ashlands News

Veterinary Centre

WINTER 2021

119, Leeds Rd, Ilkley, LS29 8JS ☎ 01943 817000 • The Institute, Colne Rd, Glusburn, BD20 8PR ☎ 01535 632608
Rock Villa, Clifford Street, Skipton, BD23 2AB ☎ 01756 636999

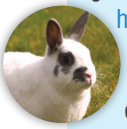
Booster time!

For dogs, cats and rabbits, a yearly booster vaccination is vitally important to protect your pet against a range of potentially life threatening infectious diseases.

Dogs should be vaccinated against a range of infectious diseases. One is parvovirus, which causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea and can be fatal. We also vaccinate against Distemper, Hepatitis, and Leptospirosis. Thankfully, due to the success of vaccination, these diseases are much less common. We can also protect dogs against Kennel Cough, which, is less serious, but highly infectious. The length of protection for each disease varies, so what we vaccinate against will change annually.

Cats: We recommend vaccinating cats against Cat flu, Feline Leukaemia and Feline Enteritis.

Cat Flu: calicivirus and herpesvirus are components of so called 'cat flu' where cats show flu like symptoms. Signs include runny noses, sneezing and sore eyes. Feline Leukaemia is usually fatal, typically within a couple of years of cats contracting the virus. Feline Enteritis is thankfully rare, mainly due to vaccination.



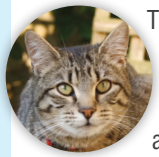
Rabbits should be vaccinated against myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD). There is now a licensed vaccine that covers both strains of VHD – the older VHD 1 and the newer VHD 2. All three of these viruses are frequently deadly.

Viruses, due to their nature, are not easily treated once caught. Vaccination represents a safe and effective way to protect dogs, cats and rabbits. The vaccine visit is also a great opportunity for us to give your pet a nose to tail check. If your pet's boosters are out of date, please call us today for an appointment!

Arthritis alert!

Arthritis is commonly seen in middle aged and older dogs and cats. Sadly, it is often made worse by cold, damp winter weather. Pets showing signs of stiffness on rising, or slowing down on a walk may both point to arthritis being a problem.

The joints most susceptible to arthritis are those permitting limb movements – called synovial joints. The ends of the bones which meet at these joints are covered by smooth articular cartilage. 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 as well as conformational joint issues such as hip and elbow dysplasia. Secondary new bone is commonly deposited around the affected joints and may be seen on x-ray (green arrows).



The signs of pain associated with arthritis can often be subtle and hard to pinpoint, and whilst some pets will develop an obvious limp, others (especially cats) will simply slow down, be stiffer getting up and generally rest more. Weight gain, inappropriate exercise (too intense or over rough terrain), slippery flooring, and colder / damp weather can all worsen the signs.

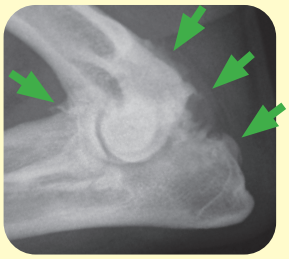
Although arthritis cannot be cured, most pets will benefit from a wide range of treatment options. A key consideration is **weight loss** for any pets carrying excess weight, as this hugely impacts on the joints. Many pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory medication** to reduce the soreness and pain. **Dietary supplements** (such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate) are also often beneficial. Many arthritic pets struggle with long walks, so little and often is the key. Additionally – simple changes at home can also make a difference: putting mats on slippery floors and providing a super supportive bed can both be of great help.

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

X-rays and arthritis

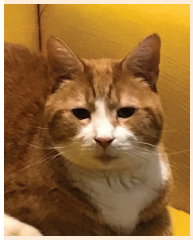
Radiography is commonly used to investigate joint problems.

X-ray of a **normal elbow joint**



Arthritic elbow joint in a dog with lots of "fluffy" new bone (yellow arrows) around the joint, indicative of marked arthritis.

Winter fleas – are your pets protected?



With the colder weather upon us you might be tempted to ease back on routine flea control. The advent of central heating and double glazing creates warm homes through the colder months. As a result we create the ideal environment for fleas to thrive and breed through the winter months.

Fleas can make their way into our homes in all sorts of ways; on our pets, on us, or just hopping in by themselves. Whilst fleas are present they lay eggs in protected places like under furniture or in the cracks of laminate floors and those eggs can survive for months, waiting to be activated by warm conditions (as you turn on your central heating) and the presence of pets spending more time inside. The eggs hatch out and progress (via larval stages) into adult fleas, which in turn hop on and feed on your pet and start the whole life cycle off again.

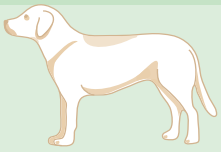
So, it is vital to protect against fleas all year round! By routinely treating your pets against fleas, you help keep them flea free, plus reduce the egg burden in your house which will in turn help eliminate future flea infestations! Come and have a chat to us about the best ways to do this and stop your home from becoming a winter flea's paradise!

Winter weight worries!

With winter and the shorter daylight hours there can be a trend towards pets (and their owners!) gaining some extra weight. This is a problem because whilst it is all too easy to gain weight, it isn't nearly as easy to lose it!

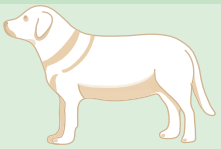
Just as in ourselves, there are many diseases that are worsened or become more difficult to manage in overweight pets. These include arthritis, diabetes, cardiac disease and chronic respiratory conditions. In diabetic cats, for example, weight loss alongside initial insulin can result in some cats going into remission and no longer requiring insulin. Similarly in cases of arthritis (see article on front page), weight loss is a key part of managing the condition.

IDEAL WEIGHT



Outline of ribs can be easily felt through a slight fat cover

OVER WEIGHT



Ribs difficult to feel through a moderate to thick fat cover

The good news is that, even without scales you can easily check your pet's body condition score at home. Generally pets should have the ribs palpable under a thin layer of fat. Dogs should have a nipped in waist just behind the rib cage when looking from above. Cats shouldn't have a 'mouse pouch' when looking from the side, but instead should be tucked up neatly.

If you are worried about your pet being overweight then please get in touch. There are many ways we can help. The starting point may be a food diary so that everyone in the house becomes aware of who is feeding what and when. Additionally we advise measuring their meals out every day, feeding a diet designed for their lifestyle (for example, neutered pets and older pets need fewer calories), keeping treats to a minimum and absolutely no table scraps!

Best of all – as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. So, if your pet has gained weight, or seems to have slowed down, then why not give us a call – we are here to help!

Rabbit teeth – a growing issue!

Did you know that it's not just dogs and cats that suffer from dental disease? The key dental problem seen in rabbits is tooth *overgrowth* – see photos right. Rabbits have continuously growing teeth – incisors at the front of the mouth and molar teeth at the back of the mouth, growing at a rate of 1-3mm per week!

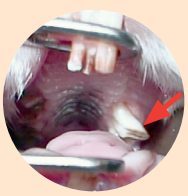
In the wild, their natural diet of roughage is high in fibre ensuring that their teeth are constantly ground down. The high fibre content means the food takes a while to chew and ensures all teeth are evenly worn down. Without enough fibre in their diet, they can get spikes appearing on their cheek teeth, and overgrown front incisors, which can then cause painful ulcers in the mouth. This can ultimately stop them eating and they risk their gut stopping (called gut stasis) which can be life threatening.

Thus, to keep our pet bunnies' teeth healthy, fresh hay (which is very abrasive) should be the main component of a rabbit's diet, plus a small amount of fresh green leafy vegetables, and a small amount of a pelleted rabbit feed. Pelleted feeds are generally preferable to the traditional "muesli" type mixes. Muesli type mixes can encourage *selective* feeding, leaving vital nutrients uneaten and which can lead to bone weakness.

The good news is that feeding the correct diet, as outlined above, can go a long way to avoiding most dental problems in rabbits. For more advice, please have a chat to our team who will be very happy to advise you!

Healthy incisor teeth should normally meet – as above

Misaligned and overgrown incisor (front) teeth



Overgrown cheek teeth (arrowed) are sharp and can lacerate the soft tissues. Symptoms include saliva wetting around the mouth, decreased appetite and weight loss

Brrr - it's Winter!

With the onset of winter weather, we take a seasonal look at some top tips to keep your pets fit and well at this time of year.

Winter walks: With the colder, wetter and darker days to come, it's still essential to make sure your pets get adequate exercise. However, it's also important to ensure pets are well prepared: an older arthritic dog will benefit from a warm, waterproof coat to reduce the cold on the joints – which can worsen the problem. Similarly, short coated breeds like greyhounds and whippets, will benefit from wearing coats. Make the most of the shorter days by playing games whilst you are out to give your pet mental as well as physical stimulation. On snowy days, remember to check your pet's paws after walks and give them a good wipe down. Snow clumps up painfully between toes, especially on fluffy feet. Grit and salt can also be very caustic.

Festive alert: The festive season can pose a huge range of very tempting toxic hazards for our pets! Chocolate is a festive favourite, but as little as 50g of plain chocolate can be fatal in small dogs. Any cake or pies containing grapes, sultanas, raisins or nuts should also be avoided! Flowers too are often gifted, and of special note are lilies and cats. All parts of the lily are poisonous and even a small amount of lily pollen can be enough to cause kidney failure.

Continuing our look at festive hazards, over indulging in fatty foods can cause tummy upsets, and sometimes pancreatitis in dogs, which can make them very unwell. Tinsel and other decorations need to stay on trees – there is a risk, if eaten it can cause a linear foreign body, which involves painstaking surgery to sort out and can be fatal. If your pet swallows anything unusual please contact us at once!

Outdoor pets: Make sure rabbits and guinea pigs have well insulated hutches, plenty of bedding to snuggle down in, and check their water twice daily to ensure it hasn't frozen. Also – consider moving them somewhere warmer in cold weather.

For further information on any of the topics covered in this article, please speak to a member of our team.

Rabbit photo: Warren Photographic

This Newsletter is provided as an education service to our clients. All news and other items in this newsletter are for information only and should not be treated as a substitute for veterinary advice. For all images, the copyright is the property of the photographer.