

smalltalk

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

WINTER 2016

Winter warmers

Taking care of your rabbit or guinea pig during winter

Inside...

Worming

The importance of worming your pet

Pet grooming

Tips to prepare your pet for their first visit

Pet obesity

50% of pets are considered overweight



Routine healthcare

The benefits of regular pet health checks





The Value of Continued Professional Development

Continued Professional Development, or CPD, is an essential part of the veterinary surgeons', and the veterinary nurses', training.

In order to practise all vets and registered veterinary nurses have to be members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and one of the requirements of membership is that all vets must complete an appropriate, and documented, amount of CPD annually.

CPD can be a brilliant opportunity to do some further studying in a particular area of interest, or just to make sure that vets and nurses are up to date on the latest research and techniques. Practices that are members of the XLVets community have a unique opportunity to take part in the XLVets CPD courses that are run across the country. The XLVets Small Animal National Meeting is an invaluable opportunity for small animal vets and nurses to gain some useful CPD as well as getting to know new

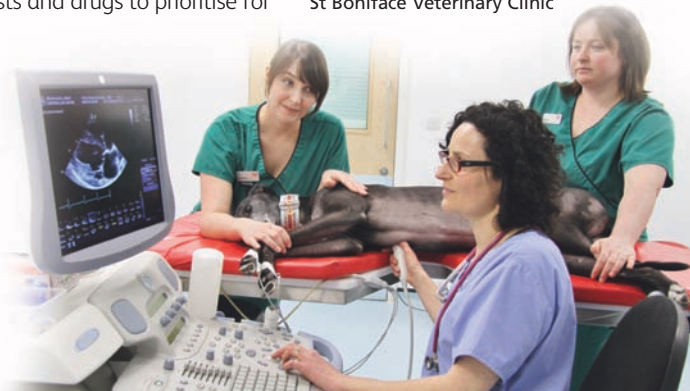
colleagues, which can be a great opportunity to share experiences and knowledge.

This year the CPD was focused on cardiology, and provided some insightful teaching on the main categories of cardiac disease, how to improve the accuracy of diagnosing them and treatment. Over the two days we had lectures and interactive case discussions with two highly respected cardiologists. Their invaluable advice has improved our confidence in diagnosing cardiac disease accurately and quickly, which will improve the services that we can offer to our patients. One of the sessions focused on how to diagnose and treat heart disease on a budget - it has helped us to understand which tests and drugs to prioritise for

which specific cardiac disease. By carefully selecting our diagnostic tests, we can help to save our clients' money which may then be put towards treating their pets, we hope this will then improve the long-term wellbeing of our patients.

By providing stimulating discussions and interactive case studies with a variety of specialists the XLVets CPD courses allow us continually to improve the services we can offer our clients. These courses help us to keep our techniques and practices in line with the most recent research, which allows us to continue to provide our pets with the high quality treatment they deserve.

Juliette Preston
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WINTER Warmers



Rabbits and Guinea Pigs are increasing in popularity as domestic pets in the UK, and while they make fulfilling pets, it is often the case that owners remain unaware of the specific husbandry requirements of these domesticated prey animals.

For instance, during colder periods of the year, these animals can struggle to maintain their body heat as they are both afflicted by a high surface area to volume ratio. Unfortunately it is often the case that these small pets are kept outside all year round, and are therefore at the mercy of the elements when we are safely tucked up inside our insulated houses.

Ensuring that their building (often the shed or garage), as well as their hutch, is a suitable place for 'Small Furrries' is key

to preparing for the winter months. If possible, bringing the hutch into the warmer confines of the house makes this task much easier, whilst offering a greater relationship with your pets, and providing easier, more attentive care. If this is not possible, an assessment of the shed for draughts should be performed, and the hutch moved away from these areas to reduce wind chill. Lagging the shed with insulating material can make it significantly warmer, although care must be taken to ensure that light is not occluded, as even the short hours of sunlight can still have a positive warming effect. It is also important to monitor drinking water to ensure it does not freeze, particularly at night.

Feed provision should be tailored to the fact that these animals will use their large digestive tracts to generate internal heat and warm

themselves. Providing more hay will also provide a warm and insulating bedding. If additional sources of heat are required then heat pads warmed in a microwave are a safer alternative to electric heaters.

Above all, ensuring that these pets are not forgotten about during the cold weather is the greatest single factor in preserving their good welfare. A pre-winter check with your veterinarian will allow their general health to be assessed. Uneven tooth wear (a common issue, particularly in rabbits) can result in reduced appetite, which has a knock-on effect on fat stores for insulation, as well as energy intake for heat production. Early diagnosis of these conditions, can be lifesaving. **So don't delay, book today.**



you can go first...



pet Obesity

by Sarah Drodge RVN Endell Veterinary Group

In the UK 50% of pets are considered overweight. Left without treatment obesity can lead to chronic incurable diseases, but many veterinary staff find it an incredibly difficult topic to broach with their clients.

One of the commonest questions we are asked is why should you bring your pet to an obesity clinic? Well we want you to have healthy happy pets and enjoy your time with them for as long as possible, and obesity can increase the risk of health conditions such as osteoarthritis and diabetes, leading to a shorter lifespan and a reduction in the quality of life of the pet.

Some practices have specific weight management clinics, run by qualified nurses, which aim to manage the increasing number of pets suffering from obesity. The initial consultation usually involves the preparation of a weight management plan and a hands-on consultation. These clinics aim to assist a pet with a medical condition in a similar way to treating other medical conditions, such as heart disease, which would require regular appointments with a veterinary surgeon.

After the initial consultation, follow up consultations may be recommended every 2 weeks. They serve as opportunities to review how the programme is going, adjust any aspects as necessary, with guidance from the nurse, and to answer any questions or concerns a client may have. Some practices may offer discounted rates on purchases of a specific weight management range of food.



During the programme the practice will teach you how to use weight management tools. The most important of these being:

Nutrition

In weight management clinics a specific food will be recommend for your pet. These diets are specifically designed to induce weight loss and formulated to provide all nutrients required whilst promoting weight loss safely.

Exercise

Almost as important as diet, appropriate exercise can be an essential part of the programme. Exercise can incorporate anything from walks, to playing with a friend, to activity feeders where the pet has to work for their food.

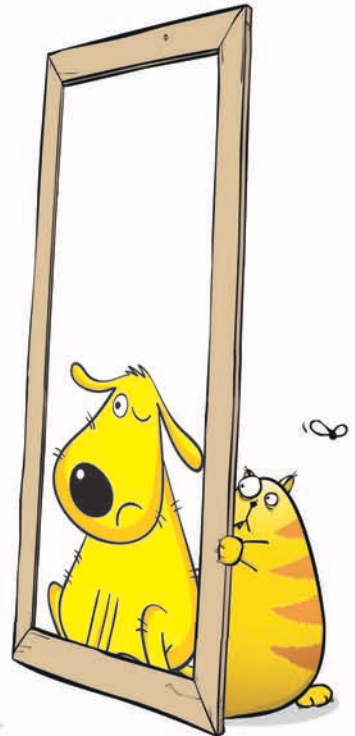
Body condition score

This type of scoring is used to help identify and keep track of weight issues and losses. It is one of the first steps in a weight management programme. At your clinic we can show you how your pet's body condition is scored and

also what you should look for as your pet's body reaches optimal condition.

Nutrition is fundamental to health and disease prevention and a balanced diet is therefore essential in the management of obesity. Weight management clinics can make the difference between a successful weight loss programme and an unsuccessful one.

So if your pet's weight gain has been mentioned to you, we are here to help. **Enrol today.**





Protecting Your Pet

By Rachael Ewing RVN Northvet

The importance of worming your pets

Have your pets been treated for worms recently?

Recent studies have shown that pet owners often require a gentle nudge in the form of a reminder to ensure their animals are sufficiently protected against all types of internal parasites.

There are two main categories of worms that pose a risk of infection in our much loved companions, one being Roundworms, also known as 'Nematodes'.

The following worms are all roundworms that could infect your dog or cat:

- Ascarids
- Hookworms
- Whipworms
- Heartworm
- Lungworm
- Capillaria

The next family of worms is Tapeworms, also known as 'Cestodes'. These are flat in appearance and gather in the intestines of animals. There are not as many types of tapeworms and transmission between pets is different from roundworms.

Some worms such as *Toxocara Canis* are zoonotic, meaning they are transmissible to humans. Basic hygiene around the house and garden can help prevent both you and your dog being infected with these worms. Picking up your animal's faeces in your garden and

public areas will reduce the risk of worm eggs in the environment. Children are at a higher risk of infection, so it is a good idea to ensure they wash their hands before eating and especially after handling puppies who may not have been wormed. This will help to control the spread of *Toxocara Canis* in particular.

Worming pregnant bitches and the pups when born is vital in making sure the pups thrive and the bitch has a healthy pregnancy. An infestation of worms can make animals very ill.



Some of the symptoms you may see in an animal are listed below, although it may be that your pet shows little or no symptoms at all:

- Weight loss
- Dry coat
- General poorly appearance
- Diarrhoea (may contain blood)
- Vomiting (may contain worms)

Treatment of worms is usually as straight forward as giving a tablet or spot on treatment. This will clear the worms out of your dog or cat's system and any symptoms they may have had should resolve. These treatments do not have any lasting effects and this is why regular worm treatment is essential in keeping a happy and healthy pet. All of our pets will become infested with worms, so prevention, by the regular administration of an appropriate wormer, is essential. **Just ask your vet which product they would recommend for you to give your pets.**

PET GROOMING



By Ria Pratty Fenton Vets and Groomers

Whether you have a nervous pet or it is their first time visiting a groomer, here are some tips to prepare your pet for their first visit:

Grooming starts at home

Get them used to the experience by bathing them at home, and go through the process of brushing and combing. Also get your pets used to contact by touching their feet, holding their paws,

and full body petting. All these areas will need to be touched by the groomer and getting your pet used to being handled is always a good idea. You can use treats or toys as a reward.



Research local pet groomers

There are many groomers about, however a good salon will always allow you and your pet a pre-consultation visit and tour. This will allow you to see the working environment and find one equipped for your pet's needs. Be upfront if your dog is fearful or aggressive, a reputable dog groomer will always be able to help and provide you with any information you may need.

Dropping your dog off

A quick fuss and 'see you soon' will suffice. Drawing it out or acting hesitant will allow your dog to sense something is wrong. Groomers are professionals and will know what they are doing. Always reward your dog after a trip to the groomers with lots of praise.

Why get your pet groomed?

Regular grooming aerates the coat enabling healthy growth, as well as keeping grease levels to a minimum (grease can block pores and cause cysts). All of this can prevent matting in longer haired animals, which can be sore and lead to skin irritation.



Dogs cool off by panting, and sweating through the pads on their paws. A good groomer will remove the hair from between their pads; keeping it trimmed allows more efficient cooling off.

Grooming can enable you to detect health problems. There can be hidden issues found under a dog or cat's coat including ticks, fleas, hot spots, dry patches, skin conditions,

cuts, grazes and more. A groomer gets a close look at areas of your pet and can identify any problems early and advise on vet visits if necessary. Removing matted or thick coats can also allow these problems to be uncovered.

Keeping nails trimmed helps avoid overgrowth in to the pad. Cleaning ears and plucking ear hair, allows for a good insight into ear health. Some groomers have hydrotherapy bathing systems which relax your pet providing a thorough shampoo and massage experience and a clip and trim to your requirements.



MOTs

and

Routine Health Care



Everyone is familiar with MOT's for our cars. Our pets also benefit from routine health checks the only difference is that we can't replace any damage with spare parts!

Modern veterinary medicine is as much about prevention of problems as it is about treating them.

✓ Health Checks

The most familiar health check occurs with annual vaccination. Checks may include discussions about:

Vaccinations - many vaccines are 'core' vaccines that all animals should have irrespective

of their lifestyle. There are others such as feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) and Kennel Cough, which are given to animals most at risk.

Key Point

All pets should receive some vaccinations.

Neutering - The pros and cons of neutering your pet can be discussed.

Parasite Treatment -

Treatment for parasites needs to be tailored to the lifestyle of your pet. The products available, and how often they should be used, can be discussed during your pet's check-up.

Key Points

All pets are vulnerable to parasites and should therefore receive regular preventive anti-parasite medication. The most effective of these are prescription-only medicines (POM-Vs), meaning that they can only be obtained from your veterinary surgeon. Some parasites, e.g. roundworms, can cause serious disease in people who come into contact with affected pets.

Dietary advice - The link between good nutrition and health applies to pets as much as it does to people. Obesity is becoming more common in dogs and cats, causing significant health issues such as increased risk of diabetes and arthritis.

Key Point

The diet most suitable for your pet can be discussed during a health check.

Dental Disease - This is very common in pets over 3 years old resulting in bad breath, gum disease, lost teeth and a painful mouth.

Key Point

If spotted in time, dental disease can be treated and the signs reversed.

Others - your pet's heart will be checked for early signs of heart disease. The general physical examination is also useful to detect 'lumps and bumps'. You can also discuss any other problems your pet might be experiencing, such as lameness, increased thirst or other symptoms.

✓ **Frequency of Health Checks**

For young animals in good health, a routine check-up every six months is recommended (one of these will coincide with the annual vaccination). Older animals and animals on long-term medication will benefit from more frequent check-ups.

Key Point

Based on average life spans, dog and cats 'age' at a rate 5 - 7 times faster than people. Changes can occur in a short space of time.



Arthritis case increase

Item taken from 'In brief' in the *Veterinary Times*, October 3rd 2016.

Research has found the number of cases of arthritis in dogs has risen threefold in as many years. The study of almost 20,000 animals showed the number of dogs affected increased by 312% between 2012 and the end of 2015. The breeds most likely to develop the condition were golden retrievers, followed by Labrador retrievers, greyhounds, boxers and rottweilers.



wordsearch



PAWS

BONE

BISCUITS

POODLE

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BARK

BUNNY

PET

KITTEN