



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 £11.99/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!

Flash, Bang, Worry?



As the evenings grow darker and Bonfire Night approaches, fireworks can become a major source of stress for many pets.

If possible, walk dogs earlier in the day before fireworks are likely to start and keep anxious pets indoors during the evening.

Create a safe, comfortable hideaway where your pet can retreat. Close the curtains and use the television or radio to help mask outside noises. Food puzzles or favourite treats can provide a useful distraction.

Many stressed pets will also benefit from calming pheromone diffusers (Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats). These can help pets feel calmer and safer in their environment. They should be plugged in at least 48 hours before fireworks are due to start.

If you're worried about how your pet will cope with fireworks this year, don't wait until Bonfire Night! Contact our team for advice – we're here to help you and your pet enjoy a calmer, less stressful season.

The health benefits of neutering your pet!



Neutering is one of the most common procedures performed by veterinary practices and offers important health and welfare benefits for many pets. While the advantages vary between species, one obvious benefit of neutering female animals is preventing unwanted pregnancies.

For **female dogs**, neutering also significantly reduces the risk of developing mammary (breast) tumours later in life. It also prevents pyometra, a serious infection where the uterus fills with pus. Around one in four unneutered female dogs are at risk of developing pyometra

during their lifetimes. Treatment usually involves emergency surgery when the dog is already very ill, making it a higher-risk procedure than a planned routine neutering procedure.

In **male dogs**, castration eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and greatly reduces the likelihood of benign enlargement of the prostate, a common condition that can cause difficulties with urination and passing faeces. Neutering can also reduce the urge to roam in search of a mate, lowering the risk of road traffic accidents and injuries from fighting.

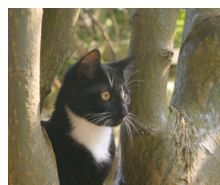
Female cats also benefit from neutering. As well as preventing unwanted litters, it removes the risk of pyometra and reduces the likelihood of mammary tumours, particularly when carried out at a young age. In **male cats**, castration reduces the urge to roam and leads to fewer fights, which in turn reduces the risk of catching infections such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), which is mainly spread through bite wounds.



Female rabbits benefit enormously from neutering. As well as eliminating unwanted pregnancies, by six years of age, up to 80% of entire female rabbits will develop cancer of the uterus. These tumours are often aggressive and may spread to the lungs, making treatment difficult. Neutering also reduces hormone-related behaviours, helping some rabbits become calmer and easier to handle. **Male rabbits** often become less territorial after neutering and can be safely bonded with a neutered female. Rabbits are highly social animals, and living in compatible pairs greatly improves their welfare.

Every pet is different, and the decision about whether – and when – to neuter should take into account their species, breed, age and lifestyle. Our veterinary team can discuss the benefits for your individual pet and help you make the choice that is right for them.

Microchipping – simple, safe and essential!



A microchip is a tiny device, about the size of a grain of rice, implanted just under the skin between your pet's shoulder blades. The procedure is quick, safe and well tolerated, and each chip contains a unique identification number that can be read by a scanner.

Microchipping gives you the best chance of being reunited with your pet if they become lost or stolen. In the UK, puppies must be microchipped by eight weeks of age and cats by 20 weeks. A microchip is also essential for travelling abroad as part of the pet travel requirements and provides permanent identification of your pet.

Veterinary practices, the police and animal charities routinely scan stray animals for microchips. If your pet goes missing and is found, a registered microchip provides the best chance of them being quickly identified and safely reunited with you.

Just as importantly – don't forget to keep your contact details up to date with the microchip database and notify them if any contact details have been changed.



Autumn Hazards!

As the days shorten and autumn arrives, it's worth being aware of a few seasonal hazards that can affect your pets.



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes

Harvest mites become more common at this time of year, particularly in grassy fields and around crops. These tiny orange mites often gather around the feet and legs, causing intense itching and irritation. **Fleas** are also still active and, as the heating goes on, our warm homes provide the perfect environment for them to thrive. So it's essential to keep up your flea treatments!

Late summer and autumn also bring an increase in **wasp stings**. Wasps can become more aggressive at this time of year, particularly after feeding on fermenting fruit. **Fallen fruit** should be cleared away where possible, as it can upset pets if eaten. **Acorns and conkers** are also best avoided, as they are toxic and may cause intestinal blockages if swallowed.

As temperatures fall, many people top up or replace their vehicle's **antifreeze**. Antifreeze is extremely poisonous to dogs and cats, and because it has a sweet taste, even a small amount can cause fatal kidney damage. Store it securely and clean up any spills immediately.

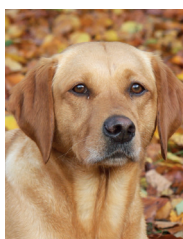


Spilt antifreeze is sweet but also deadly to pets

If you're enjoying an autumn bonfire, always check for **hedgehogs** before lighting it. Better still, build your bonfire on the day you plan to use it. Curious dogs should also be kept away from hedgehogs to avoid painful encounters with their sharp spines.

Finally, cooler weather often means less exercise and more treats. Keeping an eye on your pet's **weight** will help protect their joints, heart and overall health. As evening walks become darker, reflective collars, flashing lights and high-visibility leads can also help keep both you and your pet safe.

If you're concerned about any seasonal hazards or need advice on parasite control, our team is always happy to help.



Arthritis is one of the most common conditions affecting middle-aged and older pets, although younger animals can also develop it. It is a progressive condition in which the smooth cartilage that cushions the joints gradually wears away. As this protective layer is lost, the underlying bone becomes exposed, leading to pain, inflammation and reduced mobility. New bone may also form around the joint, making it stiff and uncomfortable.

While any joint can be affected, the hips, knees and elbows are the most common sites. Arthritis often develops through normal wear and tear, but it can also follow an injury or result from inherited joint problems such as hip or elbow dysplasia.

Many owners expect an arthritic pet to limp, but the signs are often much more subtle. Your pet may seem stiff after resting, be reluctant to jump into the car, climb stairs or go for walks, or simply become less playful and interactive. Cats often jump less, spend more time sleeping, or may struggle to reach their litter trays. Some pets may also become quieter or grumpier due to ongoing pain. Cold, damp weather can also make symptoms noticeably worse.



Although arthritis cannot usually be

cured, there are many ways to improve your pet's quality of life. Treatment is most successful when several approaches are combined. Maintaining a healthy body weight reduces stress on painful joints, while gentle, regular exercise is usually better than occasional long walks. Anti-inflammatory pain relief can make a dramatic difference, and some pets also benefit from joint supplements, physiotherapy or hydrotherapy. Simple changes at home, such as using rugs on slippery floors, providing ramps, and making food, water and litter trays easier to reach, can also help.

If you've noticed your pet slowing down, don't assume it's simply old age. Early diagnosis and treatment can make a remarkable difference, helping your pet stay comfortable, active and enjoy life for years to come. Please speak to a member of our team if you have any concerns.

Tick alert: keeping your pet safe!



The onset of Autumn brings an increase in ticks – commonly found in woodland, long grass and dense vegetation. They can remain active until the first frosts arrive, so it's important to stay vigilant well into the cooler months.

Ticks attach themselves to passing animals before crawling through the coat to find a suitable place to feed, often where the hair is thinner, such as around the face, armpits or groin. Once attached, they use specialised mouthparts to feed on your pet's blood.

The main concern with ticks is their ability to transmit disease while feeding. Lyme disease is one of the best-known tick-borne diseases in the UK. Increased travel between the UK and Europe also means that other diseases, including Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis, are a potential concern.

After walks, particularly in woodland or long grass, check your pet's coat carefully. If you find a tick, remove it promptly using a specially designed tick-removal tool, taking care to remove the whole tick. A range of preventative treatments is available – some repel ticks, while others kill them quickly after attachment, helping to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

We are here to help! Please ask us for advice on the most appropriate tick protection for your pet and their lifestyle.

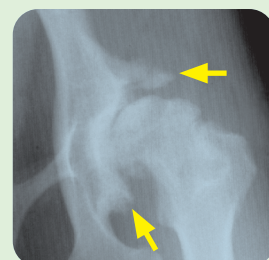


X-rays and arthritis

Radiography is commonly used to investigate joint problems



X-ray of a **normal hip joint** – note the perfectly formed "ball and socket" of the hip joint



Arthritic hip joint in a dog with hip dysplasia. Note the very shallow ball and socket joint and the secondary new bone around the joint (arrowed in yellow)