



SUMMER 2010

Your Vet

FREE!
Please
take one



Blakehurst Veterinary Hospital

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Our Vets:

DR HAMISH BATHGATE

BVSc GCM(VP)
Special Interests: Surgery, medicine, oncology

DR KATHY MEPSTEAD

BVSc(Hons)
Special Interests: Dermatology, immunology, nutrition

Our Nurses:

Kym, Dee and Jana

Are eager to help you with your appointments, food supplies, flea control and any other questions you may have about the care and welfare of your pet..

Hospital Hours:

We can be contacted between 8.00am and 6.30pm weekdays and between 8.30am and 12.30pm on Saturdays.

After Hours:

Jana is our after hours nurse who lives onsite and cares for our intensive care patients outside of regular operating hours. Jana is in her second year of a Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Bioscience at Sydney University.

For emergencies at night, on weekends and public holidays, please contact the Animal Referral Hospital on 9758 8666. If you forget the number a recorded message on our number will direct you.

Overheating Pets

Every summer dogs in every part of Australia die after being left in hot cars, but 'dogs-in-cars' is not the only way for your pet to suffer from this potentially fatal problem.

To cool off, dogs need to pant, and only sweat a little through their paws. Effective cooling relies on the air around them being cooler than their own temperature, and also on the environment being a little dry. High humidity will make it harder for them to cool off.



Common causes of heatstroke in dogs are either that the dog's internal body temperature gets WAY too high (an example is when severe seizures occur or the pet over-exercises), the external temperature is too high and the dog cannot seek shade (dogs-in-cars), or when there is no access to water and shade on a very hot day.

Rabbits and guinea pigs are extremely sensitive to heat, and can die just lying in their cages on a warmer than usual day. Cats are far too sensible to let themselves get hot via over-exercise, but are just as susceptible as dogs if forced to be in a hot circumstance with no escape.

'Over-exercise' can occur without an owner being aware that it is even too warm. A dog running alongside a bicycle cannot cool from the wind effects on its skin. The owner can, and thus perceives it to be cooler than it really is. The dog runs in enjoyment and to keep up, and in cases, within minutes may experience raised core temperatures. Likewise, the frantically ball-chasing dog, that will NOT give up playing, can overheat to the point of death without the owner even raising a sweat.

As a guideline, in the warmer months, avoid leaving pets in cars at all, avoid heavy exercise (in long nosed dogs) or ANY exercise (in squat faced breeds) except in the cool of the morning and very late evening, and ensure that pets can access shade and water at all times in the garden. If you have a guinea pig or rabbit, providing them with a frozen water bottle to lie against on days warmer than high 20s, can make a big difference to their core body temperature.

Competition for our readers!

Be in the running to **WIN** a \$50 shopping voucher

1) Just answer the following question:
Which article did you like best in this issue of Your Vet?

.....
.....

2) Tick the box next to your preferred voucher below:

- Coles Myer Ltd
- Target Australia Ltd
- K Mart Australia Ltd
- Angus & Robertson Book Stores
- JB Hi Fi

3) Post with your name and address on the back of the envelope to:

Your Vet Voucher Competition
Unit 5/1 Almondbury Road
Mt Lawley WA 6050

Must be received by latest post marked 28/02/2011 to be in the running

The winner of the competition in Your Vet's Spring edition was K. Austen.

**THAT'S IT!
GOOD LUCK!**



READERS!
Enter our competition and **WIN!**
Details above

- Holistic veterinary medicine
- Training motivation
- Flea fighting tips

inside



Symptoms of disease

Snail Pellet Toxicity

Most gardeners will, at one time or another, have used snail pellets to combat snails and slugs, but the sad fact is that the most popular brands (usually blue or green in colour), are toxic to pets if ingested in almost any quantity.



Baits that are advertised as having a 'bitting' agent in them rarely deter dogs that eat quickly, as they don't register the flavour until it is too late. These pellets are often cereal based (to attract the snails) which unfortunately also attracts the dogs.

Some dogs never survive to be presented to a veterinarian, especially if their owners are not home to notice their clinical signs, and vets believe that many pets die at home.

Clinical signs may range in severity from trembling and muscle twitches with drooling, to full loss of consciousness, major seizures, and overheating leading to major internal organ damage, brain death and internal bleeding. Ultimately, if left untreated, the pet will die of either respiratory failure, overheating or of organ failure.

Treatment varies depending on the amount of bait ingested, and the severity of clinical signs.

Treating a minor snail pellet intoxication may cost in the region of \$300 – \$400, but badly affected pets, possibly requiring transfer to a critical care facility, can cost in the region of \$1 500 – \$2 000 or even more.

All pets that have ingested snail baits should be prevented from future access to baits, as the taste can be addictive!

When it comes to snail pellets, the best prevention is not to use them. A product that is iron based can be used, but if ingested in large volumes by pets, this can cause severe gastrointestinal symptoms, very occasionally fatally. Where possible, chickens and ducks are a great natural snail killer, and are a really natural recycling tool as well, just make sure the dog is locked up while they are doing their job!

Care at Christmas

A festive home contains a myriad of pitfalls for your dog and cat.

Twiddly, long ribbon around presents and dangly tinsel is irresistible to pups and kittens and may be accidentally ingested when they chew on them. Once ingested it moves through the gut and can concertina up loops of bowel and cause an obstruction.



Batteries from the electronic presents are strangely appealing to some animals who will chew them. Most batteries contain strong acids or strong alkalis which are released when the casing is chewed. These cause chemical burns to the mouth, tongue and oesophagus. Occasionally a battery is ingested and although a blockage could occur most are passed though the intestinal tract, hopefully without releasing their irritant contents.

Many festive food stuffs are toxic to animals. Chocolate contains a stimulant called *theobromine* that causes a range of symptoms from vomiting, thirst, restlessness and incontinence to convulsions and death. The theobromine concentration is proportional to the amount of cocoa solids in the chocolate. Thus dark chocolate and cocoa powder contains high levels of theobromine and is much more toxic than milk chocolate.

Raisins, sultanas and grapes, if ingested in large amounts, can result in kidney failure whilst onions can cause a form of anaemia. Cooked ham bones and turkey carcasses can cause gastrointestinal upsets. The softer cooked bones can be ingested in larger chunks and cause an obstruction. The fat content of the bone's marrow can cause *pancreatitis* – a painful inflammatory condition of the pancreas causing severe vomiting and dehydration.

With care, all these conditions are preventable – so have a fun but safe Christmas.

Training Motivation

All dogs should have some training. Training helps the owner and pet to bond, it provides stimulation and enrichment and makes the dog an acceptable member of the community. There are many training techniques and opinions on the best way to train a dog but most will agree that dogs train better when motivated with a positive reward. The type of training motivator used will depend on the personality of the dog and the opinions of the trainer. Food is a strong motivator for most dogs especially as puppies but there are some non-food orientated dogs who find patting, praise or bouncy play with a special toy much more appealing than a piece of dried liver.

When using food as a reward, less is more. A whole sausage may be an appealing motivational tool but you won't get many tricks out of your dog before they are full and food no longer has an effect.



Use tiny pieces of food so that the dog is looking for more and vary the food on offer to help keep their interest.

Food rewards must always be accompanied by verbal praise or a pat and eventually this may be all the reward that is required. Once the basics of training have been established, food rewards should only be given intermittently – this has been shown to be a much more powerful motivator than continuous rewards. If a dog doesn't know when it will next get a treat, it seems to work just that little bit harder.



Treat my pet!

Holistic Veterinary Medicine

Many pet owners are becoming interested in more holistic ways to treat their pets. Some veterinarians embrace these methods, while those who don't often maintain an open mind about these practices.

A popular form of holistic veterinary medicine is acupuncture, and cats, dogs, horses and exotic pets are all potential candidates for this treatment. Practitioners in Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine use acupuncture for a large variety of medical problems and diseases including behavioural disorders, some forms of cardiovascular problems, such as cardiac arrhythmias, chronic coughing, some ocular disorders, dental pain, and chronic ear problems.



The disease that many vets accept acupuncture for is musculoskeletal disease such as arthritis. Some also feel that some neurological disorders including paresis, paralysis, and balance disorders may be resolved more quickly when acupuncture is added to the animal's western biomedical protocol. Happily, most companion animals readily accept acupuncture treatment, which, just like in humans, uses tiny sterile disposable metal needles.

Another treatment modality that is gradually gaining wider acceptance in the veterinary community is herbal medicine.

Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine is a 3,600 year old medical science that uses either single herbs or herbal formulas that act as drugs or nutrients in the patient's body. Part of the training for a competent veterinary herbal practitioner is to know which herbs may be a problem in some species or when given concurrently with certain western medical drugs.

Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine practitioners use herbal medicine for a large variety of medical problems and diseases

including behavioural disorders such as fear, anxiety, depression and anger.

Herbal medicines are sometimes used instead of antibiotics and practitioners in this field believe they benefit a large variety of gastrointestinal disorders including inappetence, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation or bloating.

As with any form of medical intervention, herbs should only be used after a competent veterinary practitioner has made an accurate diagnosis for your companion animal.

Traditional Chinese forms of veterinary medicine are still considered alternative by many veterinarians, but increasing numbers of vets believe that they can be used in a way that is complementary to western medicine. Even those who don't actively recommend these modalities would agree that the only appropriate person to offer or recommend these treatments is a veterinarian trained in alternative medicine, not a lay-person offering them.

Flea Fighting Tips

1. Treat all cats and dogs in the household – monthly spot on treatments, that kill adult fleas and sterilise life-cycle stages, work well for most households.
2. In severe infestations, initial use of surface sprays and foggers will help with elimination of life-cycle stages.
3. Wash your pet's bedding regularly in at least a 60°C cycle.
4. Air your pet's bed in the sun regularly.
5. Vacuum regularly – the vibrations encourage life-cycle stages to emerge.
6. Steam clean where possible and try to get life-cycle stages out of cracks and crevices.
7. Wall off hard to access areas in the garden (such as under the house or thick shrubbery) where life-cycle stages may lay dormant.
8. Choose your pet's friends carefully – don't allow animals with fleas onto your property.

Flea Facts Quiz

The warmth of summer enables fleas to complete their reproductive cycle at a faster rate, often resulting in a population explosion. How much do you know about these pesky parasites?

1. True or False:
The life cycle of a flea is just like a butterfly:
Adult, Egg, Larvae, Pupae, Adult
2. How long does it take for a flea egg to develop into an adult flea?
(a) 20 days
(b) 100 days
(c) 325 days
(d) All of the above
3. How many eggs may a female flea lay on your pet each day?
(a) 1
(b) 10
(c) 40
(d) 100
4. True or False:
The most likely way for your pet to catch fleas is from another animal.
5. True or False:
When treating for fleas you just need to get rid of the fleas on the animal.

Answers:

1. True. Eggs are laid on the pet and roll off into the environment to hatch into a larvae. The larvae can move a small distance in search of a dark, humid place where they spin a cocoon. After a variable period of lying dormant the young adult flea emerges from the cocoon.
2. (d) All of the above. The length of the flea life-cycle will depend on the temperature and the presence of a food source (your pet's blood!).
3. (c) 40
4. False. A contaminated environment is the most likely place for your pet to pick up fleas.
5. False. The fleas on the animal only make up about 5% of the total flea life-cycle population, the remaining 95% being in the environment. To have excellent flea control, use an integrated program which gets rid of environmental life-cycle stages as well as using products on the pet which kill and sterilise fleas.



Emergency! Nasty bug-bites!

In an allergic animal, a sting from the wrong insect can mean death. Insects that can cause fatal reactions can be as obvious as a bee or a wasp, or as surprising as a furry caterpillar.

Victims of mild reactions develop puffiness, swelling and irritation in the region near the sting. In dogs this is usually the paw, lips or the nose. Often the swelling will proceed beyond the initial bite region to include the eyes or the whole face. This is called *angioedema* and can be life threatening if it occurs in the throat region or in the nasal tissue, due to its interference with breathing.



More serious cases of this syndrome develop a condition known as *anaphylactic shock*. This causes a drastic drop in blood pressure. The walls of blood vessels are affected, causing leakage of fluid from the blood space. This combination of processes may lead to signs such as vomiting, collapse, coma and possible death in dogs or collapse, breathing disorders and death in cats.

Treatment of mild cases of allergic reaction includes the use of injected antihistamines to help regulate the symptoms in the short term, and decrease further release of histamine from cells. A corticosteroid is often used, to help prevent against any delayed response to the insult. Treatment of severe cases of anaphylactic shock may include injectable adrenalin, aggressive fluid therapy, oxygen support or CPR in the case of respiratory or cardiac arrest.

Animals that have had one event may be primed to have a more serious reaction if stung or bitten by the same species. Some veterinarians will even prescribe an 'epipen' which is an injectable adrenalin product, similar to that which children may carry if suffering from severe food allergies. If your vet prescribes one of these, they will demonstrate its safe use.

Summer sun on your dog's tum

Unlike their feline counterparts who sun bake with faces into the sun, dogs prefer to sprawl out flat and expose their bellies to the warmth. This explains the increased incidence of sun-related skin disease and cancers found on the underside of dogs. It is a particular problem in white dogs and dogs with non-pigmented areas on their abdomens.

To protect at-risk dogs, make sure they have access to shade and try to keep them out of the sun from 10 am to 3 pm. Hypoallergenic sun creams can be used on the abdomen but the dog must be distracted with food or a walk immediately after application to stop them licking it off! Specialist sun suits can be tailor made to fit your dog with holes left in all the appropriate areas to allow for toileting.

The cat's whiskers

If you get up close and personal with your cat you will notice an assortment of whiskers on their eyebrows, cheeks, chin and the back of the wrist or carpus. These are tactile hairs that allow the cat to "feel" their way through their environment. The follicles of these specialised thick hairs are situated deep in the skin and contain nerve endings and a tiny chamber of blood called a *venous sinus*.



When the tactile hairs brush against an object, a wave motion is created through the blood in the venous sinus. This amplifies the hairs' movement and helps stimulate the nerve endings. The cat then uses this information to help it slink through narrow alley ways and stalk its prey quietly. Tactile hairs are shed just like other hairs and can become brittle and break off easily in response to stress and disease.

Practice Update

Cupcake Day update

I'm thrilled to announce that on Cupcake Day we raised around \$250 for the RSPCA. Thank you to everyone who bought a cupcake and to Kym for volunteering her time to make the day a success.

Some summertime tips

Now that the warmer months are here, please be extra diligent in checking that your pet's water bowl is full daily - you may want to have two in case one gets knocked over.

Also, make sure your pet has access to shade and avoid walking your dog in the heat of the day. If you feel your long-haired pet is suffering from the heat, we can help by giving them a shave. It won't be a designer do, but it will do the job.

Finally, if you're the proud owner of a new dog this summer, we can help get them off on the right paw with training and socialisation in our puppy pre-schools. Classes are run regularly so if you're interested, Kym or Dee can fill you in on how to get started.

Take care of each other and have fun this summer.

Hamish