



# WHITE HORSE VETERINARY CLINIC

15 Curzon Street Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0DB

www.whitehorsevet.co.uk

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# NEWS

## Firework Fright!

AS firework night draws nearer, it's worth thinking about how to keep your pets safe and calm, as many of them are afraid of loud noises.



Keeping pets in the house during firework displays is obviously important, but being physically safe doesn't protect them from the fear

that many pets experience with the noise, flashes of light and vibrations. Don't forget that outdoor pets such as rabbits and hens should ideally be moved indoors or have their hutches covered.

Provide your pets with a 'den' to hide in such as behind a sofa. Put some bedding there and try not to disturb your pet when in its den.

On the night, try to avoid reassuring your pet excessively, as this can feed into their distress. It can help to shut the curtains, and play loud music to distract your pet.

Calming pheromones can also be very helpful. These are scents that your pet can smell (but you can't), and help pets to feel calmer and less stressed. Adaptil® for dogs and



Feliway® for cats are supplied as diffusers and should be plugged in 2-3 weeks before the event, preferably near your pet's den. We can also prescribe medicines that calm or sedate pets and help to reduce anxiety.

A longer term approach for noise phobia involves ongoing treatment and training that aims to make pets less noise sensitive, gradually getting them used to loud noises.

As you can see, there are a number of things you can do to help your pets, so talk to us now to find out how you can be prepared!

## Worms – wriggle your way out of this one!



IT just makes you squirm thinking about it, doesn't it? However, the fact of the matter is that throughout their lives, dogs and cats will come into contact with a number of different types of worms which can cause a range of diseases. Regular de-worming is the *only way* to prevent them from suffering from these parasites.

Roundworms and tapeworms inhabit your pet's intestines, interfering with food absorption and may also be a cause of gut inflammation, weight loss and diarrhoea.

**Roundworms** are spaghetti like in appearance, living in the small intestines. Adult roundworms shed thousands of tiny eggs which pass out in the faeces and contaminate gardens, parks and walkways. Dogs and cats can become re-infected by inadvertently eating the eggs – often whilst licking their paws and grooming.

**Tapeworms** also live in the intestines of dogs and cats and shed small *mobile* segments which pass out in the faeces and can also be found around the tail area. As the segments break down they release eggs into the environment. These eggs may be eaten by *intermediate hosts* – these include **fleas** and **small rodents**. This is why cats that catch a lot of mice



will commonly be infected by tapeworms. Similarly pets swallow fleas as they groom themselves, and in doing so, unwittingly re-infect themselves with tapeworms.

**Lungworm** caused by *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, is a recent immigrant to the UK and Ireland and is becoming more and more widespread. It only infects dogs and can cause problems ranging from heart failure to blood loss in affected dogs. It is also spread by *intermediate hosts* – in this case **slugs and snails**, so dogs that play with molluscs are particularly at risk.



Lungworm: slugs and snails act as intermediate hosts

Happily worms can be controlled by following a few simple steps – **worm your pets regularly**, use **regular flea control**, try to **prevent dogs eating slugs and snails** and **clear up faeces**. Please ask us to advise you on the most effective parasite control regime for your pet!

### Puppies and Kittens

It is very important to treat puppies and kittens for **roundworms**, since they are often heavily infested with roundworms, ingesting roundworm larvae via their mother's milk.



**Typical Roundworms** – in this case *Toxocara canis*.



**Tapeworm segments** – e.g. *Taenia taeniaeformis*



**Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm**

Lungworm photo courtesy Bayer. Kitten photo: Jane Burton.

## Are your pet's vaccinations up to date?

WITH recent alarming outbreaks of infectious diseases in unvaccinated pets, the importance of vaccinations in dogs and cats can't be over-emphasised! With vaccination we are able to protect pets against a range of infectious diseases (such as *feline enteritis virus* in cats and *parvovirus* in dogs) that, without vaccination, can pose a deadly threat.

An initial course of injections for puppies and kittens should offer good protection in the first year of life, but this immunity will gradually fade over time and **regular booster vaccinations** are required. At the same time as the vaccination visit we also like to give your pet a full **health check**, allowing us to pick up other health problems (e.g. dental disease) at an early stage.

Don't take any risks with your pet's wellbeing – keep them healthy with regular vaccinations and health checks!



Photo: Jane Burton

For further information on any of the topics covered in this newsletter, please contact your local surgery



## Autumn Alarm!

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!

**Ticks** are particularly active in the Autumn months, living in long grass and woodland areas. Ticks clamber onto passing pets, firmly attaching themselves and feeding on their blood. Worse still they can also spread a range of diseases such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis.

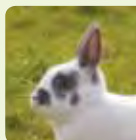
**Harvest mites** are active in long grass at this time of year, swarming onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and the underside of the abdomen. They are easily identified as bright orange dots adhering tightly to the skin and are usually a cause of great irritation.

Routine car maintenance at this time of year involves checking anti-freeze levels. Be aware that

**antifreeze** (containing ethylene glycol) is extremely palatable to pets and they will try to drink it if it is left around or accidentally spilt, resulting in kidney failure and often death.

Another hazard to avoid is dogs eating **autumn fruits** and developing digestive problems; do prevent access to fallen apples, conkers and the like.

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.



## Meal deal! Choosing the ideal diet for your pet!

DID you know that what you feed your pet can have a direct influence on his or her overall health? As our pets develop from kittens and puppies, into adulthood and eventually old age, so their dietary needs change. A huge amount of research has resulted in the concept of **life-stage diets** – with distinct diets for pets of different ages (or life-stages).

**Puppies and kittens**, because of their rapid rate of growth need much higher energy levels, together with higher levels of protein, fat and minerals for the healthy growth of muscles and bones. The large and giant breeds require their own specially formulated puppy foods.

**Adult pets**: At physical maturity (which depends on breed and size), pets should move onto adult foods designed to suit the needs of active pets in the prime of their lives, maintaining a healthy physique, and keeping the digestive system, the skin and the immune system healthy.

In **Older pets** specially formulated senior foods are ideal. These typically contain lower calorie levels and higher fibre, for the more sedentary pet, together with reduced levels of salts and carefully selected proteins to help the vital organs to remain healthy.

In summary, life-stage diets can make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of pets. If you would like any further information on the ideal diet for your pet – please just ask!



## Fact File: Arthritis - is your pet affected?



NORMAL joint function is something that most of us take for granted. However did you know that arthritis is a relatively common problem, particularly in older pets?

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 and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid. The joint acts as a shock absorber between the bones and provides a low friction surface.

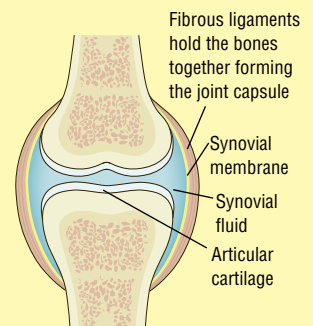
**Arthritic joints** typically show a progressive breakdown and thinning of the articular cartilage. As the cartilage wears, so pets suffer from pain and inflammation of the joint. Affected joints commonly appear stiff, swollen and painful. Pets may show signs of lameness, stiffness, difficulty in rising and problems negotiating steps. They may also become slower and less active.



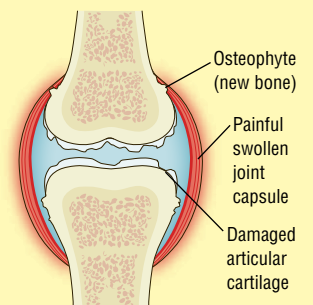
In the majority of cases, arthritis occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints. Arthritis may also occur following joint trauma or as a consequence of joint malformation (for example hip dysplasia).

*So what can be done?* Although arthritis cannot usually be cured, even those pets that are only mildly affected can benefit from treatment, and the most effective approach involves several factors. **Weight loss** can make a massive difference for pets carrying a few extra pounds and in conjunction with this, **regular exercise** (including swimming or hydrotherapy) is also helpful. Many pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory pain relief medication** and food supplements containing **glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate**. So – if you think your pet may be showing any signs of arthritis, please contact us for an appointment and lets make a start on getting the spring back into his step!

### Joint Anatomy



Healthy synovial joint with smooth articular cartilage



Arthritic synovial joint with damaged articular cartilage