"Because we care"

STONEHENGE VETS
& Sidbury Hill Veterinary Clinic

SPRING 2015

NEWS

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Monday - Friday:
8.30am to 6.30pm

Saturday:
Stonehenge:
9.00am to 1.00pm
Tidworth:
9.00am to 12.00 noon

Visit our website at –
www.stonehengevets.com

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Adding a new pet to the family!

Introducing a pet into the family is a lot of fun and also a big responsibility. So – to help keep your new arrival fit and well, here is a short "to-do" list!

Vaccinations: One of the key reasons pets are living longer is that we are able to vaccinate them against a range of infectious diseases (see panel right) that, without regular vaccination, pose a deadly threat to our pets. **Regular booster vaccinations**, combined with a **health check**, are the best way of protecting your pet, plus at the same time keeping a watchful eye out for any other emerging health issues.

Fleas: Most puppies and kittens will arrive with a fair number of fleas, so it is a good idea for us to give them a check over on arrival! Spot-on treatments are ideal for treating your pets, whilst household sprays are great for treating your home.

Worming: If their parents were not regularly de-wormed, there is a very high prevalence of **roundworm** infections in puppies and kittens. As they grow up they are susceptible to infection with both **roundworms** and **tapeworms** and will require regular worming treatment. Additionally, **lungworm** is posing an increasing threat for many dogs (see overleaf for further information).

Life-stage diets: We can now offer pets a tailored series of diets from tiny kittens and puppies, through adulthood and into their senior years. These diets are designed to offer the ideal balance of nutrients for each life stage. The good news is that these diets can make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of pets.

Vaccination against infectious diseases

We recommend you regularly vaccinate your pets against the following, potentially fatal, infectious diseases:

Dogs:
- Distemper
- Infectious canine hepatitis
- Parvo virus
- Leptospirosis
- Para influenza virus

Cats:
- Cat flu virus
- Feline panleukopenia virus
- Feline leukaemia virus

Photos: Warren Photographic

Lost and found: It is important to get your pet identified as soon as possible. As well as a collar and tag, we also recommend having your pet micro-chipped as a more secure and permanent form of identification.

Finally it is well worth considering **pet insurance** – covering your pet against those unexpected vet bills!

We are here to help, so please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on any aspect of caring for your pets!

Dentistry: getting to the root of the problem!

Pets, like humans, can suffer from a range of dental problems – and here are a couple that we particularly look out for:

In puppies and kittens: the **temporary** teeth should fall out as the **permanent** teeth start erupting – at around 12 weeks of age. If this fails to happen (as is often the case in the smaller breeds of dog), the *retained* temporary tooth may cause its adult counterpart to erupt in the wrong direction, often causing problems.

In adult pets: gum disease is a very common issue. The build up of plaque on the tooth surfaces causes bleeding and reddening of the gums, and if untreated, can eventually result in tooth loss.

Happily, most dental problems – if detected early, are usually very treatable and something that we check for when you bring your pet in for their puppy and kitten checks and annual vaccinations.

Photo of retained temporary teeth in a 6 month old dog

Photo of gum disease in an adult dog. Note the build up of yellow calculus.

Rabbits: keeping one jump ahead!

WITH the onset of warmer weather, we look at some top tips for keeping your pet rabbit fit and healthy!

Make sure they are vaccinated! Rabbits should be vaccinated yearly (even indoor rabbits) against two potentially deadly diseases: **Myxomatosis** can be spread by biting flies, and **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease** (VHD) which spreads easily from rabbit to rabbit, or via contaminated hutches, bedding, food or human clothing.

Protect them from flies! As the weather warms up, flies can be annoying for humans, but for rabbits they can be deadly. Flies are attracted to rabbits if they have soiled bottoms and will lay their eggs there. These rapidly hatch out into flesh eating maggots which can be painful and fatal if left untreated. Make sure your rabbit's hutch is cleaned out daily and check your rabbit's bottom **every day** to make sure it is clean – call us immediately if you are worried. Remember that pets in outside runs need a *shaded area* to get away from the sun.

What about neutering? It's a good idea to neuter rabbits not intended for breeding and this can be done from 12-16 weeks of age. Apart from the obvious benefits of preventing unwanted pregnancies, neutered rabbits are generally calmer (and can be kept in groups without fighting) and are protected from cancer of the reproductive organs.

If you would like any further information on **vaccination**, **neutering** or **general rabbit care** – please call us today! Don't forget it is really important to keep your rabbit vaccinated!

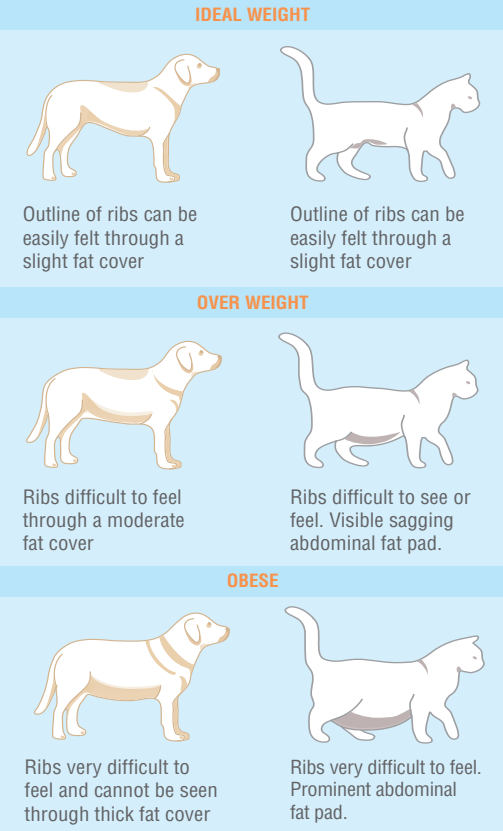
Pet Health: Can you pinch an inch?

Spring is a good time to look at your pets and think about whether they are fit and healthy. With obesity becoming increasingly common, it is wise to look objectively at your pets and see if they are overweight or not. In a healthy pet with an ideal condition score, the ribs should be able to be felt but not seen, and there should be an obvious 'waist'. By contrast, if you can pinch an inch or more, and if your pet's tum sags down and bulges out, then a diet may be in order.

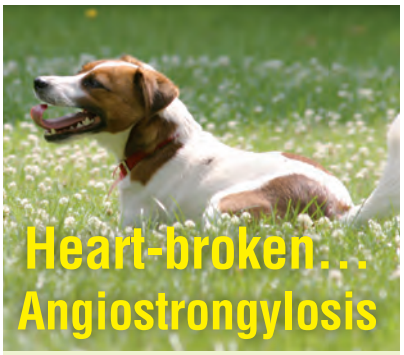
Carrying extra weight places extra demands on virtually all the organs of the body. Excess weight can lead to or worsen many medical conditions including: • joint and ligament problems, • heart disease, • raised blood pressure, • diabetes mellitus, • breathing difficulties, • decreased stamina and heat intolerance – to name just a few!

Given the potential health problems associated with excess weight – it is important to address it, and it is here that we can help. If you feel your pet is getting a little portly we are happy to weigh him or her and advise you on their ideal weight. We will also examine your pet to check for any *medical* conditions (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged dogs) that may result in weight gain.

To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around $^{2}/_{3}$ their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. All pets need regular exercise, and increased walks, more frequent play, or increased access to outdoors are all of help.



The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. So, if your pet has gained weight, or seems to have slowed down, then why not give us a call – we are here to help!



Heart-broken… Angiostrongylosis

Angiostrongylosis, caused by the parasite *Angiostrongylus vasorum,* has been present in the UK and the Republic of Ireland for the last 40 years in patches or "hotspots", but is now spreading North across the British Isles. While still relatively uncommon in the North, new cases are being identified all the time.
It is also known as the French/ small heartworm or lungworm (to distinguish it from *Dirofilaria* – the large heartworm found in mainland Europe and the USA).

Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm

Adult worms can build up in the heart, with larvae travelling through the lungs and other tissues. This can result in bronchitis, heart failure and spontaneous bleeding. Affected dogs often become weak and lethargic, go off their food, and may cough, vomit, or pass blood.

The disease can be so severe as to be fatal but if diagnosed early can be treated successfully. Blood or faecal testing can give rapid results.

Angiostrongylus vasorum is carried by slugs and snails which act as intermediate hosts and infect dogs when they are eaten – deliberately or by accident! This means that the disease is commonest in young dogs that eat or play with slugs and snails, and those dogs that eat or drink outside and may have had slugs or snails in their bowls. The life cycle of the worm is relatively rapid so **monthly deworming** with an effective product is required to prevent this disease.

We are here to help! Please let us advise you on the best deworming regime to protect your dog against this life-threatening disease.

Lungworm photo: courtesy Bayer. Cat photo: Warren Photographic

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