



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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astonlee

VETERINARY HOSPITAL

'Special care for special friends:
a great deal under one roof.'



SUMMER 2020

NEWS

How We Have Helped: We're Still Here!



We know there is a lot of scary and negative press around at the moment amidst the COVID19 pandemic. Whilst this is often informative, it can also be overwhelming and cause additional worries and anxiety amongst some of the public.

At Astonlee, we are still here to support you and your pets. It isn't always easy having to work with reduced team numbers, turn non-urgent cases away and have covert handing-over of pets in the car-park (!) but we wouldn't have it any other way; whilst we are still able to work and care for your pets, we will.

There are countless examples of kind, warm, heartfelt, inspiring and uplifting cases we have seen during this climate which restores the faith a little

bit. However, we have picked just a few of the ways in which we have helped your pets below, and hopefully reading them will reassure you if you ever need us at the moment that you are still in very safe hands.

We are ensuring that our insurance process is as seamless as ever so that unexpected veterinary bills don't add to the additional worry of having a sick pet in uncertain financial times.

We are taking telephone medicine orders and delivering them as safely as possible to clients to reduce stress around coming to the hospital – particularly for those in the more vulnerable categories.

We are offering consults discussing issues more vigorously on the phone to help put owners' minds at rest and reducing the need for practice visits. We are also launching our new video consultation service which you can access if you have a smart phone by clicking on the QR code soon to appear on our website.

Our fabulous team are deep cleaning the practice regularly to provide a safe and sterile environment for staff and pets.

Amongst all of this, we have still seen and assisted many cases including a dog who has an invasive tumour. The family were, understandably devastated, but we were still able to provide a care plan and allow the owners to take control of the quality of life and decisions along the way.

We have drained various abscesses, soothed itchy skin, eased urinary infections, arranged referral to a specialist when animals have had seemingly uncontrollable seizures, performed emergency dental work and many more.

We have also been maintaining our own 24 hour emergency services with our own team which has benefited critically ill patients with for example diabetes, and relieved suffering in terminally ill patients who have sometimes also been in pain.

So, please, do know that we are here and ready to help should you need it. We will be following government and regulatory body guidance and will update you on any developments that may occur.

Take care and stay safe, The Astonlee Team.

“ I bring my cat, Dudley, into Astonlee regularly as he has an ongoing condition that requires injections which keep him alive. I am always grateful to the staff at Astonlee for your amazing kindness and friendly approach. And now, during lock down, the service has remained as good as always and fulfils the safety requirements perfectly. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. **”**
Penny

“ Despite the current crisis, yesterday my cat was seen straight away- he was clearly very unwell. The vet was amazing, she was kind and considerate and also empathetic, when she told me that the injury was non-accidental. My lovely cat was able to be with me at the end and again the vet was very comforting and kind. Sorry I didn't get your name, too upset. I appreciate everything you and your team did yesterday for Miguel. Thank you. **”**
Jo

Best ways to access our Astonlee services as we deal with COVID-19 issues:

- Telephone consultations with emailed photo's
- Order your repeat prescriptions by submitting a request form from our website
- Keep up your membership of our Pet Care Monthly scheme for your pet's preventative care programme which now can include the option to have your flea and worm products delivered to your home if you select that new option for our **HOME DELIVERY SERVICE**.
- Visits to the practice with safety in mind. Taking your pets in from the car park for diagnosis and treatment to minimise health risks to you and our team, socially distancing where possible.
- When you think about telephoning for an appointment, consider what type of problem or clinic you would like to book your pet in for. This helps our team to prepare and be more efficient in helping to identify where we can those patients being brought in for vaccination/puppy/kitten packs, arthritis clinics, senior well pet clinics, dental clinics, heart, eye, ear clinics and so on.
- Our hydrotherapy services restarted on 11th May with appropriate social distancing. We anticipate being able to bring clients in to the waiting room again taking care to socially distance once the risk of COVID 19 has reduced to the Government definition of level 3 subject to further guidance. We have ordered Perspex screens to put on the reception desk to minimise risk of airborne infection.



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**NEW SERVICE COMING SOON
ONLINE REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS**



Caring for older cats

Thanks to improved veterinary care and nutrition, our cats are living longer and cats of over 20 are not uncommonly seen in veterinary clinics. Age is not a disease in itself, but it brings with it some conditions that owners of our senior kitties need to be aware of. Some of the most common conditions affecting older cats are an **over-active thyroid gland**, **chronic kidney disease**, **dental disease**, **arthritis**, **diabetes** and **high blood pressure** – to name just a few!

At home, it is important to watch out for changes in appetite (both eating less and more), crying at night, hiding away from the family, reluctance to jump up or down, drinking more than normal and changes in toileting habits. Cats with over-active thyroid glands will often have ravenous appetites, whilst cats with chronic kidney disease may eat less and often drink more. Increased thirst is also a feature of diabetes. High blood pressure is often associated with over-active thyroid glands and chronic kidney disease.

As you can see it is a complicated picture and if you see any of the above changes come and see us for a chat and an examination.

Older cats can also suffer with **cognitive dysfunction**, a form of senile dementia, and exhibit behaviours such as confusion, withdrawing from the family, meowing aimlessly or wandering around the house.

Our feline OAPs need regular veterinary check-ups to monitor for early signs of the above conditions, and also to check their dental health. We can also keep a close eye on body weight and notice any small changes that might indicate a problem developing. There are often very effective treatments for the management of age-related conditions, so if you have any concerns about your senior cat, please discuss them with us and don't just put changes down to old age itself.

Don't get the summertime blues!

We all love the summer weather – when it finally arrives! *But how prepared are you and your pets?* Here we look at some top tips to help to beat the heat and keep your pets safe this summer:

Slip-slap-slop! The sun is a particular problem for white eared pets – especially cats. Cats with white ear tips (and also white noses) are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes in the sunburnt areas. Early on, cancerous areas can initially look like a scabby patch which then becomes more raw and painful over time. High factor **special sunblock for pets** applied to the at risk (white) areas helps to minimise this risk.

Play it cool! The summer heat is also a huge problem for many pets and it is essential to ensure free access to water at all times.



Dogs can quite easily overheat – leading to heat stroke, with signs of panting, disorientation, collapse and sometimes death. To keep dogs safe, we suggest shorter walks in the coolest parts of the day – either morning or evening. If you have space, dogs love a paddling pool to cool off!

Rabbits and guinea pigs are very susceptible to problems arising from excess heat and it is vitally important that they have access to shade at all times, plus cool water – preferably in a bowl.

Grass seeds of the meadow grasses can be a particular issue in dogs. These innocuous looking seeds have the ability to penetrate tissue and migrate vast distances. The most common locations are as a foreign body in the ear or foot. We would always be suspicious with a sudden onset ear problem after exercising in long grass. We suggest grooming after every walk so that any seeds can be found and removed before they can cause trouble.



Flystrike is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out on a daily basis. Speak to us about options for flystrike prevention.

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.

Finally, please remember that the temperature in cars can rise rapidly and death from heat stroke can follow in minutes, so **pets should NEVER be left unattended in cars**.



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.



Grass seeds of the summer grasses are a perennial hazard

Rabbit vaccines... we're not just rabbiting on!



The warmer spring and summer months are also a peak time for the spread of a couple of life-threatening infectious diseases in rabbits.

Myxomatosis can be caught from an infected animal or from being bitten by fleas or mosquitoes that have fed on an infected rabbit. Other possible transmission risks include on your clothes or by using shared bowls or brushes. The clinical signs include puffy fluid filled swellings on the face and head, swollen eyes and swellings around the genitals. It is a very unpleasant disease causing inappetence and blindness and usually death.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is another deadly infectious disease that pet rabbits are at risk from. VHD has two strains: VHD-1 and a newer VHD-2. Both strains of RVHD are spread by direct contact with infected rabbits or indirectly via their urine or faeces. Both strains can cause sudden death.

We recommend annual vaccination against Myxomatosis and both strains of RVHD.

COMING SOON

A new vaccine which protects rabbits from their major diseases in a single dose