



# Animal Health Centre

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## NEWS

SPRING 2017

WELCOME TO the latest issue of our Newsletter designed to keep you up to date with what's happening in the practice.

### Practice facilities

- Appointment system
- Free Nurse's clinics
- 24 hour emergency service
- Modern surgical facilities
- In-house laboratory
- Full dental facilities
- Annual health checks
- Weight-watchers clinics
- Full range of diets
- Advice on buying a new pet

### Opening times

Monday – Friday:

8.30 am – 6.30 pm

Saturday: 9 – 12

### Consulting times

Monday – Friday:

9 – 10 am, 2 – 3 pm

5 – 6.30 pm

Saturday: 9.30 – 11.30

24 Hour

Emergency Service

☎ 0117 905 9000



### Topics in this issue:

- Caring for your older cat
- Rabbit teeth - a growing issue!
- Lungworm alert!

## Practice news

For some time now Animal Health Centre has been very proud to be the vets for the Bristol based charity 'DAWG', Dog Action Welfare Group, who rescues and rehomes greyhounds, whippets and lurchers. They do a fantastic job working with lovely dogs in need of caring new homes. So to do our bit and help raise funds for DAWG we decided as a practice to get fit and be sponsored to run a 5k race.

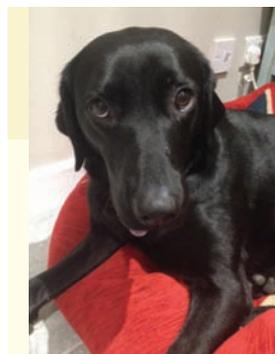
So team 'Dawglers' will set off on February 25<sup>th</sup> for a night run in Leigh Woods, an added challenge to be running with head torches! Please do support us and I hope it may be the first of many similar mad events, any suggestions for our next foray gratefully received!

We are very pleased to report that Frankie has recently passed her RCVS nursing exams, she was qualified as a vet nurse in Australia so had to resit her exams here before being fully registered. Well done Frankie!

Meanwhile Debbie, our Wednesday and Saturday receptionist, is gaining distinctions in her vet nursing course and is flying through a massive work load under the supervision of head nurse Sam. Another well done to both of you.



And finally to prove it is not all work and no play here, a picture of us all glammed up at our Christmas party, a rare treat to get out and let our hair down, literally!



## ★ STAR PATIENT ★ Impaled but oblivious!

**It wasn't until Bonnie had returned from her walk that her owner noticed that something was wrong...**

Bonnie had managed to impale herself on a stick in her groin while out walking and had carried on as normal until it was spotted later at home! 4cm of a thick stick could be seen protruding from a hole between her hind legs.



She was rushed to Animal Health Centre and seen by Sophie who immediately took

her to theatre for a general anaesthetic to remove the stick. After careful dissection of the area a stick 10.5cm long was removed, the area was flushed copiously and stitched back together again. Bonnie was incredibly lucky, the stick managed to miss her femoral artery running very close by and did not perforate into her abdomen, either of which could have been life threatening.



She went on to make a rapid uneventful recovery and we hope that next time she looks where she is going when running about and the same doesn't happen again!

**What is most amazing is that Bonnie appeared initially oblivious to her injury, what a tough girl!**

## Caring for your older cat – some top tips!



In their twilight years our cats can suffer from a range of conditions, but they are also experts at hiding the signs of illness! So, looking out for subtle changes in their behaviour can really make a difference. Here are some tips:

**Sore joints:** Recent studies have shown that approximately 80% of cats over the age of twelve have arthritis. However, it can be difficult to identify because they simply rest more, and because they are naturally athletic animals, they will often still jump, climb and play, but not as much as they

used to. Ask us to check their joints next time you are paying us a visit, and if we are concerned, a trial of pain relief medication often lets us know if they are sore or not. Make a stiff, elderly cat's life easier by placing steps up to their favourite places, putting food bowls close to where they rest, using low sided litter trays and giving them deep, soft beds in warm, cosy places.

**Weight loss:** Senior cats can lose weight due to many different conditions, but often it is such a gradual process we don't notice. It's a good idea to get into the habit of weighing your pensionable pussycat on a regular basis and if you notice a downward trend, bring them in for a check-up.

**Drinking more:** Kidney Failure and Diabetes are fairly common in older cats and both will cause them to drink more than they should. In fact, cats naturally drink very little, so often a cat who drinks 'well', is actually drinking to excess and should have a check-up.



**Eating less:** Sore teeth and Kidney Failure are two of the most likely causes of a reduced or changed appetite in a cat. If their mouth is painful they often keep eating, but they may start to prefer wet food or, if watched carefully, not actually chew properly. It can be difficult to fully check their mouths at home, so if you are worried, just bring them down!

**Eating more:** An over-active thyroid gland (Hyperthyroidism) and Diabetes will both make cats eat more, and while this is often taken as a sign of good health, it can be the opposite, especially if they are losing weight *despite* their appetite.

So – as you can see there are a lot of signs to keep a watchful eye out for. In addition it's also a good idea to bring older pets in for regular health-checks so that any problems can be picked up as early as possible.

## Rabbit teeth – a growing issue!



Did you know that rabbits have unusual teeth in that they are *continually* growing? In fact their teeth are perfectly adapted to their natural diet of tough abrasive vegetation, which – without continued tooth growth, would soon result in their teeth being totally ground down to nothing!

Thus, to keep our pet bunny's teeth healthy, most of their diet should comprise of good quality hay (which is very abrasive), a small amount of fresh green leafy vegetables, and a small amount of a pelleted rabbit feed. This keeps their teeth at a healthy (short) length plus also getting all the vital nutrition they need.

However it is easy to feed too much hard food (often of the muesli kind), which bunnies often prefer, and so ignore the hay. Insufficient hay means the teeth aren't ground down and so grow too long, developing sharp spikes which tear into the mouth (see photo). Muesli type mixes also encourage *selective* feeding, leaving vital nutrients uneaten and which can lead to bone weakness. For this reason, it is better to replace the muesli mix component with pelleted food.

The good news is that feeding the correct diet, as outlined above, can go a long way to avoiding most dental problems in rabbits. For more advice, please have a chat to our team who will be very happy to advise you!

### Oral exam reveals problems:



Overgrown cheek teeth (arrowed) are sharp, spikey and can lacerate the gums



Lungworm, caused by *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is gradually becoming more common through-out the UK and Ireland. In affected dogs, clinical signs can range from a mild cough to life threatening bleeding problems.



Slugs and snails can carry the larval stage of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* and if dogs eat slugs and snails, they can become

unwittingly infected. Some pets seem to have a taste for these garden dwellers but all dogs are at risk. Some species of slugs are very small and can easily be accidentally swallowed when dogs eat grass, drink from puddles or play with toys that have been left outside. The disease is commonest in young dogs that eat or play with slugs and snails.

Once swallowed, the larvae migrate to the heart where they will develop into adult



Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm

worms. The adult lungworms live in the heart and those blood vessels supplying the lungs. Here they lay their eggs, which hatch into larvae and migrate into the airways of the

lungs. The dog then coughs them up, swallows the larvae, sheds them in the faeces, and the life cycle begins again.

Clinical signs of lungworm can be vague and variable – ranging from a cough or tiring more easily, to bruising easily, serious bleeding problems and even fitting.

Lungworm can be diagnosed by checking for the larvae in the faeces or by specialised blood tests. The treatment for dogs who are infected with a lungworm involves killing the parasites plus also treating the bleeding or other symptoms they may have. The latter can be challenging and, sadly, many dogs have died because of the parasite.

The good news is that prevention is straight forward with spot-on or tablet medications, both of which are highly effective.

If you are concerned about lungworm, please have a chat to our staff who will be able to advise you on the best form of preventative treatment to protect your pets.