

## Your Pets, Your Health, And The Law

By C.M. GODFREY  
Whether he is bugged by rising gas prices or beset by income taxes, man can always turn for solace to his best friend—the household pet.

Dogs and cats have held a special place in our hearts for 40,000 years—but only recently has it been learned that man's best friend may also be his worst enemy.

Dr. Brian M. Cochrane, in his book *Your Pets, Your Health And The Law* (John Wiley and Sons, 130 pages; \$8.95), looks at this balance and comes to the conclusion that the health hazard, the damage to humans, and the legal ramifications of pet ownership are almost enough to put to rest any plan to give in to the urge and take home a cuddly creature.

Although he talks of pets, the main emphasis in the book is on the dog. This four-footed, moving disease-vector continues to claim a piece of our heart, while at the same time infecting our lungs, our blood and our skin.

In the city of Toronto, for example, there are approximately two million people and one million dogs and cats. These produce a staggering amount of feces and urine, which eventually may end up in your drinking glass, on your food plate or on babies' hands.

Toxocara canis, dog worm, is present and infective in fully 60 per cent of puppies. It may invade the liver, pancreas, spleen, lungs or brain of the thumb-sucking infant.

**PLEASURE, PAIN**  
And what does man receive from this ever-increasing horde of canines? Companionship, pleasure, amusement - and occasionally a bite on the ankle or an allergy.

Dr. Cochrane has collected a large amount of information from North America and Europe on the increase in the pet population.

Not only are we keeping more dogs, but the dogs are getting bigger, and more of them are joining stray packs. He himself is an obvious dog-lover (although allergic) and attempts to rationalize the pleasures and pains of petting.

While admitting that little is being done about the problem (the stoop-and-scoop plans is not successful), he has several excellent suggestions for avoiding disease contact and for the proper house-training of children in contact with pets.

A rigid enforcement of excrement control, particularly in public parks, and a thorough program of deworming and other prophylactic measures would reduce some of the thousand cases of infection.

**RISK TO KIDS**  
If his rules were followed, there would also be a radical drop in the number of children who lose the top of their scalp, or the tip of their nose to the bite of a German shepherd (most commonly) or a beagle (least commonly).

One look at the pictures of lacerated children should convince any parents that if he is going to have a pet in the house, it may only be after a determined education program.

Not only should the child be taught respect and care in handling pets, but that education should include knowledge of the fact that the pet-owner is wide-open to lawsuits.

The dear old lady, who jumps back in fright at your dog's bark, can successfully sue for damages for her resultant broken leg.

The partially obscured "warning-vicious dog" sign may not be sufficient notice to protect you in a civil action by the salesman who invades your castle, and ends up with a bloody calf.

Many of these fine legal points are made knottier by different provincial statutes and different particular circumstances, all of which means that housing a pet may mean feeding a lawyer.

In spite of the disease warnings, the legal liabilities and the danger to life and limb, and the bites from fleas and ticks, the author cannot contain his enthusiasm for pets—providing they live on our terms.

He and lawyer Sydney Moscoe, who has written the chapter on the law, manage to re-assure the unsure pet owner, providing he resolves to learn the rules of survival in the animal kingdom.

Dr. Godfrey is professor of rehabilitative medicine at the University of Toronto.



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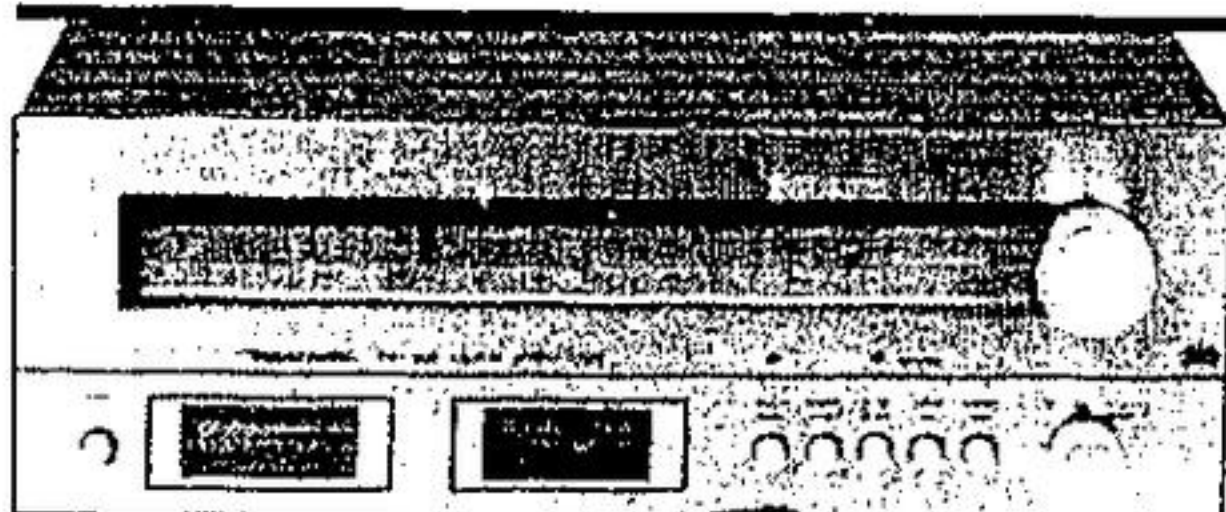
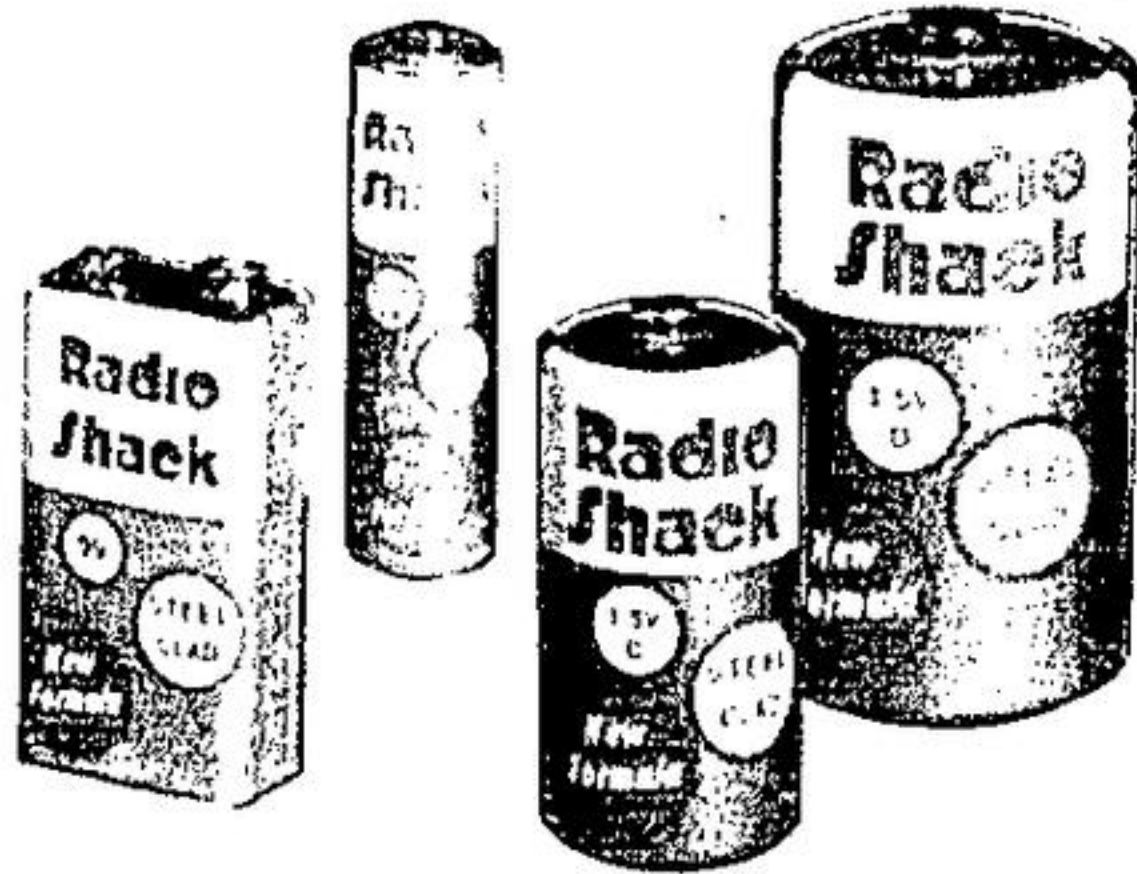
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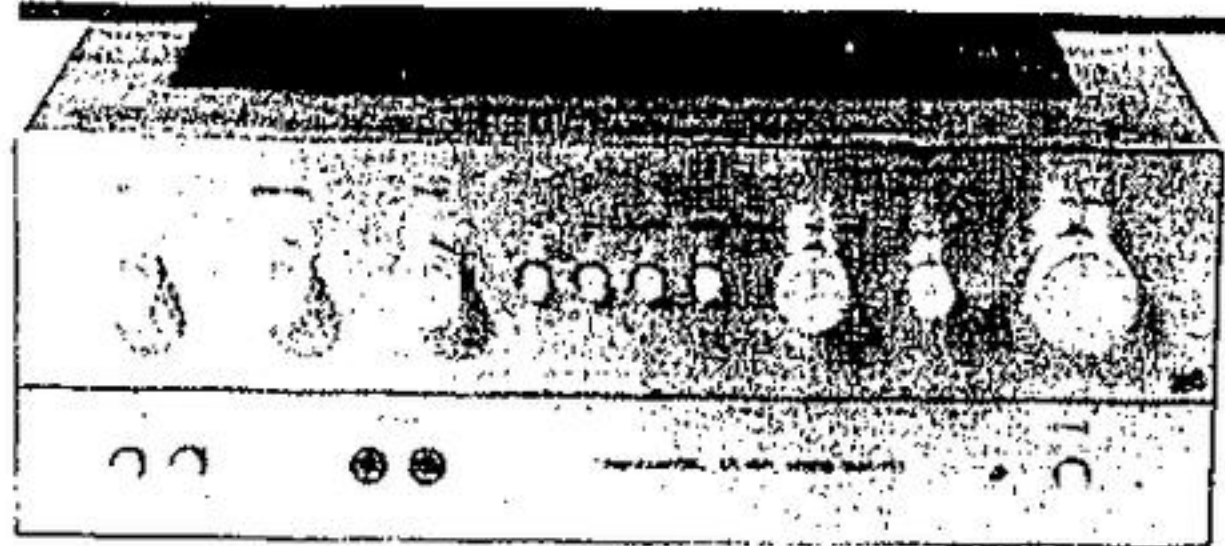
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