



from the AVMA Press Room
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AVMA supports U.S. surgeon general's call to action on walking and walkable communities

(SCHAUMBURG, Illinois) Sept. 9, 2015 – The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) today joins U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and his office in their efforts to promote walking and walkable communities as a way to engage more people in the benefits of regular exercise and enhance human health.

“We couldn’t be happier that Surgeon General Murthy has recognized in this initiative the benefits of pet ownership and how regularly walking the family dog is great for both the pet and the pet owner,” said AVMA President Dr. Joe Kinnarney. “By including pets in the [Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities](#), Surgeon General Murthy also recognizes the critical role our nation’s veterinarians play in maintaining both animal and human health. Healthy animals equal healthy people, and we are proud to say that veterinarians contribute enormously to the health and well-being of both.”

The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities is the first Call to Action that he is scheduled to release. It presents five goals and related strategies to support walking and walkability in the U.S., all with the objective of making it easier and safer for people to walk, use a wheelchair, ride a bike and be physically active in other ways.

“The AVMA is fully supportive of the surgeon general’s goals, especially those of making walking a national priority, and designing communities that make it safe and easy to walk for people of all ages and abilities,” Kinnarney said. “We need more sidewalks and more walkable destinations for both our people and their pets, because when people and pets can enjoy the outdoors and come together socially with other pets and their owners it’s a better world for all of us.”

In his commissioning and change of command remarks in April, Surgeon General Murthy said, “Public health doesn’t exist in a vacuum,” and that the nation needs to treat health as a shared responsibility. “That is why we have to build the great American community,” he said. As a champion of the one health concept, the AVMA supports the surgeon general’s call for more coordination and collaboration among the nation’s medical professionals.

“The surgeon general’s aim of building the great American community is reflective of our shared commitment to the one health concept,” Kinnarney said. “The AVMA is a founding member of the [One Health Initiative](#), where medical, scientific and environmental professionals come together and use multidisciplinary approaches to advance health care for the 21st Century and beyond. One health is a movement whose time has come, with benefits for both people and animals.”

Responsible pet ownership, which includes an appropriate exercise program designed with the help of a veterinarian, improves both animal and human fitness, Kinnarney said.

“The AVMA has always encouraged regular exercise for our families’ pets for many reasons,” he said. “It not only improves cardiovascular health, helps maintain a healthy weight, and supports good mental health for both owner and pet, but it’s a lot of fun and strengthens the human-animal bond.”

The AVMA is also pleased that the surgeon general’s efforts include an emphasis on improving activity and mobility for those with disabilities. While veterinarians help our family pets stay well, Dr. Kinnarney noted, they also support healthy communities by caring for assistance animals that help those with disabilities function more independently, including facilitating their mobility and jump-starting social connections.

“The surgeon general’s efforts will make it easier and safer for people to walk, use a wheelchair, ride a bike and be physically active in other ways,” Kinnarney said. “Our nation’s veterinarians are pleased to support those efforts by working to keep the animal end of the leash a healthy part of the team.”

The AVMA has gathered a variety of resources on its website related to [exercising with pets](#), [disease precautions for dog walkers](#), tips on [obesity in pets](#), and [much more](#).

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The AVMA, founded in 1863, is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world, with more than 86,500 member veterinarians worldwide engaged in a wide variety of professional activities and dedicated to the art and science of veterinary medicine.