

smalltalk

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

SUMMER 2016

Atopic dermatitis

Living with skin conditions



Inside...

Kennel Cough

What is Kennel Cough and how is it spread?

Moving home

How to minimise stress for your pet

Parasites

Managing fleas and ticks that can cause disease



Travel Sickness
How to avoid this issue



**Excellence in
Veterinary Care**



Customer Excellence - a top priority for XLVet

XLVets member practices strive to provide continuing professional development for all their staff. Our Customer Excellence course caters for reception staff, nurses, pharmacists and vets - basically anyone in a customer facing role.

In this ever changing and more challenging veterinary environment we acknowledge that the customer experience should be a positive and memorable one. We want our clients to believe they get the best service possible, in an environment that really values them.

'We had 18 staff attend this course from Kingsway Vets, a mix of reception staff, vets and nurses. The one day course brought the team together and worked really well. The feedback has been extremely positive.' Says Susan Pearson, Kingsway Vets Practice manager.

'Our staff felt that the XLVets course was very beneficial, helping them to recognise any weaknesses and highlighting

areas for improvement, such as dealing with sensitive and difficult situations.

The trainer was enthusiastic and easy to listen to, and was able to draw staff in to participate fully and enjoy the experience. She was very informative and made staff feel confident that they were already doing a great job.'

Many members have been on one or more of the useful and informative courses run by XLVets, which provide continuing professional development across the practice. We invest in people by supporting and helping them to progress and achieve the customer excellence XLVets and their member practices strive for. This is always with the end goal in mind - the health and welfare of our patients.

Susan Pearson
Kingsway Veterinary Group

The learning outcomes from the course were;

- What customer service is all about
- What clients expect from us and how we can deliver to the best of our ability
- Face to face and remote communication and how to excel
- Adding value. Delivering more than the client expected every time
- Managing difficult and delicate situations



Kennel Cough

Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis

Does your dog have a dry honking cough followed by gagging or retching? You may think he is choking on something but he could in fact have kennel cough.

What is kennel cough and how is it spread?

Kennel cough is a collection of highly contagious infectious diseases that attack the respiratory tract of dogs, with *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and Canine Parainfluenza Virus being the main culprits. Dogs contract kennel cough by coming into direct contact with an aerosol of respiratory secretions from infected dogs. Dogs develop clinical signs usually 3-4 days after they have become exposed to infected dogs.

Kennel cough is commonly spread in dogs that are confined in high-density facilities with poor ventilation e.g. boarding kennels, animal

shelters, pet shops. Although they can contract it from any close contact with another dog - not necessarily in a kennel environment. These bugs can also be transmitted onto cages, toys, food and water bowls.

Clinical Signs

The clinical signs to look out for are forceful coughing, an inflamed trachea/ laryngitis, sneezing, and a clear nasal discharge. More severe cases may develop inappetance, lethargy, fever, a moist productive cough and pneumonia. If you suspect that your dog may have contracted kennel cough you must keep it away from other dogs and contact your vet. Most cases of kennel cough are self-limiting.

However, if symptoms persist your vet may treat with oral antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and anti-tussives.

Prevention

The best way to prevent kennel cough would be to vaccinate your dog annually with an intranasal vaccine. The vaccine, however cannot guarantee full protection due to the mixed population of bacteria and viruses that cause infection but it does reduce the severity. Most kennels would require your dog to be vaccinated against kennel cough before you put them into kennels.

Can people contract kennel cough?

Immunocompromised people and young children whose immune systems have not developed fully can contract kennel cough. Infection in healthy people is highly unlikely even after prolonged exposure.



Scratch below the surface

By Paul Sands BSc, BvetMed, CertVD, MRCVS Scarsdale Veterinary Group

Atopic dermatitis, or Atopy, is an allergic skin condition commonly seen in animals and people. At least 1 in 10 dogs in the UK are atopic and cats suffer from this condition too. Allergens (a substance which causes an allergy), are environmental and are commonly indoor (household) such as dust mites and storage mites. Outdoor allergens include pollens from grasses, trees or weeds.



Atopic dermatitis in dogs and cats



What signs might my pet show?

Skin and ear problems are commonly seen in affected pets. Signs may be seasonal initially, eg Spring but tend to be recurrent or long-lasting (chronic). Age of onset in dogs is anything from 6 months to 3 years of age though occasionally pets may be even younger when they show initial signs. Certain breeds are more commonly affected such as Labradors, Retrievers, terriers (especially Westies) and Boxers, so hereditary factors are important. Not all puppies or kittens from affected parents will show disease, as environmental and other factors can act as triggers for the condition.

How might atopy affect my pet?

The main signs you may notice in an affected pet are related to itching. Pets may lick, chew or scratch at affected areas and initially you may think your pet is just trying to clean the skin. However, with excessive trauma to these areas, you may notice staining of the hair from saliva (particularly in pale-coated individuals), loss of fur (alopecia) and possibly reddening of the skin (inflammation) which can lead

to infections. Eventually the skin may thicken and become darker (pigmentation) though this generally takes months to occur. Ear problems are commonly associated with atopic dermatitis hence, head shaking, ear flapping, scratching at the ear/s, holding the head to one side, and discomfort may all be due to atopy.

How can it be diagnosed?

As many conditions can mimic atopy, it is important that your vet is able to rule out other possible causes before making this diagnosis. With itching and inflammation of the skin being a major presentation, we need to ensure that the animal has no skin parasites. Fleas and mites are often invisible, so it is crucial to ensure that your pet and any in-contact dogs or cats in the household are treated with safe and effective parasite control products. Believe me, it is a fools game to proceed with tests and treatments for atopic disease until this step has been fully dealt with!

The second important 'rule-out' is skin infection. Many pets with itchy or inflamed skin and ears have secondary infections (bacteria or yeast) and again, failure to recognise

and treat these can lead to misdiagnosis or unnecessary tests and treatments. Your vet will be in the best position to look for the tell-tale signs of infection.

Sadly there is no single test to diagnose atopy. It is a diagnosis reached by combining careful history-taking with appropriate rule-outs, tests and treatments.

Is Atopic dermatitis curable?

In a word, NO! Allergies tend to be for life, although you may notice a waxing and waning of signs in your pet, over the seasons or years. The good news is that this frustrating condition can now be effectively managed and vets have a wide range of therapies available, including tablets, lotions, shampoos, sprays and other oral supplements which can effectively prevent or treat flare-ups in this disease. Despite the incurable nature of atopy, I can assure you that observant owners who work closely with their veterinary surgeon can really make a difference when it comes to maintaining a healthy, comfortable and itch-free pet.

Managing

FLEAS



and ticks

Fleas and ticks are external parasites which can cause disease and affect your pet's quality of life.

Fleas cause itchy bites on pets and their owners. Some pets may develop flea allergic dermatitis resulting in excessive scratching, skin infections and fur loss. A flea comb can be used to look for adult fleas or brown-black flea dirt in your pet's coat.

Unfortunately, fleas can enter our homes and multiply quickly, as a single adult flea can lay 2000 eggs, resulting in immature life-stages residing in carpets and soft furnishings. As a result, many pet owners find eliminating fleas a long and frustrating ordeal. It is vital to

choose effective products, apply them correctly and observe the correct dosing intervals. Regular vacuuming and washing bedding at high temperatures can help eliminate immature life stages in the environment alongside appropriate environmental products.

**By Rachael Baker BVMS
CertAVP (VetGP) MRCVS**
Bishopston Veterinary Group

Ticks attach to the skin and feed on the blood of their 'host' such as a wild mammal, bird, livestock, cat, dog or human. They are typically found in grassland, shrubs and low branches of trees waiting for their host to brush against them. The most common ticks in the UK are the sheep tick (*Ixodes ricinus*) and the hedgehog tick (*Ixodes hexagonus*). Whilst they are found year round, their numbers tend to increase between March and November. Experts agree that ticks are on the rise in the UK, as are serious tick-borne diseases such as Lyme Disease and Babesiosis. Owners travelling abroad with their pets should take particular care to ensure good tick control due to the increased prevalence of disease-transmitting ticks in warmer climates. If you suspect your pet has a tick do not attempt to burn, cut or pull the tick directly off - if you do so it is likely that the mouthparts of the tick will be left behind. Ticks are best removed using a specially designed tool - your local practice will be able to assist with this.

Fleas and ticks can be prevented by a variety of treatments including sprays, collars, tablets and spot-on treatments. There are many products available and



choosing the right one to suit your pet's needs and lifestyle can be confusing. It is important to consider whether a product kills or repels ticks, which flea life stages are treated, and whether the efficacy is affected by activities such as bathing or swimming. Your vet practice can advise

you of the most effective products for your pet, along with showing you how to apply them and advising you on dose frequency. An effective preventative approach will protect you and your pets from these unpleasant parasites and associated diseases.



By **Sadie Burton RVN**
St Boniface Veterinary Clinic

Moving House

Moving house can be a stressful experience not only for us, but for our pets too.

There are simple things we can do to help minimise the **stress**

Feliway and Adaptil

These synthetic pheromones can help provide your pet with a feeling of calmness and well-being. Available as a 'plug in' (similar to plug in air fresheners), plug in 24 hours before moving in, ideally in the room where your pet will spend most of their time. Also available in spray form - particularly useful during the car journey, this can be used on dog blankets or cat carriers.

Feliway may also help your cat cope with the stress associated with meeting new cats in the

neighbourhood and with that of builders and decorators in their new home.

Safe space

While furniture and belongings are being moved in, and doors and windows may be open, ensure pets are confined to one room where they have familiar bedding and toys. Cats will need a litter tray. Put a note on the door to warn family and removers that they are in there! If you feel your pet will be happier, consider boarding them in a cattery/kennels, or with a friend.

Identification

Once you and your pet are settled in, it is a good idea to walk your dog to allow them to become familiar with their new surroundings. As of 6th April 2016 all dogs must be microchipped so ensure you update your registration details. A collar and tag (with your new contact details) are also required if walking in public areas. We would also recommend that your cat is microchipped in case they should go missing.

Moving house

Routine

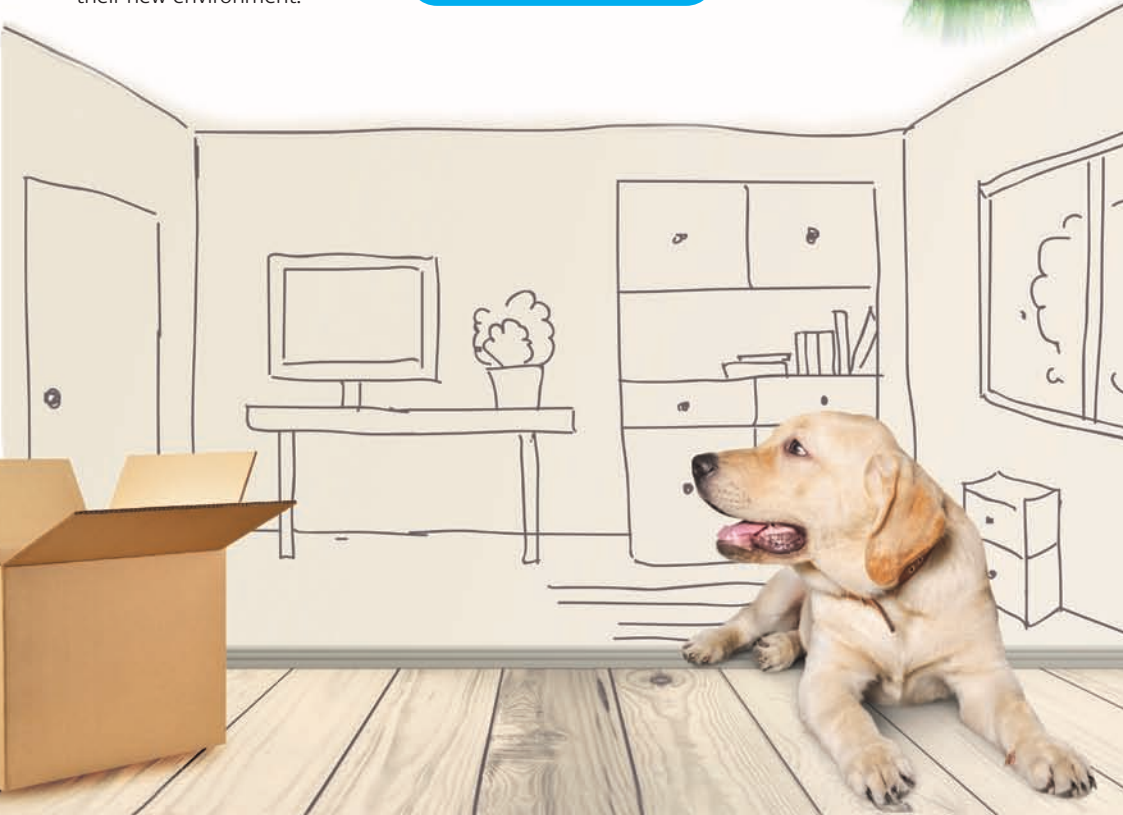
There is no set period of time to keep your cat indoors before letting them out for the first time (advice ranges from 24 hours - 2 weeks). However, do this when you are at home to supervise them and ensure they return home safely. Allow cats time to explore their new surroundings, don't rush them and keep routes back into the house open (doors/windows/cat flap). Letting cats out when they are hungry should encourage them to return home for their next meal!

Returning to your dog's normal routine as soon as possible will help them relax and settle into their new environment.

Register with a new vet and keep details updated

If you have moved out of your vets' catchment area you will need to register with a new vet before an emergency situation arises. Your new vet can then request your pets' history and set up reminders for vaccinations and flea/worm treatments.

Remember to also update your details with your pet insurance company as well as the national microchip databases.



Travel Sickness

By Ursula Bollmann BVSc, MRCVS Millcroft Veterinary Group

Many pups' first car journey coincides with leaving their mum and being a little frightened. Some pups can literally start worrying themselves sick. Once the pup associates car travel with the unpleasant sensations of nausea and vomiting, they become ever more worried about travelling and the end result can be a pup suffering from severe travel sickness.



So how do we help puppies and dogs that are prone to motion sickness?

Early training is important. Keep your puppy as calm as possible and start with short journeys.

After the initial vaccination course is completed, start taking the pup for a nice walk or play session at the end of car journeys, so that your puppy associates the car with a pleasant reward.

Here are some handy hints to avoid travel sickness occurring.

Plan ahead:

- Don't feed your dog just before travelling.
- Plan regular comfort breaks for long journeys.
- A bit of fresh air, stretching legs and a small drink of water will help maintain your pet's wellbeing while travelling.
- If possible, a good long walk before setting off can help tire your pet so that he is more likely to sleep.

During the journey:

- Open the windows a little to allow in fresh air.
- Avoid smoking or other strong odours in the car.

- Allow your pet to see out of the car. Some harnesses allow dogs to safely sit up on the back seat and face forward. Being unable to look out and focus on distant objects can trigger motion sickness.
- Sleeping dogs tend not to develop nausea, so a non-slip surface or comfy bed to sleep on when the dog gets tired can help them to relax and sleep.



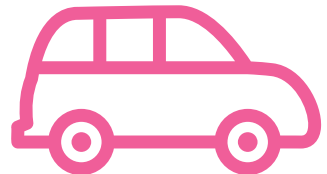
Longer term management:

- Older pups and dogs that have already developed travel sickness problems need behavioural modification, which really just means restarting the training process at a very slow pace.
- Allow your pet to sit or sleep in a comfy bed in the car without travelling anywhere.
- Perhaps offer a much loved toy or treat and lots of affection and praise.
- After 2 weeks, start the engine for a little while without going anywhere.
- After another 2 weeks, try a 2-3 minute journey and slowly build up your pet's confidence following the travel hints already discussed.



- A pleasant end destination will again be useful for positive reinforcement.
- Hopefully your patience will be rewarded with your animal companion enjoying journeys with you.

For the stubbornly travel sick case, the above advice should still be followed, but medication can be added in. Mild sedatives and antihistamines can reduce the symptoms of travel sickness by reducing anxiety and causing drowsiness, which will help the pet sleep. A specific anti-sickness tablet can be prescribed for severely affected cases. It is always best to have your pet checked and weighed by your vet before starting on a new medication.



Dog owners warned about outbreak of animal disease carried by ticks

Taken from news featured in UK Dog News - March 16, 2016

British dog owners are being warned about an outbreak of animal disease caused by the babesia canis parasite (also known as the brown dog tick).

Better known in Europe and the USA, the brown dog tick is adapted to a warmer climate where it affects shelters and greyhound kennels, but has recently been diagnosed in

Harlow, Essex where two dogs have sadly died and three have needed blood transfusions after contracting the disease.

Veterinary companies have previously warned about the affects of ticks and encouraged dog owners to be tick aware. Two government agencies are now investigating the outbreak: the Animal and Plant Health Agency and Public Health England.



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TOYS

TICKS

HUTCH

LABRADOR

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FUR

MEOW

WALKS

GERBIL