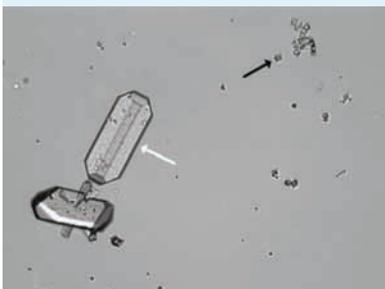


## An introduction to our New SediVue

We have recently added a new lab machine to our in-house Laboratory. The SediVue is the most up to date urine analysis veterinary lab machine, currently available on the market. With the smallest amount of urine (4-5 drops) we are now able to identify microscopic details. This includes red and white blood cells, bacteria and various crystals and casts. All this information can now be gathered without the need to send the urine to an external lab and so reduces the time that you have to wait for your pet's results. The SediVue can generate the results within 3 minutes and also takes photos.



The SediVue produces pictures like the one below: in this photo you can see both crystals and cocci bacteria



### Did you know that we have another surgery in Ewell.....?

Their surgery hours are the same as ours and they use the same emergency service. Should you ever need to find a vet in Ewell, rest assured they will provide the same level of care as we have always done.

#### They can be found at:

Ewell Veterinary Centre, 4 Langton Avenue, Ewell, Epsom, KT17 1LD

Tel: 020 8393 6056

If you would like to find out more about them please visit their website at [www.ewellvets.co.uk](http://www.ewellvets.co.uk)

## Arthritis alert – is your pet affected?



As the weather cools down, signs of arthritis can become more noticeable in many pets. Arthritis is a painful and debilitating condition caused by inflammation and damage in the joints. It is more common in older pets, affects all species and breeds and can strike at any age.

The joints most susceptible to arthritis are those permitting limb movements – called synovial joints. The ends of the bones which meet at these joints are covered by smooth articular cartilage and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid. Arthritis develops when the smooth cartilage that lines the joints becomes roughened and cracked. This can be due to general ageing but poor joint conformation, like hip dysplasia, will exacerbate issues and cause problems earlier in life.

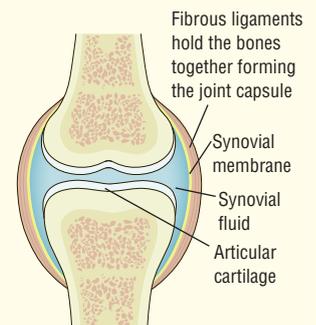
Signs of arthritis can be difficult to pick up on at first, particularly because our pets are great at hiding chronic pain and often changes such as resting or sleeping more, slowing down on walks or general grumpiness can be easily put down to 'old age'. Cats especially are absolute masters of disguise when it comes to arthritis and despite the fact that a huge 80% will suffer once they are older than twelve years, very few are actually on any treatment.



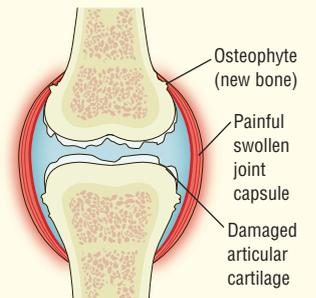
Arthritis is usually diagnosed with a combination of a clinical examination (looking for stiffness, pain and roughness in the joints), plus a history of changes compatible with the disease. X-rays can be helpful, confirming the degree of bone changes and allow assessment of the joints affected.

There are many different treatments for arthritis and as every patient and their joints are different, there is no set protocol to follow. Pain relieving medications are the mainstay for most pets and these are safe, effective and available in various formulations. Supplements can also be very helpful, as can physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and acupuncture. It is also vital to keep arthritic pets slim and fit, so their joints don't have too much weight to carry. If you think your dog or cat may be showing signs of arthritis, please come and see us for a check-up today!

### Joint Anatomy



Healthy synovial joint with smooth articular cartilage



Arthritic synovial joint with damaged articular cartilage

## 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.



**Did you know you can now follow us on facebook?** Just log on to facebook and type in Aspen vets - you will find a pool of useful information and contacts - please become our friend!

# Diagnosing Patent Ductus Arteriosus



Ada, a 10 week old Coton De Tuleur puppy, was brought into us by her owner for a Puppy health. She had already had a puppy check and first vaccination at 8 weeks by the breeder's vet; however her owner wanted to get her health checked after picking her up, as most new owners do. Our Vet identified that Ada had a heart murmur to the left side of the heart during the routine health check. One of the main aspects of a clinical exam is for the vet to check the heart and chest using their stethoscope. Peter felt that the heart murmur was possibly a congenital abnormality and recommended a heart scan. The scan showed that Ada had a quite rare, but treatable heart abnormality, Patent Ductus Arteriosus.

Patent Ductus Arteriosus is a serious but treatable heart condition that can occur in puppies. It is a feature of animals and humans in the womb that the aorta and the pulmonary artery are connected by a blood vessel called the ductus arteriosus. Though necessary while in the womb, this connection should naturally rectify and detach when the puppy is born. Sometimes this does not happen and the two vessels stay connected. As long as these vessels are connected, the oxygenated and non oxygenated blood is mixed, putting a strain on the heart. This condition requires specialist heart surgery and the procedure is risky. Peter referred Ada quickly and she was able to receive this specialist surgery before the condition started to cause a problem to Ada's health. We are happy to report that the surgery was a success and Ada has made a full recovery and she no longer has a heart condition. We were recently able to carry out her spay procedure safely and Ada continues to be a happy and healthy puppy.

## A word in your ear!

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

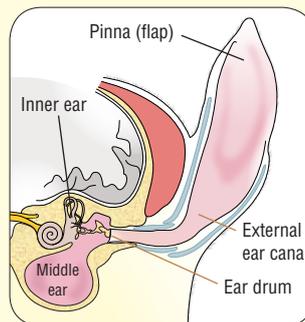
Anatomically, our pets' ears are very similar to ours, with a canal extending from the ear flap into the skull with a drum at the base protecting the middle ear. The main difference is that their ears are positioned towards the top of their heads, rather than the sides, and the ear canals are longer.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

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.



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



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.



## 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.



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

