trailer Park to Paul

CBC better have a five-second delay in