

Do fireworks put your pets in a fizz?



The fireworks “season” (it’s sadly not just one night any more!) is fast approaching and if your pets find the bangs and flashes

frightening, it can be an extremely stressful time for all the family. However, there are many ways in which you can try to keep the peace in your home – even if it is anything but peaceful outside!

Firstly, make sure pets are inside well before darkness falls. Lock the cat flap and take dogs for a good long walk during the day to tire them out. Also, don’t forget any outside pets like rabbits or guinea pigs! Covering their cages with a thick blanket can muffle the noises and make sure they have plenty of bedding to snuggle down in.



Making a den inside for your dog is a great idea. Any small

space will do – cover it over, put their bed inside, add a few treats and encourage them to rest in it. It will help with feelings of security and block out the noise. Also, putting the TV on and closing the curtains will disguise the sounds and will help to make things seem as ‘normal’ as possible.

For very stressed pets, come and talk to us about how we can help. For the more severely affected, sedatives may be needed, but for others, calming supplements or anti-anxiety pheromones (Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats) are a gentle, but effective, way to help them relax at this stressful time.

Pet Health Plans

This year we launched **Abbeycare**, a pet health plan (PHP) that helps hundreds of patients with their preventative health every month. Our goal with **Abbeycare** was to provide the very best in preventative health care for your dogs and cats and save you money. A monthly payment covers your pet for their core vaccinations, flea, tick and wormer all year round and there are many additional benefits like free nail clips and money off dental procedures.



Here are a few common queries from owners about Abbeycare:

My cat is insured, does a pet health plan replace this?

No, a health plan is a preventative health package that includes things an insurance policy does not. **Abbeycare** covers your pets’ core vaccinations and parasite prevention with discounts on procedures such as neutering and nails clips. It is really important not to stop insuring your pet if you want private health insurance.

My dog used to have a spot-on the flea and tick prevention, can I have that?

The health plan was devised by our vets to provide the best parasite prevention based on specific local risk factors in South Wales. We truly believe the worming regimes and flea and tick prevention are safe, effective, and excellent value. Presently, we do not have the ability to swap different canine products in your plan. However, we do have alternative products for cats within our **Abbeycare** plan.



My pet is not neutered, can he still go on the health plan?

Yes, and did you know you will receive a money off voucher if you are a PHP member? This can save you up to £40 and neutering carries health and behavioural benefits.



Over the year we shall continue to answer questions online and on social networks so please check out Facebook [@abbeyvets abergavenny](#) and Twitter for details.



To gain the benefits of our **Abbeycare** Plans or to enquire, please contact your usual branch or call **0800 169 9958** to join over the phone.

We’re sure about insurance, are you?

Are your pets insured? If not, it is definitely something worth considering and we would certainly recommend it! When looking for policies there are a few things to consider; some will offer ‘lifetime’ cover, which means they will pay for any on-going conditions for the lifetime of your pet, whereas others will have a time limit, usually twelve months, which means they will cover costs for that period and then exclude that problem from the policy. Others will set a limit on how much they will pay per condition (and this can include lifetime policies, so you need to read the small print!).

With appropriate pet insurance we can hopefully ensure that any treatment decisions are made on the basis of need rather than cost, so be sure to get your pets insured today!



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.



Feeling ticked off?

Autumn is the prime time of year for ticks as they thrive when the weather is still mild, but moist. They are particularly prevalent in areas with livestock, especially sheep, and where the undergrowth is thick, waiting to hop on to passing pets as they brush by.

Ticks will attach themselves to your pet and feed on their blood for several days. Although pets are rarely bothered by them, they can leave skin irritations behind and have the potential to pass on some nasty infections. Ticks can spread: **Lyme Disease**, an inflammatory infection which causes lameness and fever, **Babesiosis**, which can lead to life threatening anaemia and **Ehrlichiosis** which also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal. The latter two conditions are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

Pets should be monitored daily for ticks and if any ticks are found, these should be promptly removed with a specially designed tick remover. Treatments and preventions for ticks are available as spot-ons, tablets and collars and are generally very effective.



Grooming reveals an *Ixodes* tick. These are widespread across the UK and Ireland and may be infected with Lyme disease.



Ticks can be carefully removed using a tick hook.



Autumn Awareness!

Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year – the trees are turning to glorious golds and the weather is crisp. However, here are some things we need to be aware of to ensure our pets stay happy and healthy as the seasons change.

Parasite alert! Firstly, keep up your **flea** protection! Turning on the central heating means our homes become their ideal environment when it is too cold for them outside. Continue to treat your pets and come and talk to us about how to protect your home as well. **Harvest mites** and **ticks** (see above left) also thrive at this time of year and again we are happy to advise you on how to prevent problems.

Toxic alert! Cars often have anti-freeze added to their engines around now which means bottles are often left out and spillages can occur. Unfortunately, cats find it very tasty despite the fact it is highly toxic and often fatal. Make sure you keep anti-freeze well out of reach, clean up drips and if you think they might have eaten some, bring them to us immediately.

Outdoor pets like rabbits or guinea pigs are usually able to cope fine as winter approaches but we can help by ensuring their cages are free from drafts and that they have enough bedding to create a cosy bed. However, they still should have as much freedom as possible, so do keep allowing them outdoor access in a secure run, they are active creatures and will be miserable cooped up for months.

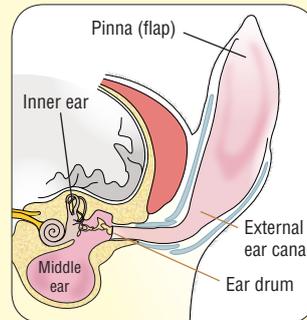
Finally, watch out for **conkers!** For some dogs they can seem like fun play things or tasty snacks! However, they are poisonous, causing nasty tummy upsets, and can potentially lead to dangerous blockages in the intestines.



A word in your ear!

Ear disease is common in our pets and being able to quickly recognise the signs is very important.

Anatomically, our pets' ears are very similar to ours, with a canal extending from the ear flap into the skull with a drum at the base protecting the middle ear. The main difference is that their ears are positioned towards the top of their heads, rather than the sides, and the ear canals are longer. Sound travels down the ear canal and vibrates the ear drum, stimulating tiny bones in the middle ear, which in turn transmits sounds onto the inner ear and brain.



A dog's ear in cross section. Most ear problems occur in the external ear canal

The vast majority of ear problems affect only the external ear canal but repeated infections and some growths will cause middle ear disease. Middle ear disease (which is more common in cats) can be a challenge to diagnose, and treatment is difficult owing to the depth of the middle ear.

Signs of ear problems include: head shaking and scratching or rubbing at their ears. Discharge is common and can be black and waxy or creamy or pus-like and is often very smelly. You might also notice inflammation and reddening.

Ear infections can be triggered by objects getting into the canal (grass seeds are a common culprit), skin allergies, excessive wetness after swimming (but not for all pets, so if your dog enjoys a dip, you don't necessarily need to stop them!), bacterial infections or ear mite infestations (seen commonly in cats). Sometimes we might recommend sedating your pet so we can fully examine their ears, and run tests such as swabs, bloods or X-rays.

Treatment of ear problems usually involves topical liquids but these can be a challenge in some pets! If you think you might struggle, please ask us about other options. Some drops only require once daily, or even once weekly application, which we can always do for you, and occasionally we will prescribe tablets.

To prevent or reduce ear problems it is important to promptly identify the cause and start treatment as soon as possible to avoid longer term problems. In addition, regular cleaning will help affected pets – once or twice a week is enough and always use a veterinary standard ear cleaner. Ask us and we can show you what to use and how to do it effectively.



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites with a typical crusty brown discharge.



Photo of a grass awn lodged at the base of the external ear canal. Pets with trapped grass awns will usually present with severe head shaking.



Spilt antifreeze is sweet but also **deadly** to pets

