

smalltalk

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

AUTUMN 2016

Heart disease

in dogs and cats

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How to deal with the loss of a beloved pet





Effective Communication

An important part of XLVets customer satisfaction

The **train the trainer** course is a LANTRA approved course that XLVets member staff have access to.

I recently attended this course and the overall objectives are:

- Planning effective training
- Understanding how adults learn
- Communication tools that are available; what's available and what works best
- Knowing which training style should be used in different circumstances
- Practical tools for assessment

The course covers a wide variety of tools and techniques to help vets and nurses communicate during consulting and at client events. The course looks into how adults have different learning styles which shows

how we view and manage information differently. This helps vets and nurses to share information effectively with their clients and ensures clients can understand and retain the information.

Questioning is key in consulting as we need to be able to ascertain the problem with the pet, this can be done by using different types of questions. In the course you learn about open and closed questions. Open questions are helpful in getting information as they cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Closed questions are useful to confirm, check and summarise after a series of open questions. Being able to use questions in the best way will help the vet or nurse and the client understand what is going on.

During the course they put a lot of emphasis on why it's important to explain what you mean and why it is important to the client, which during consults ensures the client understands the benefit to them and their pet.

Vets and nurses are often asked to show how to do something such as clean a pet's ears, the course helps in how we go about doing this to give the client the best learning experience so they feel confident and able to do the task at home.

Overall the course provides valuable information that vets and nurses can use to improve communication with their clients leading to a better service and customer satisfaction.



Helen Knott RVN
Severn Edge Veterinary Group

Feline

Lower Urinary Tract Disease

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is a syndrome which is regularly presented to vets. It can be very frustrating for vets and owners alike, as repeated consultations often involve lengthy investigations.

The outcome in the majority of cases will be idiopathic, meaning 'of unknown cause'. Pedigree cats and male neutered cats are more susceptible. Any age cat can be affected, but there seems to be more of a tendency in overweight or indoor cats, and those in multi cat households.

Clinical signs may include difficulty urinating, increased frequency of urination and blood in the urine. The bladder has a protective barrier, and it is thought that some cats have less of this, which means that neurotoxins are more likely to pass through, causing inflammation. Stress plays a very big part in this.

Urolithiasis, or stone formation, is another cause of FLUTD. Stones can form anywhere along the urinary tract, although most commonly in the bladder. Better diets have reduced the likelihood of certain stones forming, but a type that requires surgical removal, called oxalate, is still prevalent. Plugs of mineral can also form in the urethra, especially in neutered male cats, and these cases are often life threatening, with the cat being completely unable to urinate, resulting in the rapid onset of kidney failure, then possible death.

The vet will need to make a swift diagnosis and this will often require x- rays or an ultrasound scan, as well as blood sampling to check for kidney damage, and urine sampling to look for evidence of stones or crystal fragments.

Treatment depends on the cause of the FLUTD. If there are uroliths present, the correct diet will need to be instigated and surgical removal of the stones may even be required.


The majority of cases are idiopathic, and so attempts to identify an underlying cause is paramount. If stress is a factor, then finding the cause is essential. There are many nutraceuticals that can combat stress, but simple measures like ensuring that every cat in the household has its own litter tray, as well as minimising the number of cats in the household can have a huge effect.

Analgesics are essential, and many cats require these long term. Anti-spasmodic drugs are used where necessary.

FLUTD needs to be managed correctly right from the start, and where possible, removing possible trigger factors would be the aim.

By Charlotte Matthews
BVet Med MRCVS
Belmont Vets





by Andrew Carpenter BVSc, MRCVS
Kingfisher Veterinary Practice

Diabetes

Spontaneous Remission of Diabetes in a Cat



“About 20% of cats have been reported to go into spontaneous remission after insulin treatment is initiated.”

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a fairly common disease in dogs and cats, characterised by a lack of insulin, which leads to persistently high sugar levels in the bloodstream. In the early stages excessive drinking and weight loss are common. But, if left untreated more severe consequences can occur including blindness and kidney disease, and in some situations can have life-threatening complications.

Diabetes is treatable, and most animals do very well on long-term treatment.

Remission of Diabetes

Spontaneous remission of diabetes mellitus is a unique feature of the condition in cats. About 20% of cats have been reported to go into spontaneous remission after insulin treatment is initiated.

The carbohydrate content of the diet is believed to be a factor in this, and in the case of this cat the adoption of a low carbohydrate diet from a very early stage may have contributed to the subsequent remission of the condition.

Case Study

Ozzy, now 11 years old, is a domestic short-haired cat who was first diagnosed with diabetes mellitus in 2014 after his owner noticed that his appetite and drinking had increased, together with sudden weight loss.

Primary blood tests showed high blood glucose, indicating diabetes, and a further test showed that his blood glucose levels had remained persistently high for a prolonged period, confirming the condition.

Ozzy's owner was keen to do everything for him, and started him on Insulin injections as well as starting a low carbohydrate diet recommended by us. By reducing the carbohydrate level in the diet we can reduce the dependence on Insulin, usually meaning that lower doses can be used. In addition, diabetes is usually better controlled because glucose levels fluctuate less.

Over a period of weeks, Ozzy's insulin dose was adjusted until his diabetes

was well controlled. In his case he was receiving 4 units twice daily of Insulin, a low dose for a cat of his size (Ozzy is a big cat!).

About 4 months later, Ozzy's owner noticed that he seemed quite quiet during the afternoon. Tests showed that his blood glucose was now slightly low, and over a period of weeks his Insulin was gradually stopped again.

Further tests over the next year and a half leading up to now have confirmed that Ozzy is no longer diabetic.

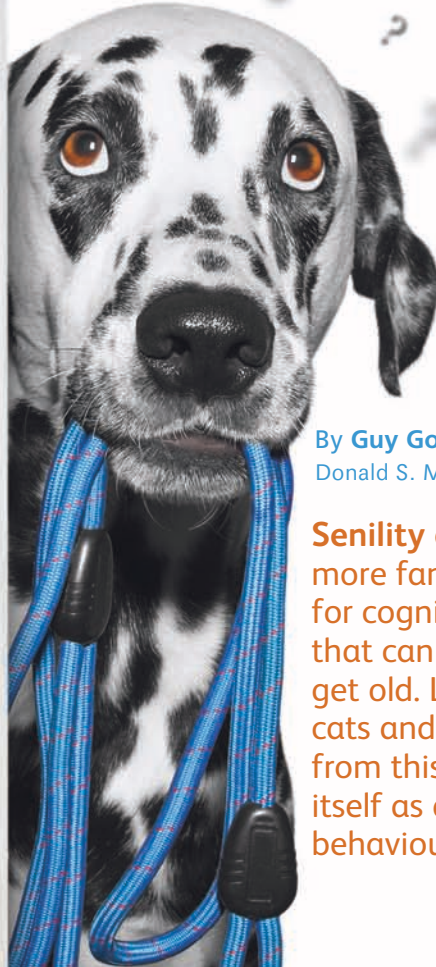
His owner has kept him on the low carbohydrate diet to reduce the chance of the condition recurring.



Conclusion

Diabetes is common in both dogs and cats, and you should always consider getting your animal tested if there are obvious increases to his or her drinking, usually together with weight loss. It is a treatable condition although regular testing is required to keep diabetic animals healthy. In both dogs and cats special diets, which are reduced in carbohydrates, can greatly improve the control of the condition. In cats, the condition can sometimes resolve completely. Although it is not fully understood why this occurs, low carbohydrate diets are likely to be a factor and it is always worth looking at dietary changes for diabetic pets, which your vet can advise you on.

Sen?le behaviour



By **Guy Gordon BVM&S MRCVS**
Donald S. McGregor & Partners Ltd

Senility or dementia are more familiar terms used for cognitive dysfunction that can occur as brains get old. Like humans, cats and dogs can suffer from this too. It shows itself as a change in behaviour or personality.

Animals may display one or more of the following signs:

- **Disorientation** (put down to memory loss) - this could result in anxiety or aimless wandering.
- **Decreased or increased activity levels**, or possibly repetitive activities such as pacing.
- **Altered interaction** with owners and other pets, perhaps reduced recognition.
- **Excessive vocalising** (common in cats).
- **Sleep pattern disturbance** (waking, vocalising at night, wandering).
- **Urinating and defecating** in inappropriate places.
- **Reduced appetite**
- **Various other behaviours** from aggression to phobias or separation anxiety.

Many conditions other than cognitive dysfunction could cause or contribute to the above listed signs. Various medical disorders in older animals can affect brain function or demeanour and primary behavioural disorders can occur at any age. For these reasons, if you think your pet is suffering from senility, it is important to seek veterinary advice; there may be a condition present that when treated may fully or partially resolve the signs being displayed.

Not all animals will show signs of brain ageing but a large proportion of pets over 10 years of age will display at least one sign. The changes are caused by processes such as brain tissue degeneration, blood flow changes and free-radical (oxidative) damage.

It is possible to ward off or, once present, reduce the signs of senile behaviour.

Diet plays a role. Many substances have been shown or suspected to improve brain function, these include the antioxidant vitamin E as well as B vitamins and omega-3-fatty acids; there are many others. A special proprietary veterinary diet can be considered which is supplemented appropriately.

Environmental enrichment is important. This means keeping your pet's brain active and stimulated. For both dogs and cats this can involve getting out and about, physical exercise, interacting socially with other

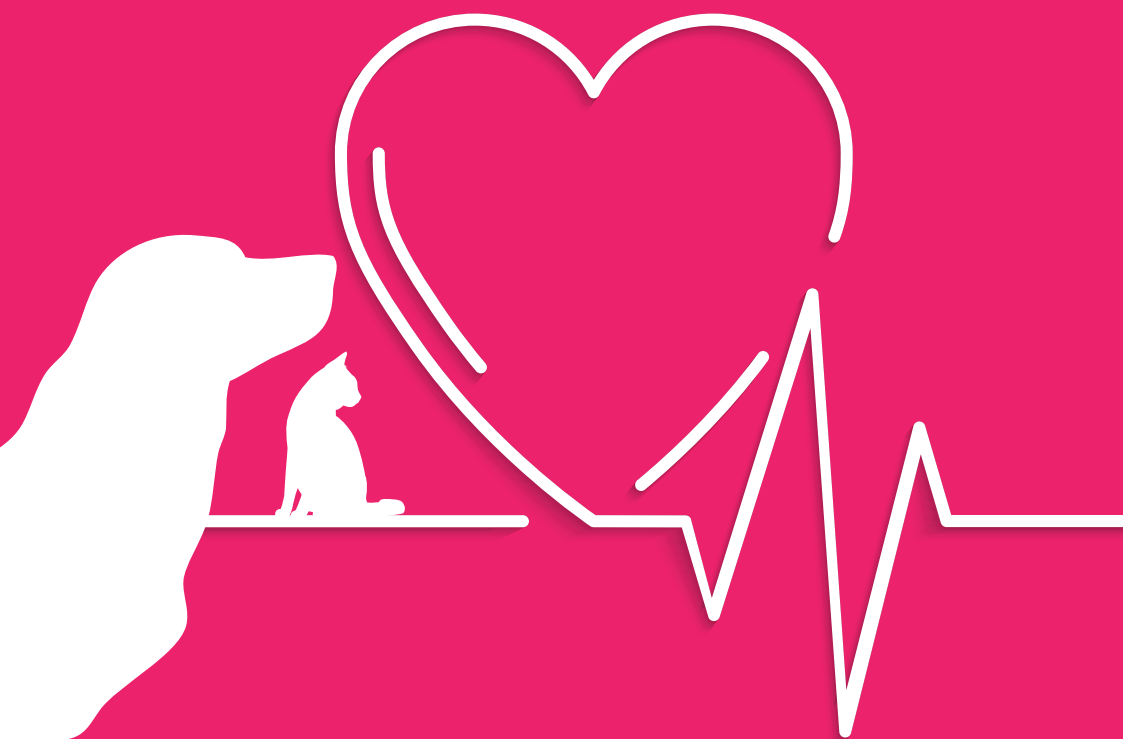
animals or humans, playing games, even deliberately creating activities where a pet is forced to use its brain by searching or working for a food reward. It may be that treating other old age conditions (such as arthritis) will facilitate these activities - speak to your vet. However, note that for pets affected by advanced dementia too much change can cause anxiety, so keep the surroundings, routines and feeding times constant.

Medications: Environmental pheromones can help reduce anxiety. There are also some medicines that can help improve cognitive function but these must be prescribed after a veterinary examination and assessment.

Sources:

vettimes.co.uk April 21, 2014. Daniëlle Gunn-Moore 'Dementia in Geriatric Cats'. Veterinary Internal Medicine Seventh Ed. Ettinger & Feldman. Chapter 60.





Heart disease

in dogs and cats

How does the heart work?

The heart is a muscle which pumps blood around the body. It contracts to pump blood out from the heart, to the lungs, to collect oxygen for delivery to the rest of the tissues within the body. There are valves within the heart that ensure the blood moves in the correct direction.

What is heart disease?

There are several conditions which make the heart work less efficiently. The most common can be divided into the following 2 groups:

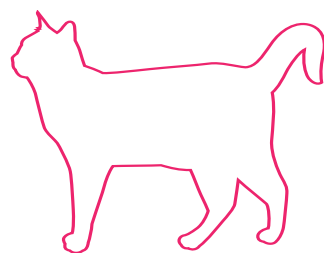
- **Disease** of the heart muscle, causing it to beat less effectively.
- **Disease** of the heart valves, causing them to leak.

Commonly in practice, small breed dogs are more likely to develop leaky heart valves due to degenerative changes. Whilst cats and large breeds of dogs are more likely to develop disease of the heart muscle (i.e. muscle dysfunction).

Heart disease in animals can further be described as either congenital (they are born with it) or acquired (develops due to an underlying cause). Congenital disease is more commonly seen in younger animals; whereas acquired heart disease is generally seen in older animals.

Acquired heart disease can be caused by trauma, infection or degeneration. You may also hear your vet talking about congestive heart failure. This term means that the diseased heart begins to lose its ability to pump enough blood to meet the needs of the body.

Some animals can have very mild heart disease and are able to live their whole lives without any symptoms.



What happens next?

Heart disease is often diagnosed with radiographs (x-rays), electrocardiogram (ECG), echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart), as well as a thorough clinical examination by your vet.

Treatment options for heart disease very much depend on the diagnosis. There are many treatments available which each focus on the underlying cause of the disease. It is important to tailor the treatment plan to the individual animal to give them the best quality of life possible.

Spotting the symptoms of heart disease:

- Coughing (especially at night), breathlessness or difficulty breathing
- Reluctance to exercise, lethargic
- Lack of appetite
- Gum colour is not the “normal” pink and may be white or even blue
- Swollen abdomen
- Collapse or hind-limb weakness

If your pet is showing any of these symptoms you should contact your vet without delay.



Dealing with **Pet** bereavement

By **David Crane, Marketing Manager** Willows Veterinary Group



Our pets can leave paw prints on our hearts when their time with us comes to an end and it is a normal response for owners to grieve their loss. However everyone deals with grief in a different way - there is not one standard response to losing a close companion.

Grieving is a complicated process which is made up of different stages of feelings and emotions. Alongside the loss and sadness you will feel after losing your pet you may also experience guilt, denial, anger or depression, or a combination of these feelings.

The important thing to remember is that it is okay for you to feel this way. Grieving is natural and by coming to terms with your feelings you may find that it will help you to work through the bereavement process.

Speaking to others who have endured similar losses and experienced similar emotions can be comforting, as you will be able to confide and talk to them about your loss without feeling embarrassed. Talking about your loss can often release feelings that you may be bottling up because you don't think other people will understand.

Experiencing the rollercoaster of emotions that you have can cause a negative impact on your health and lifestyle, so it is important to keep your mental and physical needs met, it is also important to try to maintain your daily routine, particularly if you have other animals to care for as they will pick up on this change and will also be dealing with the loss of their companion.



When you feel ready, creating a way to remember your pet can be a great aid to your emotional recovery. Some creative ideas can include; a painting, a poem/story, sewing a tapestry or making a scrapbook of your favourite memories shared with your pet. Other people find it comforting to plant a tree or a shrub in the garden to create a place to go and remember their pet.

The most important aspect to remember of this mourning process is that time is a great healer, there are no guidelines as to how long your grief will last but accepting that it is okay to feel the way you do will help you to move through the process more quickly.

There are a number of associations that can help with pet bereavement, such as the APLB - Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement.



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LATEST NEWS

Tick-borne disease

There is a general perception that the risk of tick-borne disease (diseases that are spread by ticks, eg Lyme's disease) is increasing.



To be able to quantify this risk various vets, medics and parasitologists are working together to be able to produce a best advice statement for doctors and vets. However, regardless of the risk, the basic advice remains the same: the best way to avoid tick-borne diseases is to treat your pet with an appropriate product that will kill or repel ticks. Speak to your veterinary practice for advice on what is most suitable for your pet.



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VACCINE

PET

WORMING

LABRADOR

L M G E P S O W D V
V A S N W I O G R A
I V B A I R O K A C
T F L R M T S E W C
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CLAWS

REWARD

PETTING

FEEDING