

Burlington Reports

Paws and Claws Society, Inc., Thorofare, NJ



Issue 36: Spring/Summer 2025

Partners in Prevention *Not* Destruction since 1993



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- Read about Paws and Claws Society's programs or see "Gems of Wisdom and Pearls of Knowledge: Humane Messages" at "Compassion Central".
- Find statistics and No-Kill information on "Tips From The Trenches".
- Read articles about pet care (and even use the age calculator to find out your pet's age in human years) at Caretakers' Corner".
- Look for "Share" buttons throughout our site to share content via X (Formerly Twitter), Facebook, email, and other services.

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Cats Learn Human Words Faster Than Human Babies!

In the 1990's, a study was designed with human infants, aged 8-14 months, for the purpose of determining at what point in our development we begin to make the association between words and objects.

Some of the researchers involved in this study later participated in a 2022 study using the same type of word test, but *this time*, they tested cats.

Many cat parents have likely noticed, on some level, that our cats understand a great deal of what we say—with our words. This comes from living with us and hearing us speak certain words and phrases over and over. Cats are, of course, also excellent at reading body language and mood, as this is a large part of the way they communicate with each other. But they know a great many of our words, as well.

The original study, testing human babies, centered on showing infants two pairings of word-and-object. This was done by showing the babies short video clips of animated characters and

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Cats and Words (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

playing pre-recorded audio with a voice speaking words to associate with those characters.

Later, the babies were shown one pairing that matched one of those previously shown and *another* pairing in a new combination. Across six experiments, it was only the 14-month-old babies who formed word-object associations under the controlled testing conditions, although only when the objects were moving. The younger infants, however, while not making the associations, did appear to process both the word and the object.

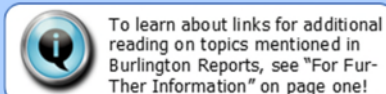
The takeaway from these experiments? The ability to make word-object associations seems to develop at around 14 months of age in humans.

The study of cats was carried out with 31 adult pet cats (23 of which were up for adoption at cat cafés). Each cat was placed in front of a laptop and shown two 9-second cartoon clips, while at the same time, hearing recorded audio of their caregivers saying a made-up word. The word was spoken four times.

While a blue unicorn was visible on the screen, the audio of the caregivers saying the nonsense word “keraru” was played, and while a red-faced cartoon sun was on the screen, the nonsense word “parumo” was played.

The cats were presented with the cartoon and audio clips until they got bored, which was indicated by a 50% drop in eye contact with the screen, and were given a break.

After the break, the cartoon clips were replayed, but half of the clips were shown with the “wrong” audio, using in-



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Burlington The Cat's Alarming Surprise



sound?

I *know*, right?

Well, little did I know, our house has one of those alarm systems.

I mean, I notice that Mom and Dad always push buttons on the wall thingy when they leave or come home, and it goes, “*Beep, beep beep*,” but I never thought any more about it.

Until the incident last week.

I'll give you the details leading up to said incident.

A month ago, Mom bought this really cool scratching board for me. It's a sisal-covered board about a foot long, and it hangs from a rope. Mom hung it from the doorknob on the door that leads out to the garage. It's near one of my favorite beds where I like to nap in the afternoon and early evening because there's a window there that lets in the nicest, softest, most comforting light at that time of day. When I wake up from those naps, I like to grab that board with my claws and stretch as I fully wake up.

Well.

On the day of the incident, Mom and Dad had gone out for the day. I don't know where they went. They said “errands” and something else . . . blah blah blah . . . before they left. I was just looking forward to a long nap in that particular favorite bed, so I was only half listening. Humans are always doing *something* or going *somewhere*. It's just in their nature. I don't worry. I always know they'll come back to me. They always do.

So, I ate a few of my crunchies, got a nice drink of water from my fountain, and curled up in my bed, quickly

Hello, Burlington here.

Have you ever heard the deafening sound of a house alarm going off? I mean, the ear-melting, body-shaking
BRRRRRRRRNNNNN!



falling into a luxurious sleep.

Later . . . I'm not sure how much later, but long enough that the light had shifted quite a bit . . . I awoke, yawned, and got out of my bed. I went to my sisal-covered board, dug my nails deeply into the fibers, leaned down and curved my back, and *strrreeetched*.

The tug of the board's rope around the doorknob pulled the door, and apparently it hadn't been properly locked and it pulled open, and then the entire house was vibrating with “*BRRRRRRRRNNNNN!*”

I ran. I ran as fast as my furry legs would carry me. I wound up cowering under the couch in the living room, way back against the wall, but I couldn't outrun that atrocious *sound*.

Somewhere, mixed in with that sound, was the ringing of the telephone in the kitchen, and then it stopped, but the big noise continued.

In the meantime, the front door opened and I heard Mom and Dad's voices as Dad did the “*beep, beep beep*” at the wall thingy. Finally, *finally*, the horrible loud sound stopped.

“The garage door is open,” Mom called from the spot near my bed, then after a pause, “and Burlington's bed is warm. He must have been napping and then got up to use his scratching board and it pulled the door open.”

Dad laughed and Mom joined in.

“Burlington?” Mom called out. “Burlington, it's ok, buddy. You can come out. You're ok.”

I scooted forward and stuck my nose out from beneath the couch's edge. She spotted me and came over. She sat on the floor in front of me and stroked the fur on my head. I leaned in, the comfort of her touch



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Squirty's Words From The Rainbow Bridge



In memory of Squirty, a longtime friend of Paws and Claws Society who passed away on Mother's Day 2011 at the age of 16½, Burlington Reports added a new section to remember pets who have passed or to learn more about our animal family members. Ask Squirty a question or share your pet memorial story on our web site (hover over "Newsletter" on our menu). Let Squirty answer your questions or meet your pet(s) at the Rainbow Bridge and escort them to Pet Heaven.

Cats and Words (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

stead "keraru" for the sun and "parumo" for the unicorn.

The cats spent an average of 33% more time looking at the screen when hearing the mismatched audio, indicating that they had learned the original association between the images and words.

Saho Takagi, an Azabu University comparative cognitive scientist and member of the 2022 study, said, "Some cats even gazed at the screen with their pupils dilated during the 'switched' condition. It was cute to see how seriously they participated in the experiment."

In a surprising twist, the majority of the cats needed only two 9-second lessons (and four repeats of the word) to make the word-object association, where the 14-month-old human infants needed four 15-second lessons (and seven repeats of the word).

Janet Werker, a developmental psychologist at the University of British Columbia and one of the designers of the original study in the 1990's, did point out that there were notable differences in the methods between the two studies. The cats heard three-syllable words, recorded by their own caregivers, using exaggerated speech, while the infants heard one-syllable words spoken in a voice unfamiliar to them, using a range of vocal intonations.

The fascinating thing is that the cats in the study seem to be learning these word associations in the same way that human babies learn language, without any other training or clear promise of reward.

And we already *knew* that our feline friends and family members understood us in ways that are hard to explain, now, didn't we?



Question: Hi Squirty. Do squirrels really forget where they bury their acorns and nuts?

Answer: Squirrels actually have excellent memories when it comes to remembering where they have buried nuts, although they probably *do* forget *some* locations over time.

Fortunately, they bury a *lot* of nuts.



Most squirrels are *scatter hoarders*, or practice *scatter caching*. Among animals that hide food to find and consume later, there are two categories of caching: *larder caching*, which means keeping everything in one place, and *scatter caching*, which means keeping small caches in many places. The second method involves more work, finding the right spots to hide food, digging all the holes, and of course, remembering where everything has been hidden. But this method also provides the added security of not being left completely without, should another animal stumble upon a hiding spot, because there are still many others. Some squirrels will actually make some "fake" caches in addition to their real ones, if they feel that they are being watched by an animal that may steal their food.

There may be more to squirrels' caching behavior, besides saving food for the future.

There is a theory, based on observation, that squirrels may decide whether to eat a nut or to bury it for later based on its tannin content. Tannins are chemicals called polyphenols, a type of flavonoid, that are found in many plants such as cacao beans used to make dark chocolate, or the types of grapes used to make dry wines, and contribute to a bitter taste and astringency.

Tannins can bind to bacteria in the mouth before plaque has a chance to form, helping to prevent bacteria from sticking to teeth. Tannins are also antioxidants and may have anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, but can interfere with digestion and absorption of some nutrients, so balance is important. In some mammals, excess tannins can inhibit water absorption in the gut, leading to dehydration, as well as potentially causing ulceration and kidney issues.

Burying higher-tannin acorns or nuts may allow some of these tannins to leach out, making them safer for the squirrels to consume.



A 1986 study by Ohio State University biologists Peter Smallwood and David Peters reported that when Grey squirrels were given

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Fox Denning Season

Late February through early April is the denning season for red foxes.

A February 16th Facebook post by Wildthunder Wildlife & Animal Rehabilitation & Sanctuary had this to say:

"If you have suddenly seen a fox in the yard near your home, there is a good reason for this. It is denning season. Between the end of January thru early April, a mother fox will give birth to between 4 and 5 kits (a baby fox is called a kit). A coyote will often find a fox den, dig out the babies, and kill them. A mother fox knows this and will frequently choose a den site close to people, away from where coyotes generally go.

"A fox will often den under a porch, shed, garage, barn, or side of a hill, trying to keep her little family safe.

"Please offer them a short-term rental because this is not a permanent situation. If you are lucky enough to see how beautiful an adult fox is, or witness the kits playing (at a distance of course),



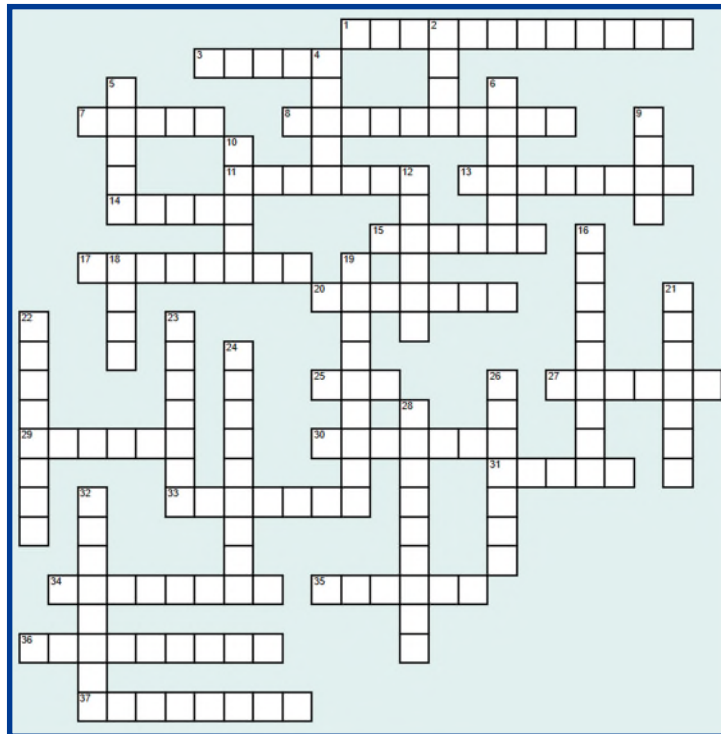
(Continued on page 5)

Crossword Puzzle: Animal Trivia

Shared in Burlington Reports Over the Years

In the 15 years (so far!) of The Burlington Reports, a lot of animal trivia has been shared. (Sometimes more than once!) How many of these facts do you remember?

Visit our web site to see the completed puzzle or to solve the puzzle online.



Clues:

Across

- 1 The ____ is born underwater. (Aug 2013 issue)
- 3 It takes a ____ two weeks to digest its food. (Spring/Summer 2019 issue)
- 7 At birth, a ____ is smaller than a mouse and weighs about four ounces. (Aug 2013 issue)
- 8 A group of owls is called a _____. (from Spring/Summer 2023 issue's crossword puzzle)
- 11 ____ can change from one sex to another and back again. (from Spring/Summer 2023 issue's crossword puzzle)
- 13 An ____ is nearly 6 feet long, yet its mouth is only an inch wide. (Spring/Summer 2017 issue)
- 14 A baby ____ is called a "cria" which is Spanish for baby. (from Spring/Summer 2023 issue's crossword puzzle)

Down

- 2 A ____ is a mammal in the family Ochotonidae, placed among the same order as hares and rabbits. This rabbit relative can be found in North America and parts of Eurasia, and it strongly resembles a hamster, although not closely related. (June 2013 issue)
- 4 The ____ of a shrimp is located in its head. (Spring/Summer 2019 issue)
- 5 A ____'s hump does not actually store water; it stores fat; enough to go for 3 weeks without eating. (Fall/Winter 2019 issue)
- 6 ____ foxes dwell in underground dens in the sandy Sahara and elsewhere in North Africa. (June 2013 issue)
- 9 ____ have no gall bladders. (Spring/Summer 2017 issue)

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Clues (Continued) for Crossword Puzzle on Page 4

Across: (Continued from page 4)

- 15** ____ cats are almost always female. (Dec 2012 issue)
- 17** The oldest recorded ____ lived for 82 years. (Aug 2013 issue)
- 20** The ____ is the only dog that can't bark but it is known to make a sound resembling yodeling. (June 2012 issue)
- 25** The domestic ____ is the only species able to hold its tail vertically while walking. (Aug 2012 issue)
- 27** I'm a very social animal that lives in large groups that can contain as many as a few hundred members. We form close bonds by feeding, sleeping and grooming together. Our teeth are very similar to human teeth with a series of large, flat molars, perfect for grinding down vegetation. We can save extra food for later in our flexible cheek pouches! What am I? (Fall/Winter 2017 issue)
- 29** Bears do not actually hibernate in winter; they go into a state called ____, which is similar to, but is not actually, hibernation. (Fall/Winter 2019 issue)
- 30** A ____'s neck contains the same number of vertebrae as a human neck. (Aug 2011 issue)
- 31** The Greek writer ____ is considered the first person to write about dogs. Dogs are mentioned frequently in The Odyssey. (Feb 2012 issue)
- 33** Both humans and cats have identical regions in the brain responsible for _____. (Feb 2012 issue and Aug 2012 issue)
- 34** Long, muscular hind legs enable snow ____ to leap seven times their own body length in a single bound. (June 2013 issue)
- 35** What is the technical term for a cat's hairball? (Dec 2012 issue)
- 36** A ____ doesn't actually change color to blend into its surroundings; this actually has more to do with communicating its moods as well as with temperature and light. (Fall/Winter 2019 issue)
- 37** The ____ is the only animal capable of turning its stomach inside-out. (from Spring/Summer 2023 issue's crossword puzzle)

Down: (Continued from page 4)

- 10** ____ fingerprints are almost indistinguishable from human fingerprints. (Spring/Summer 2022 issue)
- 12** The belief that female dogs have better personalities if they are allowed to have a litter before being ____ is actually a myth. (Feb 2012 issue)
- 16** The only mammals to undergo ____ are elephants, humpback whales and humans. (from Spring/Summer 2023 issue's crossword puzzle)
- 18** An adult ____'s roar can be heard up to five miles (eight kilometers) away. (June 2013 issue)
- 19** ____ puppies are born without spots. (June 2012 issue, Dec 2012 issue, and Aug 2013 issue)
- 21** An ____ has three hearts. (Spring/Summer 2017 issue)
- 22** In the wild, ____ are larder hoarders; they use their cheek pouches to transport food to their burrows. Their name in the local Arabic dialect where they were found translates to "mister saddlebags" due to the amount of storage space in their cheek pouches. (June 2013 issue)
- 23** ____ dogs are actually a kind of a rodent. (June 2012 issue)
- 24** The ____ is the fastest dog breed, reaching speeds of 45 mph. (June 2012 issue)
- 26** Cats have a small scent gland in the roof of the mouth called the vomeronasal organ. A cat will open its mouth to draw odors to this scent organ. This fierce-looking behavior is called the ____ reaction. (June 2011 issue)
- 28** At birth, baby ____ are only about an inch long; no bigger than a large water bug or a queen bee. (Aug 2013 issue)
- 32** ____ do not roar, as the other big cats do. Instead, they purr. (June 2013 issue)



Fox Denning Season (cont'd)

(Continued from page 4)

you will be glad you did! It is not uncommon for Red Foxes to change dens several times during the season, so you may not see them for long.

"Kits are slow to develop and will not leave the den until they are about a month old. Foxes do not live in a den year-round, only when a mother has babies. During the summer as the kits grow older, you will see less and less of them, and by September everyone will have packed up and moved on.

"Please do not call a service to "relocate them", they will often be killed. If you see a fox during the day, it does not mean she is rabid. A mother fox works tirelessly to feed her kits and will often be out during daylight hours foraging for food.

"Foxes are omnivores, generally feeding on berries, grasses, and small rodents. They are solitary and prefer to be left alone. They do not want to hunt and eat your children, mate with your dog, or kill your cat. A fox just wants a place to raise her family safely, please allow her to do that."

Many thanks to Wild-thunder Wildlife & Animal Rehabilitation & Sanctuary for sharing this important and educational information!

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Mutual Healing Benefits — for Cats and Humans

Several prison systems across the country have adopted programs, in conjunction with local animal shelters and organizations, that allow inmates to care for shelter cats, building a bond of mutual trust and helping the cats to become socialized before they are made available for adoption. But these programs have shined a light on so many additional layers of healing benefits, for both the cats and the humans caring for them, than anyone might have expected.

The cats brought into these programs are often among those with high euthanasia rates. Some prisons have TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return; also sometimes called Trap-Neuter-Release) programs as well. An article on Alley Cat Allies' web site talks about their work in helping two New Jersey prisons to develop TNR programs, saving the lives of 156 cats as of the posting of the article.

There were many security protocols that had to be met, from proper clearance for Alley Cat Allies staff to enter the prison in order to trap the cats, including background checks and ID badges, screenings, and regulations-training, to the vetting of supplies entering the prison grounds. And because the logistics of taking these cats out of the prison environment for veterinary appointments can prove challenging, their organization created a wellness program to provide veterinary care for the cats.

These cats, in the various prison programs in multiple states, receive their second chance, not only at life, but at love. Inmates are assigned to foster specific cats, providing them with food, water, and attention, and learning their cats' needs. Some program activities include the building of cat houses, shelters, and the providing of enrichment activities. The cats live in a designated area of the prison, *with* their inmates, with access to their feeding stations and litter boxes; it is *home* for them, during this fostering time.

And the benefits of this bonding and interaction, beyond meeting the needs of the cats, *literally saving their lives*, and preparing them for

adoption and loving lives with their forever families?

A flyer from the Alley Cat Allies web site presents results from a polling of 159 prisons across 36 states with animal programs. The results revealed include:

- 8 out of 10 reported an increased sense of pride and accomplishment among inmates
- 85% reported an increase in work ethic among inmates
- 89% reported that the programs humanize and calm the facilities
- 93% reported an increase in inmate self-control
- 97% reported increases in inmate trust and relationship skills
- 100% reported that the program reduced stress levels among inmates

Prison Cats in History



the benefit of the doubt) drew attention to prisoners who were secretly preparing food in their cells, which was against the rules. Enticed by the scent of the food, Rusty would show up and sit outside the cell in question, meowing.

Rusty's offspring, Blue, eventually joined the group, along with Blue's constant companion, a finch named Chirps, who was found deserted in a nest on the prison wall and who was seen in photos, perched on Blue's paw or head.

In Lima, Ohio, in 1975, the first official testing began into the correlation between pris-

“Cats in Prisons” Programs



This AI-artist-created image represents the connection fostered between cats and inmates in prison-animal programs—calm moments that reflect healing and trust.

oner involvement with animals and behavior change.

Lima State Hospital, known then as Lima State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, was an Ohio facility that housed individuals who had committed crimes and were deemed “criminally insane”. This included those found not guilty of their crimes by reason of insanity.

The 1975 study was begun after a group of patients started to foster a small hurt sparrow that was found by a patient, smuggled into the building, and hidden in a broom closet. This particular ward of the hospital was home to the most depressed and non-communicative patients. Staff noticed changes in patient's behavior after their involvement in helping the bird and the year-long study was created. The study examined behavior in two different wards of the prison, identical except for the use of animal therapy, in the form of pets, in one but not the other. In the ward with the pets, no suicide attempts were recorded during that year, while in the other ward, there were 8 attempted suicides recorded. The group working with animals also showed less violent behavior and required less medication.

Varied types of animals have brought these

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Cats in Prisons (Continued)

(Continued from page 6)

healing experiences in different Prison programs, including dogs as well as cats, and even horses.



Examples of Prisons with Cat Programs:

Below is a selection of U.S. prisons with cat programs, as described by CD Stevens in response to a Quora discussion on the topic. The following entries reflect their wording and insights:

- **Monroe Correctional Complex-Special Offender Unit (MCC-SOU):** The SOU E living unit's kitten and cat connections program (MCKC) has helped offenders
- **South Boise Women's Correctional Center:** This Idaho prison program gives inmates the opportunity to help cats and kittens in need.
- **Douglas Arizona State Prison Complex:** Inmates participate in a partnership with the Humane Society of Southern Arizona to trap, neuter, and spay feral cats, and then return them to the prison. Inmates also foster kittens that are too young to be spayed and neutered.
- **New Hampshire State Prison for Women (NHSP/W):** Inmates are temporary guardians for kittens and a mother cat.
- **Allendale Prison in South Carolina:**

Inmates care for cats and dogs from local shelters that would otherwise be euthanized.

- **Pendleton Correctional Facility:** Inmates participate in an animal care program that helps them rehabilitate each other.
- **Bayside State Prison:** Alley Cat Allies helped develop a cat wellness program at this New Jersey prison.
- **Southern State Correctional Facility:** Alley Cat Allies helped develop a TNR program at this New Jersey prison.
- **Western State Penitentiary:** Also known as Western Pen and State Correctional Institution Pittsburgh, this prison has a colony of cats known as the Prison Cats.

Squirty's Words (Continued)

(Continued from page 3)

food items that were identical *except* for their tannin content, the squirrels ate more of the low-tannin foods.

In an interesting twist, the *same* study found no evidence that the squirrels' ability to digest protein was affected by tannins after all, meaning the Grey squirrels could actually detoxify the tannins.

This led the researchers to posit that perhaps tannin levels are clues to the squirrels about the perishability of the acorn, aiding them in their decision of "cache or don't cache."

Takuya Shimada at the Kansai Research Center in Japan published a more recent paper suggesting that the physical properties of acorns, such as their smaller ratio of surface area to volume, compared to things like branches or leaves, may actually reduce or prevent the tannins leaching out, after finding no significant changes in tannin astringency of two types of acorns and nuts after three months of burial.

In a 1996 study published in the journal *Animal Behaviour*, Leila Hadj-Chikh, Michael Steele and Peter Smallwood observed how Grey squirrels cached two types of acorns: white oak and red oak.

Red oak acorns remain dormant through the winter and germinate in the spring, while white oak acorns germinate in the autumn, making them more perishable.

The squirrels in the study consistently cached the red acorns and ate the white ones. In addition, when they *did* cache the white acorns, they would first remove the embryo of the seed with surgical accuracy, preventing the acorn from germinating and therefore making it able to be stored for a longer length of time.

So the next time someone says squirrels forget where they stash their nuts, just tell them: "Actually, they're practicing selective inventory management with seasonal germination timing and biological modification techniques."

You won't be wrong.



*Peace. Love. and Head-Butts.
Squirty.*

Burlington The Cat (Continued)

(Continued from page 2)

grounding me.

The next thing I heard was the ringing of the doorbell. Dad answered and I heard voices—Dad's and someone else's. Then laughter.

After a few minutes, Dad came into the living room.

"That was the police," he said, "I explained how the alarm went off. The officer understood and said she has cats as well."

Mom and Dad are extra careful to double check that door, now, whenever they leave the house, and they remind me that I am safe.



Burlington is a fictional gray/silver tabby cat belonging to a family in the Northeast United States. "Mom" is Paige Turner, owner of a small book store. "Dad's" real name has not been mentioned to date. Their two (now adult) children are Mallory and Matthew. The family also adopted a Chihuahua and named her Jersey. See our web site, pacsnj.org, for other issues of Burlington Reports and read the ongoing adventures and learning experiences of Burlington and his family!



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To learn about links for additional
reading on topics mentioned in
Burlington Reports, see "For Fur-
Ther Information" on page one!

Microchip Registry Alert – Is Your Pet Affected?

In February of 2025, Austin, Texas-based Save This Life, a pet microchip company, closed, prompting alerts for many pet owners. The AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association), upon receiving reports of failed searches in their Pet Recovery Service registry, removed the company from its Microchip Registry Lookup tool. AAHA tried immediately to reach someone from Save This Life, but were unable to reach anyone from the company by phone or email. Pets with implanted chips registered with Save This Pet can apparently still be read, but the associated registry entries can no longer be searched. The number of pets affected by this closure is not clear.



If you have a pet with a microchip, the AAHA encourages you to contact your veterinarian to determine if your pet's microchip should be reregistered with another registry.

You can find a list of pet microchip providers on AAHA's website:
<https://www.aaha.org/participating-companies>.