

Happy Holidays!



With the warmer weather here at last, you may be considering taking your pets abroad this year. The Pet Travel Scheme enables you to travel with your pet dog, cat or ferret to other EU countries (and specified non-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 **tapeworm**. 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. Depending on where you are travelling to, the disease risk varies:

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.



When travelling further south to the Mediterranean area, there are other diseases to consider and we can advise you accordingly.

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

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



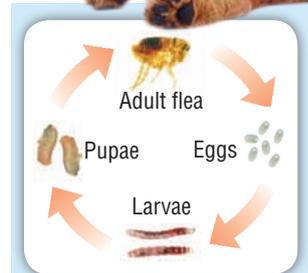
range of symptoms including: itchy skin, infections, rashes and hair loss, and they can also bite humans as well! Worse still, they hop off our pets and make their home in pet beds, carpets and soft furnishings, where the flea life-cycle is completed.

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).

Photos: Warren Photographic

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.





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 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.

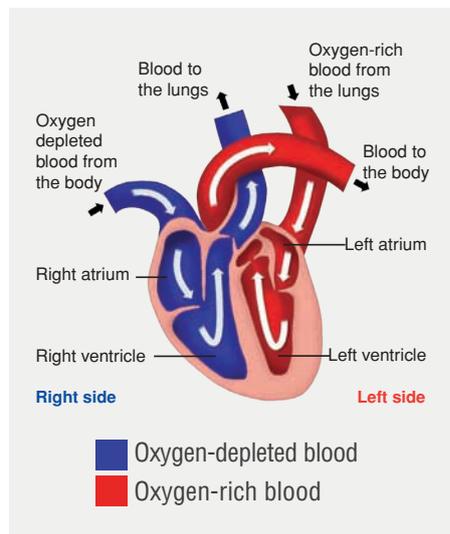
Heart disease – which can be gradual or sudden in onset, is the loss of the normal pumping action of the heart. Whilst there are many possible causes of heart disease, most problems are associated with the heart valves or the muscular walls of the heart.

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.

Signs 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 signs 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.



VIP Pet Healthcare Plan

Your Pet's Health



Your Pet's Health

At Abbey Veterinary Group we recommend a proactive and preventative approach to your pet's healthcare. With this in mind we have developed a simple and affordable VIP Pet Healthcare Plan. With the VIP Pet Healthcare Plan the cost of routine vaccinations, flea and worm treatment is spread over a 12 month period, including a VIP healthcheck 6 months after the routine vaccination. In addition to this members of the Plan can get a 10% discount on some other services including routine neutering, food, accessories and long term medication purchased at the surgery.

Joining the VIP Pet Healthcare Plan

Come into either surgery during opening hours and speak to a member of our team who will complete a short form with you. There is a 5% discount off your monthly premium if more than one pet is on the VIP Pet Healthcare Plan.

Budget Monthly, and Save Money

Our Pet Healthcare plan has been specifically designed to provide routine veterinary care which your pet will require throughout the year. As well as providing comprehensive pet care it allows you to budget in convenient and affordable monthly payments, including substantial discounts.

How do I register? The answer is "it's easy!"

Call in at either of our surgeries and complete a simple registration form. This will require details of your bank account to set up the direct debit, so remember to bring these details with you.

Practice staff will be happy to deal with any queries you may have.