



Practice News

Welcome to the autumn newsletter for Abbey Vets. As a general practice to companion animals we provide care for dogs, cats, exotics such as children pets and small birds and backyard poultry. Furthermore we have several vets with special clinical interests – notably surgery, internal medicine, cardiology and dentistry.

At heart the vets at Abbey are general practitioners - medicine and surgery form the a basis of our skills that irrespective of the species can be applied to all patients. Most vets train for their first years at university with human medics – physiology, pathology and pharmacology are topics, however we are excused human anatomy. Following this and in answer to the frequent question, “Are vets trained and allowed to treat humans?” The reply is an unequivocal “No.” However, our grounding in general medicine provides the knowledge we apply to all creatures (great and small) in our working day. From cats to canaries and dogs to degus we are taught principles of health care that apply to all species.

With our close association to human medicine advances in veterinary practice closely follow the technology and developments seen in human healthcare environments. In the last decade the imaging techniques - Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computer Tomography (CT) have become familiar to most us through personal or family experience in hospitals. Their use in veterinary medicine has revolutionised our diagnostic approach to many diseases. Abbey Vets has excellent relationships with referral hospitals and has recently created a new partnership with Valley Vets practice in Cardiff to provide access to this technology.

Our practice focuses on veterinary care and although we have access to fantastic world-class referrals institutions we are proud to provide local, professional expertise at a range of budgets.



Arthritis - is your pet affected?

Anyone with arthritis knows that chills get in their joints, and the same is true for our pets. With 80% of older dogs and cats suffering with arthritis, it is important that as pet owners we know the signs to look out for when problems arise.

The joints most susceptible to arthritis are the ones permitting free limb movements – called synovial joints (see diagram right). Arthritis develops when the articular cartilage becomes pitted and cracked. These changes are commonly due to age related wear and tear, but can also be secondary to joint trauma and also conformational joint issues such as hip dysplasia.



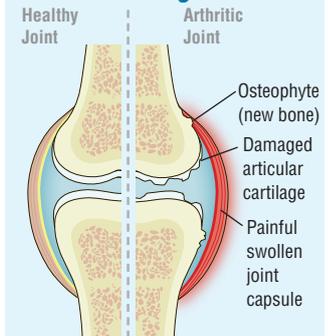
So what are the signs of arthritis? These often include sleeping more, plus for dogs – difficulty in getting up after rest, slowing down on walks and a reluctance to jump into the car. Cats may take extra time or effort to jump up onto surfaces, or show signs of toileting issues such as incontinence or missing a litter tray.

Arthritis is usually diagnosed on a combination of clinical examination (examining the joints for swelling, thickening, pain and range of movement), plus a history suggestive of changes compatible with the disease. X-rays can also be helpful, confirming the degree of bone changes.

Although arthritis cannot be cured, most pets will benefit from a wide range of treatment options. A key consideration is **weight loss** for any pets carrying excess weight, as this hugely impacts on the joints. Many pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory medication** to reduce the soreness and pain. **Dietary supplements** (such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate) are often beneficial. Many arthritic pets struggle with long **walks**, so little and often is the key.

So – if your pet is showing any signs of arthritis – please come and see us for a check-up!

Understanding arthritis:



Healthy Joint: The ends of the bones are covered by smooth articular cartilage and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid, achieving pain free movement.

Arthritic Joint: The protective cartilage is damaged and worn away, resulting in exposure of the underlying bone causing pain and inflammation.

The tooth about rabbit teeth!



Did you know that, unlike dogs and cats, rabbits have continuously growing teeth – growing at a rate of 1-3mm per week! Wild rabbits have evolved to grind and chew large quantities of tough grass and plants.

These diets lead to a great deal of tooth wear, and without continuous tooth growth, they would rapidly wear out their teeth!

Problems are often encountered in domesticated pet rabbits fed a diet of mainly pelleted food, with little roughage to encourage tooth wear. The edges of their teeth do not wear down properly if they do not chew enough, and they can develop sharp points or spurs which eventually cause ulcers on the inside of the mouth and tongue. Your rabbit may start dribbling, paw at their mouth, seem unsettled or eat less food and produce less faecal pellets.

To keep our pet rabbits’ teeth healthy, most of their diet should comprise of good quality hay (aim for them to eat a pile as big as themselves every day), a small amount of fresh green leafy vegetables, and a small amount of a pelleted rabbit feed. This keeps their teeth healthy, plus keeps them stimulated and busy, and helps keep their intestinal system working normally.

If you notice any signs of dental problems, please come in for a check-up. We can also advise you on diet regimes aimed at promoting optimum dental health.

Oral exam reveals problems:



Overgrown cheek teeth (arrowed) are sharp and can lacerate the gums.



Autumn Alert!



After hot summer days, the cooler Autumn weather can be quite a relief. It is also a great time of year to have pets; long walks through golden trees with the dog and cosy evenings at home with your cat, there is nothing better!

However, Autumn does come with a range of pet care challenges that we must be prepared for!

Firstly, it is easy to think that as the temperatures drop, so does the risk from parasites but actually the opposite is true!



Ticks thrive in the warm but moist conditions, especially in the grassy undergrowth our dogs love to explore. Ticks lie in wait for passing pets and will quickly latch on and feed on your pet's blood and can carry a range of infectious diseases (see box right).

The **Harvest Mite** is also prevalent and makes pets very itchy! It commonly congregates between toes and in ears and can be seen as tiny, bright orange dots.

Fleas also have a resurgence because once the central heating goes on, they move in! Our homes have everything they need; warmth, carpets and soft furnishings to breed in and a readily available source of food in our pets.

Ask us about how to protect against these Autumn invaders!



While you are out on your seasonal strolls, be on the look out for your dogs helping themselves to **windfall fruit!** A rotten apple can seem like a tasty snack but is likely to cause an upset tummy, especially if they eat quite a few!

Conkers and acorns are also very tempting but are actually toxic and can cause intestinal blockages.



Wasps and bees will be getting slower now and although their stings rarely cause serious issues, they are very painful. Swellings can quickly appear on paws if your pet has been batting them about, or mouths if they tried to eat them!

Seasonal Canine Illness is a rare, but serious, condition and is most commonly diagnosed between August and November. The cause is unknown but affected dogs become very poorly with sickness and diarrhoea soon after walking in woodland. Treatment is often successful but they usually need to be hospitalised and placed on a drip.



Antifreeze will also be making a comeback as the temperatures drop! It is highly toxic but sadly pets, cats especially, seem to find it irresistible. Make sure your bottles are well sealed and you clean up any spillages carefully if you top up your car.

And finally, don't forget the **wildlife!** Check bonfires thoroughly for sleepy hedgehogs and keep the bird feeder well stocked!

Chipping away!



Having your pets microchipped is absolutely vital! Even the most loyal of dogs and the most indoor of cats can go missing. Rabbits can hop off, tortoises can make a (slow!) getaway, and ferrets will find the smallest of holes!

Microchips are slightly larger than a grain of rice and contain a unique number which shows up on microchip scanners. This is held on a central database with all your contact details. It is important to register as many numbers and email addresses as possible, so if you can't get to the phone, another member of your friends or family can! Also, don't forget to keep the information up to date! Pet rescue centres have microchip readers to identify your pet should they go missing.

Microchips are placed with a needle – it is a very quick procedure and most pets barely notice it has been done! The only animals that are required to be legally chipped are dogs but we believe all pets should be chipped. If yours aren't yet, please ask us to help you!



Feline SOS!

Knowing when your pet needs to be seen as an emergency is an important decision for many owners. Generally, cats are good at keeping themselves out of trouble but occasionally serious problems do occur – here are a few things to look out for:

Road Traffic Accidents: Hopefully this is something that won't happen to your cat, but it is worth being aware that sometimes there may be no obvious injuries and you might just find them hiding away. A classic clue is that their usually clean and sharp nails may be shredded and dirty from scraping on the tarmac.

Poisonings: Cats are often poisoned because the toxins get onto their coats and are groomed off. **Lily pollen** is the most common but others include **engine oil** and road salt. Additionally, **permethrin flea treatments for dogs** are very toxic to cats, so make sure they are never accidentally applied to cats.



Poisons they might eat include antifreeze, slug pellets and, lilies (again!), because all parts of the plant are toxic.

Signs of poisoning can often be vague so owners should be vigilant when it comes to their cat's health. Please contact us at once if you notice any signs of unusual behaviour or illness. Some of the most common causes of poisoning: lilies and antifreeze, cause severe kidney damage in very small quantities, so vigilance is needed.

Blocked bladders: Cats can frequently suffer from cystitis, especially when stressed. In rare cases, male cats may produce crystals in the urine that block the bladder so they cannot urinate. This is a **true medical emergency** so it is always important to call us if you see your cat unusually straining whilst out in the garden, or in the litter tray.

We are here to help – if you are worried about your cat, always call us for advice!

