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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



Media Release

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Fort Leonard Wood veterinary clinic stands ready to serve pets, families

By Derek Gean
GUIDON Community editor

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – With operations of the Fort Leonard Wood Animal Shelter shifting to the city of Waynesville, staff members at the Fort Leonard Wood Veterinary Treatment Facility wants the community to know nothing has changed, as far as animal-treatment services.

Capt. Crystal Cunningham, post veterinarian, said the intergovernmental agreement allows facility workers to focus on caring for the four-legged friends of service members and their Families, while making it possible to expand services at the shelter.

“They take owner surrenders now on a space-available basis, something which we did not do before,” Cunningham said.

Cunningham, one of two veterinarians on post, said clinic staff are ready to do vaccines, wellness visits, same-day sick calls, in-house blood work, X-rays, dental work and basic surgeries such as spaying and neutering and mass removals.

“Anything that is an emergency or will require sustained hospitalization, we will see them initially, but may have to refer them to another specialty practice,” Cunningham said.

Cunningham said caring for service member’s pets gives their staff a great deal of satisfaction, and she is glad they are able to offer those services on post. She said their staff all shares a love for the pets.

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“Pets are important members of our Family,” said Stacey Martin, one of the facilities receptionists who often greets Families and their pets upon arrival.

“(Pets) provide us with unconditional love, morale support and comfort and, therefore, deserve the same quality of compassion and care that we would receive from our own health-care providers. Ensuring their health and well-being and giving their owners peace of mind is our contribution to the Fort Leonard Wood military community,” Martin said.

Cunningham said locally, the clinic often faces two major problems — strays being left behind when people move on and owners lacking the proper knowledge about preventative care for their pets. Now that Waynesville handles the shelter, staff members are able to focus on providing preventative care and educating the community.

“If (pet owners) have never lived here, they should know we have a lot of tick-borne diseases, we also diagnose a lot of dogs with heartworm disease,” Cunningham said.

“Every year pets need to be seen to determine if they need vaccines,” she said. The doctor also checks for any bumps or lumps and looks at the animal’s teeth.

“We strongly recommend they come in for an annual physical,” she said.

New Families on post are required to register their pets with the clinic. Registration helps ensure they are micro chipped – which is a mandate of a post regulation that helps them reunite lost pets with their owners.

“It also allows us to track if animals are up to date on vaccines, which is important for public health and safety,” Cunningham said.

To register pets, the owner simply has to stop by the clinic and bring any records of their pet with them; they do not need to bring the pet.

“We enter their information into our records system and transcribe any vaccinations or relevant health history,” she said.

What many people may not realize, is the clinic also occasionally treats pets other than the traditional dog or cat. Earlier this month, they even treated llamas.

“The llamas are somewhat similar to doing equine work in terms of the exam, etc. Each llama definitely has its own personality — some are okay with the exam. Others are timid and do not like to be examined. It definitely makes for an interesting day, depending on what needs to be done,” Cunningham said. “It is nice to do something different from time to time.”

The types of animals staff members are willing treat is often determined on a case-by-case basis, as to what is going on with the animal and the attending veterinarians comfort or experience level.

“For example, I have seen rabbits for ear mites and health certificates and the llamas for health exams, fecal egg counts, etc. We do some limited equine work and have had people call about neutering rats, sugar gliders, etc., so I encourage people to always call and ask — there isn’t really a definite line, but we do see animals other than cats and dogs,” Cunningham said.

The facility is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays for over-the-counter product sales.

For more information or to make an appointment, call 573.596.0131, ext. 60094.

-30-

Photo outline:

Capt. Crystal Cunningham, post veterinarian, left, performs canine dental surgery with the assistance of Sgt. Courtney Struble, Sept. 30, at the Fort Leonard Wood Veterinary Clinic. The clinic provides preventative care, sick care and routine surgery for Fort Leonard Wood Families' four-legged friends. (Photo by Derek Gean, GUIDON Community editor/Released.)

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.

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