



Spring alert!

This Easter, with lots of human treats around, it is important to make sure you are aware of common items in your home that are poisonous for your pet, and where possible, avoid any exposure.



Dogs are very susceptible to **chocolate** toxicity. The stronger the chocolate, the more dangerous it can be and it may cause fatal neurological signs.

Dogs also enjoy a good snuffle through handbags and often find packets of gum and tablets. **Sugar free chewing gum** containing **xylitol** can cause life threateningly low blood sugar levels.



Xylitol is also used as a sweetener in home baking, and cakes made with it, could prove lethal to dogs.

Sultanas and raisins – found in hot cross buns, fruit cakes and the like, are also toxic for your dog. They can cause symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and, in severe cases, kidney failure.

Cats are less vulnerable to poisonings but they can still occur.



Lilies are beautiful but very toxic to cats. Chewing the leaves or grooming pollen off their coats can lead to severe kidney failure.

Anti-freeze (ethylene glycol) is another, often fatal, toxin. It has a sweet taste, but even in small amounts, will cause kidney failure.

Permethrin spot-ons: Many canine spot-on flea products bought from supermarkets and pet shops contain permethrins. While these are safe for dogs, they should *never* be applied to cats, since they are **extremely** poisonous to cats.

Signs of poisoning can often be vague so contact us at once if you notice any signs of unusual behaviour or illness.

2018; The Year of Fire, Flood and Drought

We have had another memorable year at Abbey Vets; where treating animals and providing preventative health care to your pets was the highlight but also where each season assaulted us with the worst of whatever the weather could throw at us.

Looking back to last winter you may recall we started with several days of severe snowfall. This brings the challenge to keeping the practice running in all temperatures. However, blocked roads and broken boilers bring out the best sort of competition between the small animal and equine departments. Both teams accepted the challenge and proved their ability to provide a 24 hour service that does not give in to the elements.

Spring was the kindest season but soon followed by soaring temperatures in early Summer. It seems incredible that people still do not appreciate the dangers of leaving pets in cars and following several cases of heat stroke we used our Facebook page to spread the message (again) that dogs must never be left in an unattended vehicle. Social media had a mixed year with its public image but it undoubtedly helps us communicate with the pet owning public. Join us on [Facebook/abbeyvet](https://www.facebook.com/abbeyvet)



Floods threatened the practice in Autumn but the danger was from within in the form of fire. A faulty fan heater spontaneously combusted one September night at our Abergavenny clinic. We were incredibly fortunate the damage from the fire and its smoke was restricted to a single non-clinical area in the practice. In fact, no animals were ever at risk due to the fast

action of the staff present at the time. Not only do our overnight staff provide a fantastic 24hr care service to animals but their presence meant the fire services were onsite in minutes and prevented a potential catastrophe.

So Happy New Year and as we look forward to 2019, rest assured that Abbey Vets will always be here, whatever the weather!

Bunny boosters – is *your* bunny vaccinated?



Vaccinating your rabbit is very important since the infectious diseases we protect them against are extremely serious and often fatal.

Myxomatosis is probably the one you have heard of. It is common amongst wild rabbits and deadly. It is passed by fleas, which can travel from the countryside into our homes and gardens on us, other pets and wildlife. Protection by vaccination is the only cure.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease is also extremely serious. It is spread by direct contact but also survives in the environment for months and can be carried by wildlife and people. There are now two strains, RVHD1 and RVHD2, and both need vaccinating against – given at least two weeks apart. Rabbit vaccinations are usually given annually to ensure full protection. They are safe, effective and as bunnies are extremely good at hiding illnesses, the health check they get is also important. If you would like any further information or an appointment, please just give us a call!





Caring for your elderly cat

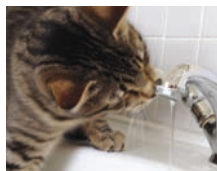
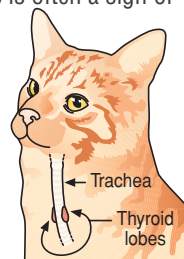
Elderly cats can seem to have the ideal life; snoozing in a cosy bed, eating when they fancy and occasionally demanding attention. They can appear so content, it is easy to assume that they are well in themselves, but their peaceful appearance can be deceiving!

In their twilight years, our feline friends are vulnerable to many illnesses, but are extremely good at hiding the signs. So, we have to be super vigilant to ensure they don't suffer in silence. Regular health-checks are a good way of helping to keep your cat in top shape and pick up medical conditions early, when they are easier to treat. Here is a list of things to keep an eye on:

Sore Joints: One of the most common problems for geriatric cats is painful arthritis. The vast majority will suffer with it to some degree but spotting the problem is a challenge. Cats are natural athletes, so they will still be agile to a certain degree, they will jump, climb and play, but with less freedom and frequency. You may notice they don't sleep in a previously preferred spot, if it is higher up, and they hesitate before jumping both up and down. Perhaps they are sleeping more, don't put a lack of activity down to age, it could be pain or illness. Is your cat a little more grumpy? Less keen to play or interact with the family? Not grooming themselves? Contact us to arrange a check-up.

Eating habits: Dental disease is very common in older cats and can be extremely painful. Older cats with dental disease may become fussy with their food, chew on one side, or refuse dry food. However, in many cases they will show no signs at all, making regular dental-checks vital. If your cat becomes fussy with food, contact us to make an appointment.

Weight loss: Notice your cat looking slimmer? In senior felines, weight loss is often a sign of underlying illness, but in many cases, the gradual nature of the drop makes it difficult to spot. We are very happy to weigh your cat, and this is a great way to monitor their health if you can't weigh them at home. You can also monitor their 'body condition score', so ask us how to do this to keep an eye on their level of fat and muscle. A common cause of weight loss in older cats is thyroid disease. An overactive thyroid will cause your cat to lose weight despite a ravenous appetite. The good news is that thyroid disease can be diagnosed from a simple blood test and there are a range of treatment options to manage this condition.



Drinking more: Drinking more than usual may be an early sign of some medical conditions such as kidney disease and diabetes, both of which are fairly common in older cats. Cats naturally drink very little, so if you see your cat constantly at the water bowl, please get in touch for a check-up. Equally, if the litter tray suddenly seems heavy or your cat is urinating in the house, let us know.

Dementia: We hear about this debilitating condition in humans and it can also affect cats. Affected cats may yowl in the night (this can also be a sign of other problems such as high blood pressure), seem confused, interact less with the family or start to urinate or defaecate in the house. If your cat starts keeping you up, please let us know. A few health tests and some treatment can often get you both back to having restful nights.

If you notice any of the above signs, please get in touch to book an appointment for a health-check. The good news is that modern diagnostic tests, combined with an expanding range of treatments, can greatly improve the quality of life of your elderly pet.

Diet dilemmas!



With so many choices on the market, it can be quite a minefield finding the ideal diet for your pet. The most important thing is that the diet for your pet needs to be balanced and in the correct quantities.

To help with this, many pet foods have a selection of age ranges, such as puppy or kitten, junior, adult and senior. These are to help tailor the calorie and nutritional contents. Some also have specially designed breed types or breed sizes, such as giant and large breed dogs. It is very important that your pet stays a healthy weight to reduce illnesses in later life. Neutered diets and lower calorie diets are available to help maintain a balanced weight.

Complete diets can be in wet or dry forms, so you can choose what is best for your pet depending on their tastes.



Some diets (or kibble) are designed to help with dental disease, which can be a complete diet or fed as a supplement.

If your pet has an illness, a specific veterinary diet may help with your pet's condition. Kidney diets are low in some toxins and waste products to reduce the chemicals your pet's body needs to eliminate. Intestinal diets are designed to help with short and long term digestive issues. Special hydrolysed diets mean that specific proteins have been broken into small pieces so that they can help reduce symptoms from skin allergies. With diets designed for fur balls in cats, diabetes and liver disease, the choice is endless.

If you need any advice regarding your pet's diet, please don't hesitate to ask!

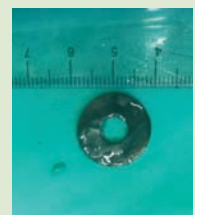
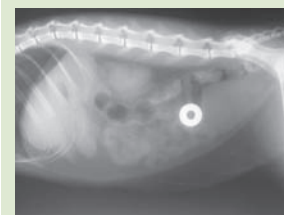
The assurance of insurance: is your pet insured?



Knowing that your dog, cat or rabbit is insured can be a weight off your mind, especially if your pet has a sudden accident or illness and you are faced with an unexpected vet bill.

There are different types of cover to choose from. The top cover is a **lifetime policy** where your pet is covered for a condition for life, usually up to a certain amount of money per year. A **time-restricted policy** means that you can claim per condition, usually for 12 months only. If your pet has an on-going condition such as diabetes or arthritis, the cover expires after the time period. A **condition-restricted policy** means that you can claim up to a certain amount per condition. **Accident only insurance** is a basic cover only. Insurance won't cover a condition if it has occurred before the policy was started. This means it is useful to choose good cover for your pet as soon as possible.

We highly recommend insuring your pet since there are a huge number of surgical and medical conditions that can be very costly to treat.



Pets commonly swallow items which require surgery to remove them, however it's not every day that a kitten swallows a washer! Happily, surgery resolved the issue for this young cat.

In addition to the need for unexpected surgery, many *medical* conditions (such as skin infections, ear disease, kidney or heart disease – to name just a few!) can also be very costly to treat.