

animalism veterinary surgeons

4 St Stephens Hill, St. Albans, AL1 2DS
SUMMER 2013

NEWS

Happy Holidays!



Did you know The Pet Travel Scheme enables you to travel with your pet dog, cat or ferret to other EU countries and then return home without having to put them into quarantine? Here are the steps:

Pets must firstly be **microchipped** and subsequently **vaccinated against rabies**. Once these steps are completed a **Pet Passport** can be issued. Pets will be allowed to travel with a Pet Passport 21 days after rabies vaccination.

Before travelling home, dogs must be treated against **tape-worm**. This needs to be given by a veterinary surgeon and recorded in the passport and should be given not less than 24 hours (but not more than 120 hours) before travelling home.

Whilst you are abroad your pet is at risk of picking up exotic diseases not usually seen at home. In

France and many other European countries, **ticks** can carry a range of diseases including *Babesiosis* (which causes anaemia). It is advisable to treat pets against ticks and remove any ticks promptly using a tick remover.

Please contact us for further information or visit: www.defra.gov.uk

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

Itchy scratchy – is your pet affected?

With the onset of summer weather, many pets will start to itch and scratch and two of the commonest causes are fleas and allergies.

Fleas need little introduction to most pet owners! During the winter months, fleas usually only breed indoors – making the most of the central heating. However as the weather warms up, the problem becomes far more serious as fleas can *also* breed outside in parks and gardens. Here, any dormant flea eggs from last year will rapidly hatch out into adult fleas which will hop onto passing pets, bringing dozens of these tiny pests back to your home. Adult fleas feed on your pet's blood, causing a



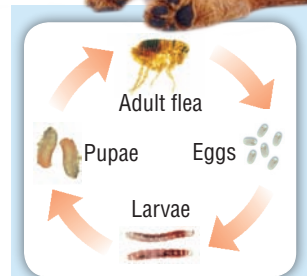
range of symptoms including: itchy skin, infections, rashes and hair loss, and they can also bite humans as well! Worse still, they hop off our pets and make their home in pet beds, carpets and soft furnishings, where the flea life-cycle is completed.

Allergies are another problem seen commonly in the spring and summer months. Allergies are immune reactions where an animal responds abnormally to a common substance – these substances are called *allergens*. (See box right for different types of allergies).

Inhaled allergies are a major cause of problems in humans and pets at this time of year. Every type of plant and tree produces pollen and the surge in pollen levels can lead to inhaled allergies.

When outdoors, pets and humans inhale dozens of pollens, but the allergic symptoms are often very different. Whilst humans get 'hay fever', affected pets tend to show *skin* symptoms. Dogs may show generalised itchiness, but more commonly may show *localised* signs of paw chewing, face rubbing, and itchy ears.

So, if your pet is showing signs of skin problems, come and see us for a check-up! We can check for fleas (and other parasites) and advise you on the best preventative products. Diagnosis of allergies is more tricky, but blood tests and skin testing can help us identify the allergens. It is usually difficult to *cure* allergies, but modern treatments can be very effective in making pets less itchy.



The flea life-cycle:

Adult female fleas can lay up to 50 eggs per day and these fall off your pet and onto carpets, bedding and outside areas. Whilst the eggs can remain dormant for many months, in warm weather they will rapidly hatch out and develop (via larval stages) into adult fleas. With a life-cycle of about a month, flea numbers can rise dramatically in the summer.

Different types of allergies:

Our pets come into contact with allergens in three main ways:

- Inhaled (e.g. pollens).
- Ingested (e.g. food allergies).
- Contact (e.g. flea bite allergy where certain pets develop an allergy to flea saliva).

Rabbits: don't get caught on the hop!



Just like other pets, rabbits benefit from regular vaccinations and Health Checks to keep them fit and well. Did you know they can be **vaccinated** against two potentially fatal infectious diseases?

Myxomatosis is a viral infection spread by blood sucking insects such as rabbit fleas and mosquitoes. The virus multiplies on the skin leading to blindness and difficulty in eating. Affected rabbits become very ill and sadly many die from this distressing condition.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is another highly contagious and deadly viral disease. The virus is spread both by direct contact between rabbits, or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. Symptoms include loss of appetite, lethargy, nose bleeds and sudden death.

Thankfully we are able to offer you protection against both of these deadly infectious diseases – please contact us now to arrange a Health Check and annual vaccination.

Our telephone number is 01727 854787 (24 Hours)



Gum disease – a very common problem

If your pet's breath leaves a lot to be desired, it is likely that *gum disease* is the underlying problem! A healthy mouth usually has shrimp pink gums and bright white teeth. However problems will occur if plaque bacteria are allowed to build up on the surface of the teeth. Over time, accumulation of sticky plaque leads to *inflammation* and *reddening* of the gums – termed **gingivitis**. This is frequently accompanied by the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth along with very bad breath! However there is worse to come...! If the gingivitis is allowed to continue unchecked, plaque bacteria will start to penetrate *below* the gum line, resulting in destruction of the bone and tooth supporting structures – a painful condition called **periodontitis**. As the tooth support structures are progressively destroyed, the tooth will become loose and eventually fall out.

So what is the incidence of gingivitis and periodontitis?

Sadly – it is very common and unfortunately once a tooth becomes loose, the problem is usually too advanced to save that tooth. However if gum problems are identified at an *earlier* stage (where there are signs of *gingivitis*), a combination of a Scale and Polish and ongoing Home Care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health (and their breath!). Please contact us today for a dental check-up and to find out more about caring for your pet's teeth.



Gingivitis with a swollen and inflamed gum margins



Periodontitis with redness and recession of the gum margin.



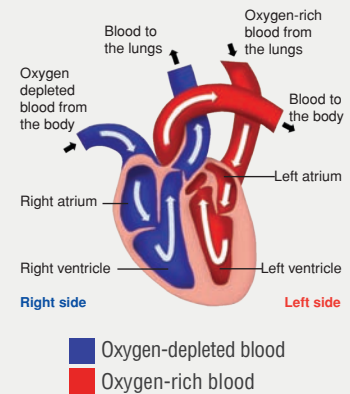
Scale and Polish: Removing the calculus using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing is a very effective form of treatment



Have a heart!

Whilst most of our pets take normal heart function for granted, it's a sad fact that heart disease is surprisingly common in dogs and cats.

The heart is a muscular pump that is responsible for supplying the tissues of the body with oxygenated blood. The heart receives de-oxygenated blood from the tissues of the body and pumps it to the lungs where it is re-oxygenated. This re-oxygenated blood flows back to the heart, where it is then pumped back round the body.



Heart disease – which can be gradual or sudden in onset, it the loss of the normal pumping action of the heart. Whilst there are many possible causes of heart disease, most problems are associated with the heart valves or the muscular walls of the heart.

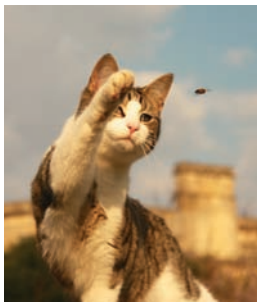
In dogs it is generally more common in older pets, but in certain breeds it can be more prevalent at an early age. In cats it is often associated with an over-active thyroid gland.

Symptoms of heart disease include:

- coughing (excluding minor coughs lasting a few days)
- laboured or rapid breathing,
- reluctance to exercise,
- fainting or collapse.

If your pet is showing *any* of the symptoms listed above, come and see us for a full clinical examination. Happily, new diagnostic techniques and novel medications are now greatly improving and extending the lives of pets with heart problems.

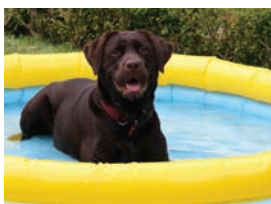
Don't get the summertime blues!



We all love the summer weather – when it finally arrives! *But how prepared are you and your pets?*

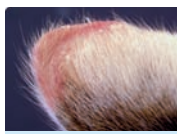
Here we look at some simple steps to help to beat the heat this summer:

Play it cool! Remember to avoid walking dogs in the heat of the day, particularly old overweight dogs and those with heart



problems. Early mornings and evenings are best. If you have space, dogs love a paddling pool to cool off!

Sunscreen please! Cats with white noses and white ear tips are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes in the sunburnt areas. High factor sunblock applied to the at risk (white) areas helps to minimise this risk.



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes

Barbeque beware! Remember to ensure pets don't eat the barbeque leftovers – scraps and fatty leftovers can give your pet tummy upsets or pancreatitis, whilst also beware of corn on the cob husks which can easily become lodged in your dogs intestines.



Flystrike is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs

there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out on a daily basis. Call us immediately if you are worried.

Also remember that pets in outside runs need a *shaded area* to get away from the sun.

Grass seeds of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets, particularly 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 grass seeds.



Bee and wasp stings are another seasonal problem. Some pets are allergic to their stings and may need prompt veterinary attention.

And finally: Don't forget to keep treating your pets regularly against **fleas, ticks and worms** and **never ever leave a pet in a car on a hot day, they can die of heat stroke.**