

## VETERINARY CORNER

*by Phil Kress, DVM*



**Dr. Phil & Stella**

This week, just before the deadline for a newsletter article, I'm getting ready for an annual 4-day adventure that I've enjoyed for years. A group of us floats 32 miles of the Snake River's wild and scenic Hells Canyon. It starts at Hells Canyon Dam and ends at Pittsburg Landing, where our rigs and trailers have been driven over 200 miles by a shuttle service. The scenery is rugged and beautiful, wildlife abounds (i.e. deer, bears, Rocky Mt. Bighorn sheep, eagles, turkeys), and the fishing is a "bass a cast". We are also often swarmed by coveys of Chukars, making me wish I had my bird dog and shotgun along. The season usually opens the middle of September. This reminds me of a chucker hunter's nemesis, the rattlesnake. I've encountered many over the years, not only in the Canyon but other places, and have been lucky enough to have never had my dog or myself bitten. If you ever have a dog struck by a rattlesnake, immediately restrain and calm them. If possible try to hydrate them with as much water as they'll drink. Of course the hunt is over and it's time to ambulate the dog to your rig and head directly to a veterinary facility. Walking the dog, or if possible carrying them, helps keep their circulation and perfusion normal and slows the uptake of venom.

At the veterinary clinic dogs will be treated symptomatically with I.V. fluids and shock alleviating drugs, and from day to day the bite area is treated for tissue inflammation and destruction. Some sluffing away of tissues may occur and an open wound has to be healed in. Usually antiserum is not administered due to extremely high cost and availability. Antiserum has a very short shelf-life, discouraging most practices from trying to keep on hand such an expensive drug. Fortunately most dogs survive a venomous rattlesnake bite with proper treatment.

I've always said that you're not hunting Chukars unless there is sweat dripping off the end of your nose! Be careful out there and carry plenty of water for you and your dog. I'm looking forward to it myself.