

Companion Animal Specialty & Emergency Hospital

Helping Barks & Meows for Two Decades



David Hunter, GreenRoom Productions Inc. photos

By Susan Dobbe-Leahy

For two decades, Companion Animal Specialty & Emergency (CASE) Hospital has put itself at the center of care for family pets. Located at 1095 Pingree Road, Ste. 120, Crystal Lake, CASE and its 10,000-square-foot facility serve referring veterinarians and their clients from a multi-county region.

“Twenty-four-hour emergency service was not available in the area when we started in a Crystal Lake clinic,” says Dr. Alicia Ragni, DVM, a hospital co-owner. “The business was conceived by a group of veterinarians who wanted to provide afterhours care for pets that need surgery, treatment for illness or accidents. The concept and services grew quickly.”

In many suburban households, the family pet is just that – family. Cats and dogs provide affection, connection, company, joy and love. When accidents, illness, chronic conditions or age affect our furry friends, we seek relief for them.

CASE Hospital has provided compassionate care and emergency medicine to area pets and their families since 1997; additional specialty services were added in 2006. Over these two decades, the hospital’s dedicated team of veterinarians, veterinary technicians and support staff have helped families as they transition from birth through illness and accidents to death.

Staff members at CASE Hospital support local veterinary clinics with specialized services, equipment and 24-hour care.

“Our work is in partnership with veterinary clinics in McHenry, Lake, Boone, Cook and DuPage counties,” says Dr. Michael Hochman, Director of Veterinary Medicine and co-owner. “The original business was called Animal Emergency of McHenry County. As we started adding more specialty services, we decided to change our name to reflect the new direction of our company. So, in 2013 we became Companion Animal Specialty and Emergency Hospital.”

Recently, the facility was expanded and updated to accommodate new technologies and additional services.

Laura Johnson, of Spring Grove, has been bringing her golden retriever, Ruben, to CASE for several years.

“From the practice manager to the kennel staff, all have exceeded Ruben’s and our expectations over the years,”



CASE Hospital maintains the only animal CT scanner in McHenry County, enabling local veterinarians to better diagnose patients.

she says. “Our experience since 2014 has included rehab, diagnostics, general medicine and emergency. We are treated like we have the most important dog in the world. I’ve seen others cared for in that same way.”

Johnson says she’s been impressed with the intelligent, compassionate and attentive care she and Ruben have experienced.

“The staff is friendly, calm and reassuring,” she adds. “It’s amazing how sensitive they are to our special needs. CASE Hospital strongly shares our goal in celebrating the rock star that Ruben is, and he loves his CASE family.”

At CASE Hospital, doctors of veterinary medicine provide emergency care around the clock. For cases that aren’t necessarily an emergency, specialists deliver internal medicine, integrated medicine, dermatology and surgery services by appointment. There’s also a pet blood bank for animals in need of blood for surgery and other medical conditions.

“Emergency care is critical in a community, yet the additional specialized services we offer allow families to get the help they need close to home,” says Ross Oliver, Practice Manager and a co-owner. “Internal medicine addresses the organs and relies on ultrasound, CT scans and other diagnostics. Integrated medicine combines nutrition, physical therapy, chiropractic and acupuncture

to maximize good health, naturally.”

Because it has the only animal CT scanner in McHenry County, CASE Hospital can assist with diagnosing diverse and complicated conditions in concert with family veterinarians and specialists. When surgery is necessary, CASE Hospital has a partnership with Veterinary Specialty Center of Buffalo Grove, which uses CASE Hospital’s two surgical suites. A dedicated emergency surgical suite is also on-site.



CASE Hospital’s recently expanded facility includes more space for diagnostic services, including gait analysis.

Many older canines suffer from hip and leg issues that can be diagnosed through gait analysis and improved through water treadmill therapy. On any given day, you can spy dogs happily licking peanut butter off a toy as they walk purposefully in the water tank – a device that enables easier movement without putting extra pressure on sensitive joints.

Compassionate care is a vital component in the life and death circle of care delivered by the CASE team. When it’s time to say farewell to a beloved pet, having an understanding professional at your side can ease the sorrow.

“Comfort given by a trained person who really cares about you and your pet can make difficult moments, such as end of life, easier to bear,” says Oliver. “We treat our clients’ pets like our own. We grieve with the family yet help them through it gently.”

As a part of the community, CASE Hospital gives back through involvement in animal shelters and support of local organizations.

“Giving back to the community has helped us grow and build awareness,” says Hochman. “We are active in the Chamber of Commerce, involved in continuing education training for area veterinarians and vet techs, and we actively support the region’s animal shelters. We even sponsor the local farmers market each year.”

In addition to educating area veterinary clinics, CASE Hospital’s team engages in its own continuing education, to stay abreast of the latest veterinary treatments.

“Our business, like most, is a partnership between our clients, referring clinics and our veterinary team,” says Hochman. “We are very proud of the reputation that has been built over the past 20 years. We recognize we must continue to be vigilant in delivering excellent care, cutting-edge services and empathetic consideration for all involved.” ■

20 Years of Compassionate Care

April 1, 1997: Animal Emergency of McHenry County begins providing afterhours-only emergency care inside a local veterinary practice.

May 2004: Due to increasing demand, the afterhours Emergency Department begins 24-hour daily service.

March 2006: Firm moves to Pingree Road facility, occupying just less than 5,000 square feet. Canine rehabilitation added.

August 2010: Internal medicine services added.

2011: Surgical specialists become available through a partnership with Veterinary Specialty Center of Buffalo Grove.

Mid-2013: Practice is rebranded to become Companion Animal Specialty & Emergency Hospital.

Spring 2014: Dermatology services become available through partnership with Veterinary Specialty Center of Buffalo Grove.

Early 2015: Crystal Lake facility is doubled in size. Updated facility, now at 10,000 square feet, includes large reception area, nine exam rooms, larger integrative medicine area, a second underwater treadmill, a land treadmill, tripled space for surgery, and more space for treatment and kennels.

November 2015: The region’s first animal CT scanner installed.

April 1, 2017: Practice marks its 20th anniversary of providing emergency and specialty veterinary care to pets in McHenry, Lake, Kane, Boone and Cook counties. ■

