

animalism veterinary surgeons

4 St Stephens Hill, St. Albans, AL1 2DS

SUMMER 2013

NEWS

Microchip alert!

DID YOU know that hundreds of pets go missing every day as a result of straying, theft or following an injury or accident. Sadly many pets are never reunited with their owners for one simple reason – they cannot be reliably identified. While collars and tags can get caught or removed, the good news is that you can *permanently* identify your pet with a microchip.



Microchipping takes just a few seconds, with a tiny implant only slightly bigger than a grain of rice. Like a normal injection, it is

inserted under the skin at the back of the neck and, once there, lasts a lifetime. The chip contains a unique code that identifies the pet and the owner. These details, including your name, address and phone numbers are held on a central database.



Tiny microchip implant

Veterinary practices, the police and animal charities have microchip scanners and routinely scan strays. Should your pet go missing and be handed in as a stray, if they are microchipped, this will give you the best chance of them being reliably identified and returned to you.

So, don't take any chances – make sure your pets are microchipped and give them the very best chance of being returned if they go missing!

Walk-in Surgeries:

Monday to Friday:
9–10am and 6–7pm

Saturday: 9–11 am

Appointments

Monday to Friday:
10.30am–12 noon and 4–6pm



Pesky parasite problems!

THE summer weather is here at last, but don't forget to be on your guard for two very pesky parasites – fleas and ticks!

Fleas: As the weather warms up, any flea eggs lurking in carpets and bedding, or outside in parks and gardens, will start to hatch. The eggs develop, via larval stages, into **adult fleas** (see flea life-cycle).

Adult fleas are small wingless insects that can easily jump onto pets, taking up residence in their coat and repeatedly feeding on their blood. They can create red spots where they have been feeding and cause pets to become incredibly *itchy*, resulting in them scratching and biting the affected areas. Worse still, female

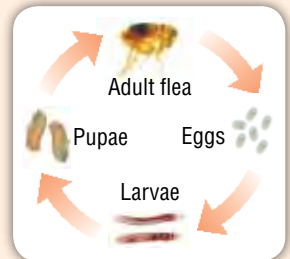


fleas can lay 30-50 eggs per day, which drop off pets and fall into carpets, bedding and outside areas. With a life cycle of about a month in warm summer (or centrally heated) conditions, the number of fleas in a household can quickly reach epidemic proportions!

Ticks in contrast are relatively immobile, waiting in long grass and woodland for an animal to brush past. Once attached (see photo top right), ticks feed on your pet's blood, often for several days. Ticks can cause problems in two main ways – firstly they can sometimes cause a marked tissue reaction at the attachment site and secondly, whilst feeding, they can transmit dangerous infections such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis.

So now is a good time to make sure you are up to date with your **spot-on flea and tick treatments**. Please let us advise you on the best form of flea and tick treatment for your pets!

The flea life-cycle

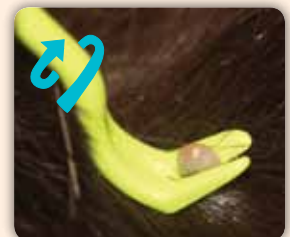


Troublesome ticks!



Parting the coat reveals a tick in situ with buried mouth parts.

Specially designed v-shaped tick removers that remove ticks by *rotation* are very effective, minimising the disease risk and hopefully avoiding leaving the tick's mouthparts behind.



Slide the v-shape under the tick and remove it with a twisting action.

Dog photo: Jane Burton.

All going on a summer holiday?

DO YOU fancy taking your pet on holiday with you this summer? Since 2000, the **Pet Travel Scheme** has allowed pet owners to take their dogs and cats to other EU countries and specified non-EU countries and then return home without having to put their pet into quarantine.

Your pet will need to be **microchipped** (to identify them) and subsequently **vaccinated against rabies**. Having completed these two steps, your pet can then be issued with a Pet Passport. Animals will be allowed to travel with a Pet Passport **21 days** after the rabies vaccination. Before travelling home, your pet will require veterinary treatment for tapeworm. Other treatments are also advisable to help to protect your pet against exotic diseases whilst abroad. Please contact us for further information or visit: www.defra.gov.uk



Our telephone number is 01727 854787 (24 Hours)

Too many teeth can also be an issue!



IT IS sadly all too easy for pets to lose teeth as a result of gum disease, but did you know that there are times when a pet can actually have *too many* teeth?!

Puppies and kittens start to lose their temporary (or “milk”) teeth at about twelve weeks of age and this process is usually completed by about six months of age.

As the temporaries are lost, so this leaves room for the adult teeth to emerge. However, it is not uncommon, particularly in the smaller breeds of dog, for one or more of the temporary teeth to be *retained*. This is the case in the upper photo where the temporary canine teeth are still present although they should have fallen out by now.

So why is this a problem? Firstly, food may be trapped between temporary and permanent teeth – leading to **reddened and inflamed gums (gingivitis)**, and secondly, the retained temporary tooth may cause its adult counterpart to erupt in the *wrong direction*. However, with **regular health examinations**, it is problems like this that can be picked up at an early stage.

So what can be done? In this case the answer is to extract the retained temporary teeth. This should resolve any gingivitis and allow the teeth to erupt in the correct direction. We are here to help, so if you would like any further information on caring for your pet’s teeth, please just ask!

Retained canine teeth



Retained temporary upper canine tooth

Retained temporary lower canine tooth

Healthy adult mouth



Note there are only adult teeth with no retained temporary teeth

Kennel cough – is your dog protected?

DID you know that wherever dogs meet, such as out on walks, training classes, and of course boarding kennels, they run the risk of picking up Kennel Cough?

This is a highly infectious cough, rapidly causing symptoms of severe whooping-like coughing and breathlessness as well as high temperatures, sore throats and loss of appetite. In the worst cases, dogs may cough for weeks and some may get more serious complications such as pneumonia. Even in young healthy dogs it can lead to weeks of coughing.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella Bronchiseptica*. Although your pet’s regular booster vaccinations should provide protection against the *viral* components of the cough, only intranasal vaccine drops can offer protection against *Bordetella*. We strongly recommend that dogs are vaccinated before staying in a boarding kennels and at any other time when the disease is rife. Please contact us for an appointment today!



Pet Insurance – are your pets covered?



YOU look after your pets and make sure they have regular health checks and vaccinations, appropriate diets, worming and flea control, but what about getting them insured?

It’s a worrying thought that in an average year, one pet in three will require veterinary treatment for some form of illness or accident. Added to this, veterinary medicine has advanced so

much in recent years, that we can now treat far more conditions than we used to; MRI and CT scans are now increasingly routine and advanced surgical techniques such as hip replacements are readily available.

With appropriate pet insurance owners can hopefully avoid some heart wrenching choices and try to ensure that decisions regarding the best course of treatment for your pets can be made on the basis of *need* rather than cost. Don’t take any chances – get your pet insured today!



X-ray of a fractured femur in a cat, following a road traffic accident

Although we tend to think of traumatic emergencies (such as bone fractures) as the main reason for insurance, many *medical* conditions, such as **heart disease** or **skin problems** can be very costly to treat – especially so if they are *life-long* conditions.



Some like it hot!

WE all love the summer – warm lazy days and longer evenings, but it’s worth sparing a thought for our pets. With this in mind here are a few tips:

Heat can be a real killer for many pets. Make sure fresh clean water is always available and avoid exercising pets in the heat of the day, particularly with old, overweight dogs with heart problems – stick to early morning and evening walks. Also ensure that rabbits, guinea pigs and hens have adequate shade and water.

Sunburn is another hazard! Cats are natural sun bathers, but cats with white noses and ear tips are particularly vulnerable to sun burn and subsequent skin cancer. This risk can be reduced by keeping them out of the sun, or by applying sunblock to these areas during the summer months.



Ear tip of a cat showing early (reddened) cancerous changes. If your pet is showing signs of skin changes, please call us at once.

Grass seeds of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets, especially dogs. They often migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears and between toes. Regular grooming, especially after walks, is helpful in preventing problems associated with both grass seeds and ticks.



Paw of a dog with an interdigital cyst caused by a grass seed (see photo right)



Flies are a huge problem for rabbits in the summer months. Flies are very attracted to rabbits if they have soiled



bottoms – here they lay their eggs, which rapidly hatch out into flesh eating maggots. It is important to check bunnies’ bottoms on a **daily basis** and call us at once if you are worried.

Finally, please remember – NEVER leave a pet in a car on a hot day.