

NEWS



AUTUMN 2023

Orchard Health Plan

The affordable way to keep your pet fit and healthy.



For peace of mind, our health plan provides you with all your pets' preventative healthcare needs - including treatment for fleas, ticks, lungworm and intestinal worms, vaccination and an additional six monthly check.

This makes it ideal both for new pets just joining your family, and older pets that benefit from more regular vet assessment.

Plans are available for dogs, cats and rabbits **from £10.99/month**.

If you would like further information on our health plan or any of the topics included in this newsletter, please ask a member of the practice team. We are happy to help!

Firework Fear!



The firework season is nearly here! The early nights are perfect for displays, but if your pet finds them frightening, then night-time can become a nightmare for pets.

During firework season itself, there are many ways in which you can try to keep the peace in your home.

Firstly – make sure all pets are indoors well before dark, shut the cat flap and make sure dogs have had a good walk earlier in the day.

Your home environment can also help your pet feel safe. Low levels of calming background noise, such as the television or music, can help to alleviate the stress. Keep curtains closed and provide a den or space for your pet to retreat to if needed.

Please do get in touch for more information.



Troublesome ticks!

As the summer turns into the Autumn, tick numbers are at their highest.

Ticks can be found in long grasses and wooded areas, especially where there is wildlife such as deer and hedgehogs. Here they wait for an animal or human to brush past them so that they can jump on and feed.

Ticks attach using their mouthparts and will feed on blood from their host for several days before dropping off. Unlike fleas, ticks are not itchy, but can spread diseases which pose serious health risks to both pets and humans. The major ones are:

Lyme disease is the most well known disease spread by ticks. Affected pets (and also humans) can develop swollen joints and stiffness. They can also develop a fever, anorexia and lethargy. In some cases the disease causes life-threatening kidney disease.

Babesiosis is an emerging tick-borne disease, destroying red blood cells and causing rapid signs of anaemia in affected dogs (but not humans). It is mainly found in mainland Europe, but there is a risk of spread into the UK and Ireland.

Ehrlichiosis also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal. Both Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

So how can you minimise the risk of tick-borne diseases?

- Daily monitoring for ticks and careful removal of ticks with a tick hook is essential because infected ticks have to feed for several hours *before* disease transmission occurs. *Plus....*
- Chemical tick protection with **veterinary licenced** spot-ons, collars and tablet products, offer you a wide variety of very effective options, particularly when used with daily monitoring. These are included in our cat and dog Orchard Health Plans.

So please let our helpful team advise you on keeping your pets safe from ticks and tick-borne diseases.



Attached ticks with buried mouthparts are often found whilst grooming your pets



Tick removal: do's and don'ts

✓ A simple twisting and pulling action is all that is required to remove the tick while minimising disease risk. Specially designed v-shaped tick removers that remove ticks by rotation are very effective at removing ticks



Close up of removed tick complete with mouthparts

✗ Stress placed on the tick by burning, freezing, covering with Vaseline and physical squeezing will lead to regurgitation of the tick's stomach contents resulting in an increased risk of disease transmission

✗ Similarly, detachment of the head, leaving it in situ will also lead to increased risk of disease transmission

Pet Insurance – is your pet protected?



Pet insurance is something that we advise all owners consider for their pets. We know that vet bills are often unexpected and can mount up over time, so having a good policy will really combat the worry of being able to afford their care; whether it is a one-off misadventure or an on-going illness.

There are lots of companies offering pet insurance and picking one out can be daunting! Here are some tips:

- Lifelong policies are the most comprehensive - they should cover your pet for the whole duration of an illness, even if it is a permanent problem.
- Ensure there is a substantial amount claimable for every condition.
- Look at other benefits offered – these can include third party cover (vital if, for example, your dog slips the lead and causes a car accident),
- Check-out the potential for premium increases – some companies will increase them after a claim, whereas others will remain the same.

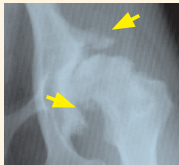
So – for peace of mind regarding your pet, we highly recommend getting your pet insured, if you would like further information on the benefits of insuring your pet, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our team.



Autumn Awareness!

Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year – the trees are turning to glorious golds and the weather is crisp. However, here are some things we need to be aware of to ensure our pets stay happy and healthy as the seasons change.

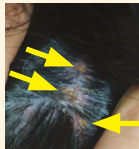
Autumn joint alert! Older pets will often feel the cold in their joints; becoming sluggish and stiff. Don't ignore these signs, since arthritis is generally the underlying problem. This causes significant pain but our pets are often very bad at letting us know just how sore they are. There are many ways we can help them, so if your senior citizen is slowing down in the autumn, speak to us about how we can put the spring back in their step!



Arthritic hip joint in a dog. You can see fluffy new bone (arrowed) typical of arthritis



Parasites are still a big issue! **Ticks** (see front page) and **harvest mites** both thrive in cooler, moist conditions and while **fleas** are in decline outside, they are quite happy to live in our centrally heated homes! Keep up with your regular protection and do check with us that it covers all the right parasites!



These tiny orange harvest mites are very itchy!

Poisonings are also a concern at this time of year, so keep an eye on what your pet is trying to eat, especially dogs on walks! **Conkers, acorns** and **rotting fruit** are plentiful on the ground but can cause upset tummies. Also be vigilant for **anti-freeze**, it is highly toxic but tastes very sweet, so cats in particular will readily lick it up.



Wasps and bees are coming to the end of their summer lives and are often pretty slow, which makes them irresistible playthings for dogs and cats but they can still sting, which is painful and causes nasty swellings. These are usually easily treated with injections and the sooner we see your pet the better! So – enjoy the autumn weather, but make sure your pets stay safe! Please call us if you would like any more information.

Cat photo: Warren Photographic

Ticker trouble – is your pet affected?



The heart is a busy organ! In the lifetime of the average animal, it beats about 1 billion times, and pumps an average of 4.5 litres of blood around the body of a dog every minute. Located in the middle of the chest, the heart is split in half by a muscular wall.

The right side of the heart receives low-oxygen blood from the body and pumps it to the lungs, where it gets rid of waste gas (carbon dioxide) and receives fresh oxygen from the air. Blood then travels to the left side of the heart, where it is pumped under high pressure to the tissues of the body, to carry oxygen and nutrients for use by other organs.

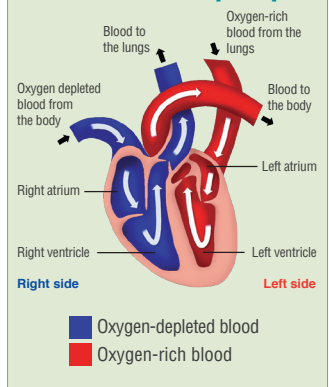
Like humans, dogs and cats sadly do suffer from heart disease. Unlike their owners, heart disease in pets is most often genetic, not caused by lifestyle.

Dogs: In dogs, two common diseases are seen by vets. In older, small breed dogs, more than half of some breeds suffer a leak in a major heart valve by age ten (called “mitral valve disease”). In larger dogs, middle and older aged dogs can develop a weakness of the heart muscle (called “dilated cardiomyopathy”). Dogs with heart disease may show signs of reduced exercise ability, heavy panting, fast breathing, cough or even fainting.

Cats: In cats, the most common heart disease is a thickened heart muscle (called “hypertrophic cardiomyopathy”). This is very common, with around 1 in 7 cats of all ages affected – not only are older cats at higher risk, but they are also more likely to develop signs, such as breathing difficulties or weight loss.



How the heart pumps



Caring for your pet's teeth

Did you know that dental problems are probably the *commonest* issue our pets suffer from, yet they are one of most under-diagnosed, mainly because it is difficult to look properly at their mouths and also bad breath is often considered “normal”!

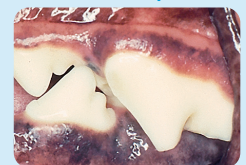
Poor dental health can be very painful, leading to tooth loss and the potential for infections to spread to other organs in the body. So it is important for us to regularly check your pet's mouth to ensure their teeth and gums stay in a good condition.

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).

However, if the gingivitis is allowed to continue unchecked, plaque bacteria will start to penetrate *below* the gum line, resulting in destruction of the bone and tooth supporting structures – a very **painful** condition called **periodontitis**.

So what can be done? 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 (and also their breath!). Please contact us today for a dental check-up and to find out more about caring for your pet's teeth.

Progression of gum disease in pets



Healthy mouth



Gingivitis with swollen and inflamed gum margins



Periodontitis with very inflamed and receding gums. As the tooth support structures are progressively destroyed, the tooth will become loose and eventually fall out.