



Firework fright!

Bonfire night can be a scary time for pets and it is important to prepare for this stressful time. Here are some tips for pets that find the whole experience of fireworks rather overwhelming:

- Make sure that dogs and cats are indoors and any pets that live outside (e.g. rabbits) are covered.
- Give your dog a quiet place to hide at any time when there are fireworks or other loud noises. Keep the windows and curtains in this room closed, and provide a comfy bed with lots of blankets to hide under. We also recommend installing a DAP diffuser in or near this hiding place as a source of additional comfort. DAP (short for *dog appeasing pheromone*) decreases stress levels in dogs. It comes as a diffuser that should be plugged in two weeks before the event to take maximum effect.
- Your reaction to your pet's fearful behaviour is important. Reassurance encourages your pet to continue displaying a behaviour – whether it is sitting nicely or displaying fear. So reward your pet's *calm* behaviour with cuddles and treats. However if your pet is fearful, stay relaxed and act as a good 'role model' and carry on as if nothing is happening.
- Music can be played to mask the sound of fireworks, or leaving the television on can also help.

For further advice on all methods available to help your pet with bonfire night, please speak to one of our practice staff who will be very happy to help.

Diets: Keeping your pet healthy



OUR PETS are members of the family and, just like ourselves, feeding them a balanced diet is one of the key things we can do to keep them fit and healthy. Better still – with Life Stage Diets it is now possible to feed them a correctly balanced diet for every stage of their lives.

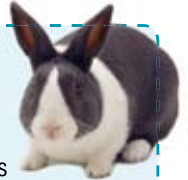
Puppies and kittens will benefit from junior/growth diets. These tend to be higher in energy and protein to aid controlled growth (avoiding obesity) whilst having the correct mineral balance to help bones and joints develop correctly. This is particularly important for large and giant breeds of dog, and they therefore require their own specially formulated puppy food.

Adult dogs and cats (between around 12-18 months and 7-8 years) require an adult/maintenance diet – helping to keep pets healthy and active during their middle years. Dietary changes may be needed at times of increased activity or during pregnancy.

In **older animals**, senior foods are ideal. These usually have a lower energy content to avoid weight gain as pets grow more sedentary. Fibre levels are maintained to avoid constipation, and protein and mineral levels are altered to reduce the workload of ageing kidneys, liver and heart. Essential fatty acids and other products may also be added to help to keep the skin and joints healthy.

Pets with particular disease problems may also benefit from specific 'prescription' diets, specially formulated for a variety of conditions including diseases of the kidneys, liver, heart, joints, skin

Feeding Rabbits



Good quality hay and grass should form the basis of your rabbit's diet; this is very high in fibre and promotes optimum dental health. To supplement the hay, a selection of fresh food and small quantity of commercial rabbit food (preferably pelleted to avoid selective feeding) may be fed.

and teeth. For pets with obesity, specially formulated low calorie diets are also available.

Life stage diets, together with a growing range of prescription diets, help your pets to live lives that are as long and healthy as possible. Please ask us for more information and we can help you choose the best diet for your pet.



Start now if you are planning a trip for 2009!



DID YOU know many owners are now taking advantage of the Pet Travel Scheme and taking their dogs and cats on holiday and to live in other countries with no need for a stay in quarantine on the way back?

Now is the time to start planning as it takes 7-8 months to fulfil the requirements of the scheme. Your pet will need to be **microchipped, vaccinated against rabies** and subsequently **blood tested** to prove that sufficient immunity has developed. You additionally need to allow six calendar months to elapse (from the date of the successful blood sample) before your pet can re-enter the UK under the scheme, and then only after certain **tick** and **tapeworm** treatments have been carried out and certified before arrival in the UK.

Please contact us for further information or advice – but don't delay!

Arthritis: is your pet affected?

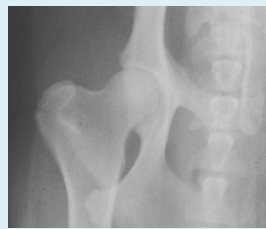


NORMAL joint function is something that most of us take for granted in our pets. However arthritis (or degenerative joint disease) is a relatively common problem, particularly in older pets.

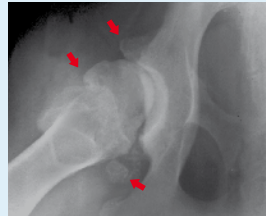
In the majority of cases arthritis occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints. Arthritis may also occur following joint trauma or due to malformation of the joint, for example hip dysplasia – see above right for x-rays.

The joints that are most susceptible to arthritis are those associated with limb movement; these joints are called synovial joints. The ends of the bones which meet at these joints are covered by very smooth articular cartilage. The joints are also lubricated with synovial fluid – allowing friction free movement.

Arthritic joints typically show progressive breakdown and thinning of the cartilage lin-



Normal hip joint



Arthritic hip joint in a dog with hip dysplasia. Secondary new bone (arrowed) can be seen around the joint

ing the ends of the bones and formation of secondary new bone around the joint. Affected joints usually appear stiff, swollen and painful. Typical signs include: difficulty in getting to their feet after rest, and (for dogs) problems getting in and out of cars and often a reluctance to go on walks.



Feeding a balanced healthy diet with regular exercise and active weight management can make a huge difference to your pets mobility

So what can be done?

Even those pets that are only mildly affected can benefit from treatment, and the most effective approach involves several factors. Weight loss alone can be effective for animals that are overweight; this along with a combination of regular gentle exercise and massage is also helpful. Special diets can help to slow the progression of the disease and food supplements containing glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate may help to reduce pain and inflammation.

Finally, many pets benefit from pain relief given by medication, and with a number of medicines available, we can choose the right one for your pet.

So, if you suspect that your pet may be suffering from arthritis, come and discuss this further – we can help you to help him!



Autumn Alert!

ONCE again, the shorter days and cooler weather signify the beginning of the Autumn months. However this time of year holds many potential hazards for our pets.

Despite the cooling weather, **fleas** unfortunately do not take holidays and are still a major problem at this time of year! So now is definitely NOT the time to lower your guard against these irritating tiny pests!

Harvest mites are another cause of irritation in later summer / early autumn. They are active in long grass and will swarm onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the eyelids, ears, feet and abdomen. They are easily identified as bright orange “dots” adhering to the skin, and are often the cause of great irritation.



Harvest mite (x 50)

As the weather cools down, **bees and wasps** become dozy and are easily caught by dogs and cats. Unfortunately they can still give nasty stings to your pets.

Antifreeze is also a potential hazard for many pets at this time of year. When getting the car ready for the winter, any spilled antifreeze should be cleared up promptly – it's very tasty but extremely toxic.

Remember also to keep pets indoors in the evenings to avoid **firework** injuries. Dogs with noise phobias may benefit from medication to help relieve anxiety associated with fireworks. Habituation to loud noises over a long period of time can also be helpful.

Finally, turning to **rabbits**, if you haven't had your rabbit **vaccinated** against **Myxomatosis** and **VHD** yet, act now! These usually fatal illnesses can easily strike in the Autumn.



Pet Insurance: are you covered?



YOU look after your pets and make sure they have regular health checks, vaccinations, appropriate diets, worming and flea control. But what about **pet insurance**?

It's a worrying fact that in an average year, one pet in three will require veterinary treatment for some form of illness or accident and with the cost of diagnosis and treatment

for a variety of conditions running into three and even four figures, pet insurance has never been more relevant. With appropriate pet insurance we can hopefully ensure that decisions regarding the best course of treatment for your pet can be made on the basis of **need** rather than **cost**. **Don't take any chances – get your pet insured today!**

Although we tend to think of traumatic **surgical** events



(such as a fractured leg), as the main reason for pet insurance, many **medical** conditions (such as skin infections, ear disease, kidney or heart disease – to name just a few!), can also be very costly to treat.



Ginger cat: Jane Burton