

## Heart Scan Offer

Heart disease is becoming increasingly common in our pets, being diagnosed in 10% of dogs (up to 60% in older dogs) and in 16% cats (up to 60% in older cats).

### What causes heart disease?

There are a number of different conditions that affect the heart, involving changes to the valves, the muscular walls and chambers of the heart. Different conditions are more common in cats' vs dogs, and in different breeds of dogs.

### What might you notice?



- Faster breathing
- Tiring on walks, general lethargy
- Coughing
- Weight loss
- Drinking and urinating more

- Weakness
- Swollen belly/pot-belly

### What can your vet can do?

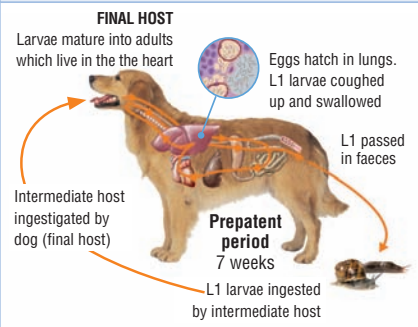
- Auscultation – Listen for murmurs or changes to rhythm
- Echocardiography (Heart scan) – Early detection of changes to size and shape of the heart
- Chest x-rays – Detect change in size of heart and changes to the lungs
- Blood/urine tests – Identify conditions that can cause damage to the heart or changes secondary to heart disease
- Echocardiogram (ECG) – Assess electrical impulses within the heart

**OUR OFFER!!** This MAY-JULY, we are offering heart scans for a **heavily discounted price of just £45**. If you have ever been told your pet has a heart murmur, this is an offer NOT to be missed. Studies have shown that early detection of heart disease can prolong your pet's life by an average of 15 months.

**What's involved?** – No sedation/ anaesthetic unless absolutely necessary. All we need is to clip a small patch of hair on your pet's chest and then they just have to lie on our specially designed ultrasound table. This is an easy and non-invasive method of getting answers that could give you years more with your loved ones. Contact us for more details and to book today!

## Lungworm Awareness Month

Life-cycle of Lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum* (diagram courtesy Bayer)



Dog Lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) is a parasite that can cause serious health problems. It affects dogs and can even be fatal if not prevented or treated.

Lungworm can have visible symptoms in puppies or older dogs however it can also show no outward symptoms in dogs that are otherwise healthy, until the worm burden becomes too great.

An animal that suffers from lungworm without showing symptoms can be problematic. Lungworm affects the clotting abilities of the blood. This means a perfectly healthy looking dog who is secretly suffering from lungworm can have major complications in routine surgeries such as neutering. Complications in surgery can be avoided, either by treating your pet with a recommended product, known to prevent

or treat lungworm, as well as simple blood tests for detection (which can be carried out routinely at your vets prior to surgery).

Lungworm is spread via a host Slug or snail which carry the lungworm larvae. When a slug or snail travels over grass or a water bowl left outside they leave a trail and dogs can become infected when they accidentally (or purposefully) eat a snail or ingest larvae which are left in the snail trail on grasses and bowls.

According to records, there have been 696 cases of lungworm in a 50 mile radius of Kingston and Tolworth. We have also treated many cases over the years. This means it is a real problem locally and we do encourage local dog owners to educate themselves about lungworm and take the necessary steps to prevent their dog contracting it.

There is also a lung worm that can affect cats too. This is a different species of lungworm altogether, called *Aelurostrongylus abstrusus*. Cats become infected with lungworms when they drink infected water or eat prey infected with the larval stage of the worm. The larvae then move out of the intestines via the bloodstream to the lungs, causing respiratory symptoms which can be fatal.



Photos: iStock Photo

If you have questions about Lungworm or would like advice on how to prevent and treat it please contact us at the surgery or visit our website [www.aspenvets.co.uk](http://www.aspenvets.co.uk)

## Could my pet have tooth ache?



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, tooth ache 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.

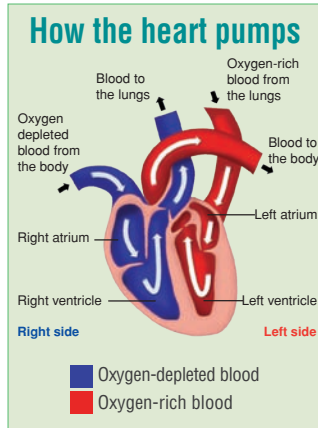
Some pets will develop heart conditions later in life. The most common condition affecting small dogs is a degenerative disease of one of the heart valves, resulting in blood flowing backwards through the left hand side of the heart, usually causing a heart murmur. Larger dogs can suffer from valve disease, 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.

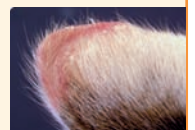
**Heat stroke** is caused by a drastic increase in body temperature, usually from periods of exercise in the sun. It is difficult to treat and often fatal. Most dogs do not know when to stop and will keep chasing balls despite becoming over-heated. It is very important not to play with your pet outside in the hot weather. Use paddling



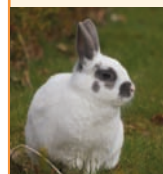
pools and ice cubes in water to help them keep cool, and walk your pets early in the morning and late in the evening. Remember, **NEVER** leave your pet in a warm car – with their furry coats they can over-heat very rapidly.

**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.