



Practice News



Welcome to our summer newsletter and I hope this finds you and your pets happy and healthy. I am sure you are starting to enjoy our beautiful countryside with your pets whether it be hacking out, taking your dog up Pen y Fan or watching your rabbit and guinea pigs enjoying the grass on your lovely Welsh lawn.



We have had a busy winter at all our branches, shaking off the dreadful weather and late snowfall in March that brought an increase in the number of pets with tummy bugs and winter viruses. In fact, many similar seasonal health issues are a problem for humans as well as pets.

The message of not leaving dogs (or any pets) in a hot car seems to be getting through, with a reduction in heat stroke cases in the last decade in the UK. However, it does no harm to warn you again that even on a relatively mild day the temperatures inside a car can soar dangerously high. Our advice is to just leave your pet at home and certainly never leave them in an unattended car even on a warm day.

The benefits of being active with your pet are widely known to not just improve their wellbeing but also your own. Did you know that dog owners walk an average of over 1000 miles a year compared to less than 400 for people without one? Another study on equine owners showed they had significantly lower blood pressure and were fitter and healthier when matched with non-owners and it's not just physical; the mental health benefit of bonding with any animal has been repeatedly proven in studies.

So here's us wishing you a lovely summer, and feel free to pop into any branch to discuss any issues in our newsletter.

Should I have my pet neutered?



Neutering your family pet is an important decision and comes with a range of health and welfare benefits. Apart from avoiding unwanted pregnancies, it can also be an important preventative health measure.

Dogs: Un-neutered female dogs usually come into heat (season) every six months. During this time your dog will

be receptive to the advances of entire male dogs in your area. The urge to mate can lead to roaming, with the associated risk of becoming permanently lost, involved in fights or, worse still, being injured in a road accident.

In female dogs, neutering avoids any unplanned pregnancies and reduces the risk of two important conditions later in life. If they are left un-neutered, around 25% may suffer from mammary (breast) cancer and a similar proportion are at risk of developing an infected uterus (pyometra). Both of these are very serious, require surgery and are potentially fatal.

Male dogs also benefit from neutering, eliminating the risk of testicular cancer and making prostate problems less likely. In addition it can be helpful with some behavioural problems.



Cats: Female cats will start their first season from as early as six months of age and may come into heat every three weeks during the breeding season (in the spring and summer months). By neutering your cat, as well as avoiding unwanted litters of kittens, you will also reduce the risk of mammary cancer later in life, which is often aggressive and malignant in cats.

Male cats that are un-neutered are more commonly involved in fights, and are at higher risk of contracting viruses such as FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and Feline Leukaemia. Un-neutered male cats will mark their territory by "spraying" objects inside and outside your house with strong smelling urine. They are also more likely to roam, increasing the risk of traffic accidents.

As you can see there are huge benefits to neutering your dogs, cats and rabbits. Contact us for further information or to book your pet in for an operation.



Don't forget rabbits!

Rabbits are social animals who like to live in pairs. Neutering is very important in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies in pairs of male and female rabbits. However, even pairs of the same sex can benefit from neutering as they are less likely to fight and will be easier for you to handle.

Could my pet have toothache?



It is important for your pet's teeth and gums to be checked regularly to look out for any signs of problems.

A healthy mouth usually has pale pink gums, and bright white teeth. When your pet eats, the sugars in the food mix with bacteria in the mouth to develop a substance called plaque. Accumulation of plaque will lead to *inflammation* and reddening of the gums (gingivitis).

This is frequently accompanied by the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth and very bad breath! Worse still, if left unchecked, this will progress to severe gum disease, toothache and eventually tooth loss. However the good news is that dental problems can be prevented!

Don't let gum disease and toothache ruin your pet's life – please let us advise you on caring for your pet's teeth and gums.



Healthy mouth



Gingivitis and calculus



Severe gum disease



Ticker trouble – is my pet affected?



The heart is a large muscular pump, continuously pumping blood around the body. Like us, animals have four heart chambers, with valves to ensure that blood flows in only the forward direction. The heart 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. If the heart stops functioning properly, it can have serious consequences.

Some pets are born with heart defects. These can include small holes within the heart wall, valve malformations and abnormalities in the vessels leaving the heart. These defects can cause abnormalities to blood flow through the heart and vessels, usually causing a heart murmur which can be heard on examination.

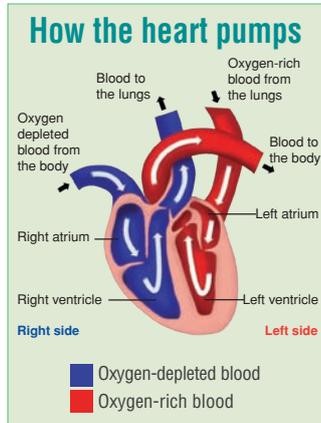
Some pets will develop heart conditions later in life. The most common condition affecting small dogs is a degenerative disease of one of the heart valves, resulting in blood flowing backwards through the left hand side of the heart, usually causing a heart murmur. Larger dogs can suffer from valve disease, but are also predisposed to a condition where the heart dilates and is no longer able to pump blood as effectively. Affected dogs may or may not have a heart murmur.

In dogs, signs of heart disease include: reluctance to exercise, weakness or collapse and laboured or rapid breathing. Coughing can also be associated with heart disease.



Cats are prone to developing a condition where the heart muscle excessively enlarges and results in a poorly functioning heart. This is very common, with around 1 in 7 cats of all ages affected. Older cats are at an increased risk. Signs of heart disease include reluctance to exercise, weakness or collapse and laboured or rapid breathing.

If you are concerned your pet is showing any signs of heart disease, please come and see us for a check-up. We may recommend imaging, such as chest x-rays and/or an ultrasound scan of your pet's heart. In some cases, blood tests and/or electrocardiography 'ECG' may also be helpful. The good news is that novel medications can delay the onset of heart failure or help manage the signs, thus improving length and quality of life for your pet. If you have any questions regarding your pet's heart health, please contact us at the surgery.



It's getting hot out there!

We all love the warmer weather and summer is a great time to be outside with your pets, so here are some topical seasonal tips to keep them fit and healthy:

Parasite alert: It's important to ensure you are using adequate flea and tick protection. Check your pet after every walk to spot if any **ticks** have become attached. These can be anywhere – around the head, under the belly or in armpits. Ticks can be removed using a special tick device or in the surgery. There are a range of tablets, collars and spot-on products to kill ticks and fleas. **Fleas** can quickly multiply, especially in multi-pet households, so make sure all your animals are up to date with their treatments. Please ask us for advice on the best flea and tick products for your pets.

Heat stroke is caused by a drastic increase in body temperature, usually from periods of exercise in the sun. It is difficult to treat and often fatal. Most dogs do not know when to stop and will keep chasing balls despite becoming over-heated. It is very important not to play with your pet outside in the hot weather. Use paddling pools and ice cubes in water to help them keep cool, and walk your pets early in the morning and late in the evening. Remember, **NEVER** leave your pet in a warm car – with their furry coats they can over-heat very rapidly.



Guinea pigs and rabbits need to be kept in a cool, shaded area. If in direct sunlight they struggle to lose heat and can also succumb to heat stroke.

UV Alert: Cats with white noses and white ear tips are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes. High factor special pet safe sun creams applied to the at risk (white) areas helps to minimise this risk.



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes



Flystrike is a huge problem in the summer months. Flies are attracted to moist and dirty areas to lay their eggs, which will rapidly hatch into maggots. This is especially concerning for bunny rabbits that can have periods of diarrhoea. Flies lay eggs within the coat and once hatched, the maggots feed on the skin. This condition is very painful and results in death in cases that are not treated rapidly. It is imperative to check your rabbit's fur twice daily, keep their hutches clean and treat any loose stools quickly. There are licenced products that can be applied to your rabbit's fur to prevent fly attraction.

Enjoy the summer months, have fun and keep your pets safe. If you would like any further information on summer hazards, please just ask a member of our practice team.

Be sure to insure!



Pet insurance is something that we advise all our owners consider for their animals. We know that vet bills are often unexpected and can mount up over time, so having a good policy will really combat the worry of being able to afford their care; whether it is a one-off misadventure or an on-going illness.

There are lots of companies offering pet insurance and picking one out can be daunting! Here are some tips:

- Choose a 'lifelong' policy – this should cover your pet for the whole duration of an illness, even if it is a permanent problem.
- Ensure there is a substantial amount claimable for every condition.
- Look at other benefits offered – these can include third party cover (vital if, for example, your dog slips the lead and causes a car accident),
- Check-out the potential for premium increases – some companies will increase them after a claim, whereas others will remain the same.

So – if you would like further information on the benefits of insuring your pet, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our team.