



## Practice News

Welcome to our summer newsletter and welcome to new readers and to our loyal clients (and especially your pets). Thank you for using the services of the Abbey Vets Group of practices.

Since it was established in 1886, the vets of Abbey Veterinary Centres have been looking after all the creatures, great and small, in South East Wales. It is extraordinary to consider our practice was established before x-rays had been discovered and anaesthetics invented, to allow surgery on an unconscious patient. Veterinary books from the time focus on the horse and cow with a few notes on the farm dog; cats do not get a mention and certainly there was no information to treat rabbits or children pets. Nowadays the staff at Abbey Vets focus solely on dogs, cats, small pets, back garden poultry and some exotics.

At our branches in Abergavenny, Monmouth, Brecon and Tredegar we offer daily appointments booked by a quaint 20th century invention – the telephone. However we invite you to visit our Facebook page - but please remember this is not monitored 24/7, so call us if ever you have an emergency. Modern technology has brought us to an era of supervets, internet vets, YouTube cats and Instagram designer dogs. The internet may have accelerated the collection and transmission of data but has not necessarily improved the quality or veracity of the information it contains. Rest assured whether your pet, be it a beloved farm cat, ex-battery hen or Crufts champion, our real life vets and nurses will always offer a friendly welcome to provide a caring, knowledgeable and professional service.

In order to provide an accessible version of healthcare, each branch Abbey Vets is equipped with digital x-ray, onsite laboratories for same-day testing, and ultrasound. So enjoy the newsletter, please feel free to contact us for any suggestions for forthcoming issues and rest assured Abbey Vets will be around to look after you pets whatever the future may bring!

## Getting off to the best start!

Welcoming a new puppy or kitten into your family is a super exciting time! To give your new family member the best start, it is important that they have their vaccinations, a microchip and are regularly treated against internal and external parasites.

**Vaccinations:** Both kittens and puppies need a course of vaccines to ensure they are protected against infectious diseases.

Our team will be able to talk you through the exact schedule. Pets will, in addition, receive a full health check, plus we can answer any questions you may have.



**Microchipping** is now a legal requirement in dogs over eight weeks of age. We also recommend microchipping cats and rabbits, hopefully ensuring that if they become lost or injured, a veterinary practice, the police or an animal sanctuary can scan your pet and identify you as the owner. Without a microchip, it can often be very difficult to reunite pets and their owners.

**Parasites:** There is a very high prevalence of roundworm infections in puppies and kittens. As they mature, they are susceptible to infection with both **roundworms** and **tapeworms** and will require regular worming treatment. Additionally, **lungworm** is posing an increasing threat for many dogs. We are also happy to advise you on **flea and ectoparasite treatment** for your pets.

**Neutering:** All cats should be neutered by the age of six months and certainly before you start letting them out! The situation for dogs is more complex and the timing of neutering, and whether it is required, is very dependent on your dog and situation. Our team will be very happy to discuss this with you.

Other things to consider are **diets** and **pet insurance**. We are here to help, so please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on any aspect of caring for your pets.



### More about vaccinations

As soon as you collect your puppy or kitten, we would recommend you contact us regarding their vaccination requirements. They will need a course of vaccines as a puppy/kitten and then we will advise you regarding their individual requirements thereafter (usually the next set is one year after the initial vaccination course).

**Dogs** are vaccinated against a range of infectious diseases: parvovirus, leptospirosis, hepatitis and distemper.

**Cats** are usually vaccinated against cat flu, panleukopenia, and feline leukemia virus.

Puppy and kitten photos: Warren Photographic

## Could it be Kennel Cough?



If your dog develops a harsh, hacking cough, it could be Kennel Cough – which is a very misleading name for the problem – because your dog doesn't need to go to a kennels to catch it! It can be picked up anywhere other dogs go, although kennels, doggy day care, or training classes, are all high risk places.

Kennel Cough (or Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis) is a very contagious disease. It can be transmitted through the air, on objects that have been in contact with an affected animal, and also by direct nose-to-nose transmission. The condition can involve several infectious agents including viruses and a bacteria – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Younger animals are particularly vulnerable, and any pet that is going into kennels or dog training classes may be at greater risk.

It causes a harsh cough, an inflamed throat and sometimes nasal discharge. The symptoms can be dramatic, and it is not uncommon for owners to become concerned their pets have something stuck in their throats. The cough is often self-limiting, but can still persist for 2-3 weeks.

To give your dog the best protection against Kennel Cough, an intranasal vaccine is available to reduce the risk of developing the disease and reduce clinical signs. This is given *in addition* to your pet's standard vaccines. Please call us at the surgery for further information.



## Dental Alert!



Did you know that by the age of just three years old, the vast majority of our pets are suffering with dental disease?

Poor dental health is painful, causes tooth loss, and infections can spread throughout the body – potentially causing significant organ damage. So, it is important for us to regularly check your pet's mouth and instigate a care regime at home to ensure their teeth and gums stay in good condition.

A healthy mouth typically has bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums. However, over time, accumulation of plaque bacteria on the surface of the teeth leads to *inflammation* of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis** (also called gum disease). If the condition is allowed to continue unchecked, bacteria will penetrate below the gum line, destroying the underlying bone – a painful condition called **periodontitis**. As well as very bad breath, if left untreated, this will lead to tooth loss.



Periodontitis with very inflamed gums

Cats may also be affected by gingivitis, but as well as this they may also suffer from one or more **tooth resorptive lesions**. Here

the tooth is progressively destroyed, leading to exposure of the nerve.

The good news is that if gum problems are identified at an *early* stage, a combination of a Scale and Polish and ongoing Home Care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health. Please contact us today for a check-up!

## Handling the heat – a summer survival guide!

Finally, the summer is here, but it brings with it its own particular set of challenges and potential problems. Here are a few tips to keep your pet fit and well at this time of year:

**Keeping cool!** It is vital to ensure your pet keeps cool in hot weather. Dogs should be walked early or late in the day to avoid heat stroke. Paddling pools may help keep dogs cool and they should have free access to water at all times. Heat stroke is a common, and serious, problem and over-weight or heavily coated dogs are most at risk. Sometimes even minimal exercise can trigger it, so take care, even in the mornings and evenings. Finally, remember – dogs rapidly overheat in cars, and should never, ever, be left unattended.



**Sunburn:** Thinly haired or white coated pets are at risk of sunburn, especially if they are dedicated sun worshippers! White cats are particularly vulnerable to developing skin cancers on their ears and noses, so pay close attention to these areas. Problems tend to start as scabs or sores that don't heal and can progress to cancerous changes. To protect your pet, you can apply high factor sun lotion specifically designed for pets.

**Grass awns** are another summer problem – the grass awns of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets, especially dogs. They then migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears and between the toes. It is always a good idea to groom your pets regularly, and especially after walks, to keep a close eye out for grass awns.

**Stick to dog toys!** Long walks with the dog are great, but please don't throw sticks! It is really tempting but we see some horrible head and throat injuries from them being speared. There is no reason not to play fetch (although it is best avoided if it is very hot) but use specific dog toys!

**Insect alert!** Bees and wasps are tempting to play with for both cats and dogs but will deliver a nasty sting if provoked! These are painful and can cause sudden swellings on faces or paws. Most stings will benefit from prompt veterinary attention.

**Flystrike** occurs when bunnies become dirty around their back-ends and flies lay eggs in the mess. These quickly hatch into flesh eating maggots, which cause horrible damage. Protect your bunnies by cleaning them out regularly, checking their back-ends twice daily and using anti-fly medications to stop any egg laying. Additionally, remember that pets in outside runs need a *shaded area* to get away from the sun.

So – enjoy the summer months, have fun and keep your pets safe. We are here to help, so if you would like any further information on summer hazards, please just ask a member of staff.



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes – note the reddening of the skin. If your pet is showing signs of skin changes on their nose or ears, please call us.



Paddling pools are a great way for dogs to stay cool in the summer!



Grass awns of the summer grasses are a perennial hazard



## Guinea pigs are great!

Guinea Pigs are sociable, very lovable and make great pets. To keep them healthy and happy, here are a few tips:

Guinea pigs require a specialist guinea pig diet with adequate amounts of Vitamin C and free access to water. A special diet will make sure they don't develop diarrhoea or scurvy. They have continually growing teeth, so to keep their teeth healthy they need free access to hay and gnawing blocks to chew on.

Guinea pigs should never live alone, they are sociable animals and listening to the chirps they make to each other is really fun! A same sex pair or group will live together happily, but boys and girls can live together, as long as they are neutered.

Some pets may be prone to respiratory conditions or eye infections if the incorrect bedding is used. Guinea pigs are also susceptible to mite infestation and symptoms include hair loss and intense itchiness and scratching. Guinea pigs instinctively hide any signs of pain and illness, therefore it is important to check them at least once a day.

We are here to help, so if you have any questions regarding your guinea pigs, give us a call!



Guinea pigs can live indoors or outside, but it is important they have enough space to run and play. A run should be at least a metre square and any outside hutches need to be well insulated.

It is ideal to keep them in pairs, or small groups in a large cage, preferably with access to a grassy area. Guinea Pigs need daily cleaning to make sure they don't get sore feet or skin conditions. Make sure the cage is weatherproof and away from any predators. Guinea pigs are grazers and will thrive with a lawn to nibble on. They should also have great quality hay available all the time and have a small amount of fresh food and guinea pig pellets every day.