

Coming to the aid of animals

Local vet scores pet oxygen masks for Medic EMS

By Tracy Dunn

NSP Assistant Editor

People often are not the only victims of car accidents and house fires. Their four-legged friends can suffer smoke inhalation and trauma, too, but until now, first responders have had to employ equipment designed for humans to help revive them.

Now, thanks to a local veterinarian, every Medic EMS ambulance in Scott County is equipped with oxygen masks specifically designed to fit dogs, cats and even ferrets or birds.

Dr. Jennifer Ewoldt of Scott County Animal Hospital recently nominated Medic to receive the pet oxygen masks through a program sponsored by the Iowa Veterinary Medical Association and Invisible Fence of the Quad Cities.

“Hopefully, this will save a lot of pet lives. Oxygen is the mainstay of treatment for smoke inhalation. By providing oxygen treatment right away — the sooner the better — it will improve survival rates. We’re very excited about being able to get this,” says Ewoldt.

The veterinarian learned about Project Breathe through the IVMA newsletter, and thought, “This fits with what we had

started doing a few years ago,” she says. Scott County Animal Hospital had already purchased and donated pet oxygen masks to the fire departments of Eldridge and Long Grove, and had done presentations on first aid for animals to several area departments. Ewoldt says she has nominated every volunteer department to receive the masks through Project Breathe, but hasn’t heard the results of that request.

Phil Vroman, owner of Invisible Fence of the Quad Cities, says, “We hope that by donating oxygen mask kits that we will contribute to saving more pets, and hopefully, protect pet owners that may risk their own life to save a pet in a fire.”

Invisible Fence Brand has teamed up with the Iowa Veterinary Medical Association to form a Pet Safety Partnership, offering to provide the lifesaving masks to first responders.

Although the number of pets that die in fires is not an official statistic kept by the U.S. Fire Administration, industry websites and sources have

cited an estimated 40,000 to 150,000 pets each year die in fires, most succumbing to smoke inhalation.

Ewoldt says that there are a few structure fires each year in our area where pets don’t get out, or they’re rescued but have smoke inhalation symptoms.

“Talking with EMTs today, they do treat a number of animals every year, using human



Dr. Ewoldt demonstrates the mask on Magnum, whose owner is Kathie Vroman of Invisible Fence of the Quad Cities.



All of the Medic EMS ambulances in Scott County now carry a pet oxygen mask kit, thanks to Dr. Jennifer Ewoldt, DVM, of Scott County Animal Hospital (left) and Invisible Fence of the Quad Cities. Owner Kathie Vroman is shown at right, with her dog, Magnum. With them is Chuck Gipson of Medic. NSP Photos by Tracy Dunn

equipment, and have brought a number of them back to life,” Ewoldt says. “It’s definitely a problem out there.”

The 18 ambulances in Medic EMS’s fleet — including the Eldridge station — received their pet oxygen mask kits on Tuesday, Oct. 5. Medic education manager Chuck Gipson says they have already completed the first of three training sessions to be sure all of their

EMTs are familiar with the equipment and know how and when to use it.

“We want to thank Scott County Animal Hospital and Invisible Fence for their generosity and believe that these kits will help us save more pets; we can all recall a fire from the past where these masks would have helped save a pet,” adds Kevin Greenly of Medic EMS.