

New laws passed to protect consumers

From the ministry of consumer and commercial relations
It pays to shop smart and that means learning about new laws passed this year to protect consumers, experts say.

In keeping with their theme - Shop Smart, It Pays - organizers of Consumer Week '89 are promoting shopper education Oct. 23 to 28, throughout the province. Through a multi-media campaign, Consumer Minister Gregory Sorbara will be encouraging Ontario residents to learn about their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace. Special activities will also include programs in schools and a Consumer Educator of the Year competition.

In the year since Consumer Week was last held, many new rules and regulations have been passed, Mr. Sorbara says. The legislation addresses such issues as fitness club contracts, car repairs and propane refrigerator safety.

"How many people know they can now cancel a fitness club contract at no cost if they do so within five days of signing?" asks Marilyn Gurevsky, a head consumer advisor with the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR). "We've developed a lot of new protections, but you've got to know how to make them work for you."

The Prepaid Services Act is of major importance, she says.

"This is the one that deals with fitness, health and dance clubs, as well as other similar organizations that take payments up front for future services. The new law makes joining one of these clubs less risky and I strongly suggest that anyone thinking of signing up for this sort of thing, get details about their rights from the ministry first."

Briefly, the act protects consumers signing contracts for \$50 or

more with clubs involved in health, fitness, modelling, diet, talent, martial arts, sports and dance activities.

Some highlights provide for:
—a five-day cooling-off period, during which time contracts can be cancelled;

—a limit on the duration of contracts to a maximum of one year;

—and the option of making monthly payments.
"If you aren't familiar with this new piece of legislation and you own a car, it would be a good idea to get a fact sheet from the ministry now," says Ms. Gurevsky. "It's always easier to insist things are done by the book from the start, rather than trying to untangle a mess of mistakes later."

Another new regulation of vital importance, particularly to cottagers, prohibits the sale of propane refrigerators that do not vent directly outdoors. This rule was adopted due to concerns about the number of fatalities linked to malfunctioning propane fridges every year, Ms. Gurevsky says.

Although they won't be fully approved until next year, new regulations governing funeral and cemetery services have also been developed by MCCR.

The proposed legislation would prohibit phone and door-to-door solicitations for cemetery lots, services and supplies. It also sets out specific information that must be included in contracts for such purchases.

Information about Ontario's consumer legislation, old and new, is available from the ministry's information centre at 555 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ont. M7A 2H6 - (416) 326-8555 or toll free at 1-800-268-1142. Ontario residents with an 807 area code may call the 416 number collect. The TTY/TDD line for the hearing/speech impaired is (416) 326-8566.

Animal health technicians help look after your pet

By MELANIE LISLE
Ont. Association of
Animal Health Technicians

If you have been to a doctor's office, most likely you know the professional names of the employees there. Likewise, with a dentist, you recognize the receptionist, the dental hygienist, the dental assistant and of course, the dentist. Would you be able to do the same at a veterinarian's office? Many people will know the receptionist and the veterinarian, but let's take a closer look. There are some other important people on the medical team, they are called animal health technicians/technologists (A.H.T.'s), commonly called veterinary assistants. These professionals do many tasks in the clinic to help make your visit there a pleasant one for you and your pet.

First, let's establish what an animal health technician is. An AHT is a professional trained in the nursing care and handling of animals, routine laboratory and clinical procedures, and knowledgeable in basic principles of normal and abnormal life processes. An animal health technician's education provides him or her with the theory and practical skills essential to work with the veterinarian as part of a professional veterinary medical team.

The basic core curriculum of the animal health technician/technologist programs will provide the AHT with the knowledge and training to perform the following functions: maintain animal husbandry, collect samples (blood, urine, feces, etc.), perform various laboratory procedures (hematology, clinical chemistry, bacteriology, urinalysis, parasitology, etc.), restrain and

handle animals, sterile preparation of surgical patient, surgical site and equipment, assist in surgical procedures, administer and monitor anesthetics, perform preventative medical techniques, administer medications and treatments on the prescription of the attending veterinarian, dental prophylaxis, expose and develop radiographs, nutritional management, perform necropsy, public education, and perform business procedures.

Various job opportunities available to the animal health technician include, but are not restricted to large and small animal veterinary practices, research facilities, teaching, governmental establishments, zoological parks, pharmaceutical sales, clinical management, humane societies and livestock health management.

The animal health technology course began in the fall of 1967 at Ridgeway College of Agricultural Technology.

In the summer of 1969, under the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, this course was moved to Centralia College of Agricultural Technology, Huron Park.

Since then animal health technician/technologist programs have been offered at the following colleges of applied arts and technology, in Ontario: St. Clair College, Windsor, St. Lawrence College, Kingston and Seneca College, King City.

However, due to the low number of graduate AHTs, many

veterinarians have been forced to hire lay staff to fill these positions in their practices. Lay staff are generally haphazardly trained by the veterinarian to perform the practical aspects, however they lack the knowledge of normal and abnormal life processes that an education would provide them with. It is of great concern to many people that their animals be examined and cared for by qualified veterinary medical professionals. After all, you would expect your medical doctor to have qualified registered nurses on staff, so why wouldn't you expect your veterinarian to have an animal health technician on his?

So next time you take your pet to a veterinary clinic, make sure that there is an animal health technician on staff to ensure that it receives the knowledgeable and qualified care it deserves.

If you have any questions or concerns, just ask the AHT at your veterinary clinic. They are most always enthusiastic and willing to answer your questions.

Sisters argue

Police laid charges of assault following a domestic assault at an Acton residence last Wednesday afternoon. A 22-year-old Acton woman allegedly got involved in an argument with her sister and struck her in the head and arm with a knife. The victim wasn't seriously hurt, police say. A Nov. 27 court date has been scheduled in connection with the incident.

ASK KATHY:

Dear Kathy

Beware Fad Diets!

Fad diets are characterized primarily by a daily food intake that fails to meet the body's nutritional needs. Many times their food lists come from only one food group, at the exclusion of the others. Fad diets also produce excessive weight loss that is constituted mostly of water.

At Diet Center, we recommend that you examine your current diet program, or any program you may be considering, by asking the following questions. Does the diet meet all of the body's nutritional needs? Is it made up of fresh foods available at the local grocery? Does it provide an



KATHY HAJAS
Diet Center Counselor

adequate volume and variety of familiar foods? If the answer to any of these questions is no, you may be looking at a fad, or at least questionable, program.

Does our opinion count?

(TC)—Are we moving towards an era of more responsive and sensitive power, or a Big Brother society where information is concentrated in the hands of new-age manipulators?

In the fourth and final program of TVOntario's *Vista: A Matter of Opinion* (Monday, November 6 at 8:10 p.m.) journalist-broadcaster Peter Trueman

ing at where public opinion is headed, how marketers and politicians will respond, and what will happen in politics, personal freedom, and technology.

By following the evolution of present opinions, experts believe they can accurately predict what our attitudes are going to be later. Changing attitudes to key issues in society during the past 20 years will be highlighted, including the roles of women, labor unions, religion, and an aging population. Pollsters will offer views, and representatives of various advocacy groups will agree or disagree. Following the discussions, Trueman offers his own insights on opinion measurement, and calls us to action as he discusses our role as citizens of a democratic society.



Vista: A Matter of Opinion host Peter Trueman.

and guest experts will examine the business of public opinion polls, look-

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