

Small talk



Moving house with your Pet!

Handy hints and tips

All the Latest News from your XLVets Practice...

Is my dog dominant?

The second part of our dog behaviour feature...



SENIOR CAT HEALTH



Dental care for your senior dog How to prevent your dog suffering from bad breath as their teeth and gums naturally grow old too.

Join in our paw print mural

To celebrate our move into the new premises on Exeter Road we have decided to produce a piece of artwork which will act to include the animals who help make up the practice.

The plan is to collect paw prints in poster paint and through the magic of digital imagery collate these into a picture. If you are interested in your pets being included in this artwork please speak to reception or Emma about how best to get involved.



Open Day

We are very grateful to all those who attended to make our open day such a success. Over 200 people came to look round the practice and to tuck into a hog roast. Thank you very much. If you missed the day but would still like a tour please speak to reception.

St Boniface Veterinary Clinic

Consultations are available by appointment within the following times:-

Monday	8.30am - 10.30am 11.00am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 4.00pm 4.30pm - 6.30pm
Tuesday	8.30am - 10.30am 11.00am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 4.00pm 4.30pm - 6.30pm
Wednesday	8.30am - 10.30am 11.00am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 4.00pm 4.30pm - 6.30pm
Thursday	8.30am - 10.30am 11.00am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 4.00pm 4.30pm - 6.30pm
Friday	8.30am - 10.30am 11.00am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 4.00pm 4.30pm - 6.30pm
Saturday	8.30am - 12.00 noon

The Practice offers **24 hours, 365 days** a year service. We are here for advice as well as to treat your pets when they are unwell.

St Boniface Veterinary Clinic
Exeter Road, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3BN

For more information please visit
www.stbonifacevets.co.uk



In this autumn edition of Small Talk...

...we consider some of the conditions that our pets may suffer from as they become older. Ageing itself is obviously an inevitable consequence of advancing years, don't assume that you can't help your pet - managing many of these conditions will allow them to grow old gracefully and in comfort. We also have the second part of our dog behaviour feature and an article containing some handy hints and tips for moving house which can be a stressful time for pets and owners.

Clean Teeth - Perfect smile!

by Gareth Harries
BVMS CertSAS MRCVS

Wright & Morten
Veterinary Surgeons

Dental care for senior pets...

Bad breath can really test the relationship between an owner and their dog!

Virtually all older pets tend to suffer from bad breath as their teeth and gums quite naturally grow old too. Dentures aren't available for dogs yet, but removal of some teeth may be the only option when tartar and debris builds up, bacteria multiply, and infection and loosening of teeth results. Removal of these teeth often results in dogs feeling much better, and looking happier.

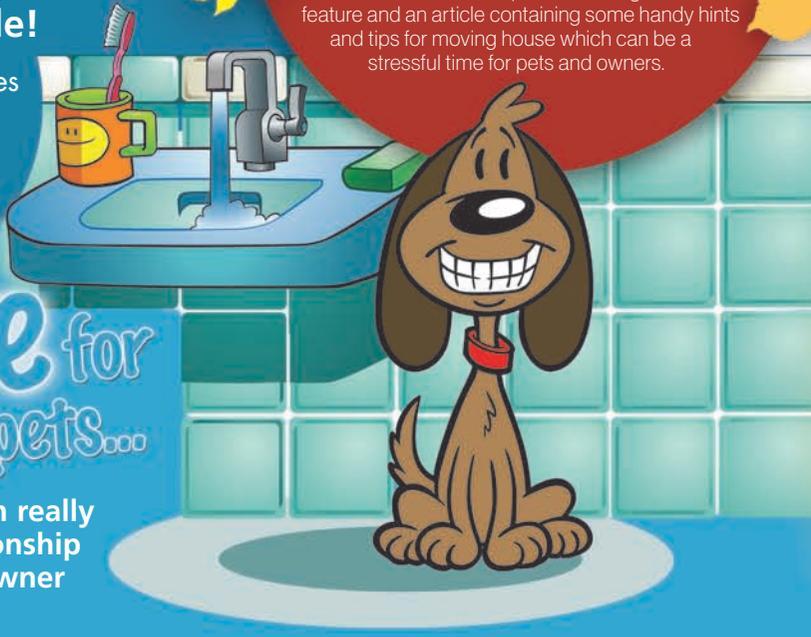
We all worry about our older pets undergoing anaesthetics but with modern techniques, we can take many measures to protect your pet. At least our pets don't have to listen to the whirring of the dentist's drill!

We all know that we should brush our pets' teeth but starting this with an older and possibly stubborn dog might be quite a daunting challenge. You don't have to brush them for a full two minutes; just 30 seconds around the molar teeth at the top on both sides will be immensely beneficial. These are the teeth that are most affected by decay. A specifically designed

brush is the perfect tool, but a small finger brush will be far easier to control when you start, and is less scary for the dog. Dogs also prefer the poultry or beef flavoured toothpastes rather than the mint varieties.

There are many options as well as brushing such as the very popular dental chews but beware of the extra calories! Some types do have fewer calories whilst a few vet specific ones are also an excellent choice as they contain chlorhexidine which is superb at killing bacteria that contribute to bad breath and tooth decay. Diet foods that clean the teeth whilst your dog eats are also available and are clinically proven to work. Dogs also spend longer eating it, so meal time lasts a little longer.

Easier still are water and food additives. Plaque Off™ is a seaweed extract that you simply sprinkle on their food. Alternatively, Aquadent™ can be added to the water where the Xylitol™ helps look after their teeth. Now that really is simple! As you can see, there is an awful lot you can do to look after your dog's teeth and it needn't be as scary as you think.



by John Watson BVetMed MRCVS
St Boniface Veterinary Clinic



Moving house with your Pet!

Cats

Most of the issues that people experience are related to moving house with cats rather than dogs. This is due to the cat's greater dependence on environmental factors to feel safe and secure - in short they have a territory that they know well and moving them from this requires a period of adaptation.

Before a planned house move it can be very helpful to get a feline facial pheromone spray (e.g. Feliway™) to apply to the cat basket. This spray which mimics the scent that cats rub onto places in their environment (including their owners) has a calming effect and is helpful in reducing fear and stress. If your cat is a particularly nervous traveller your vet may also be able to prescribe tranquillisers or anti-nausea drugs to aid the journey.

On moving day it may be prudent to take very nervous cats to the cattery and collect them when the worst of the upheaval is over. Other cats should be carefully confined to one room and then transported inside a cat carrier inside the car. Long journeys should be broken to allow food and water to be taken.

The new house

First of all, if the previous owners have owned pets, it is the ideal time to spray the house with an anti-parasite product prior to moving everything in. We often have to deal with flea problems which are the result of exposure to an established indoor population left by the last occupants.

Once you're in we recommend that cats are not allowed out for a couple of weeks. In fact it can be helpful to keep the cat confined to one safe room with familiar furniture for a couple of days. Feliway™ also comes as a plug-in diffuser which we

recommend is plugged into a floor level socket in this room. This gives the cat a safe, familiar smelling space in their new environment.

Letting cats outside

If your cat is going to be an outdoor cat at the new home then after a couple of weeks you will need to make a leap of faith and give them outdoor access. Be sure your cat is identified, preferably by insertion of a microchip, and that this identification is up to date. Gradually introduce your cat to the outside by opening the door and going out with them - allow them to explore rather than carrying or forcing them outside. Cat flaps with integral microchip readers are available and can be installed to prevent other local cats gaining access. Other local cats that stray into your garden should be chased off to help your cat to reinforce their territory.

For further advice visit the feline advisory bureau website (www.fabcats.org)

Dogs

By their nature dogs are more used to moving about and tend to take more comfort from a stable relationship with their owner than from a strong territorial bond to a place. However some stress is likely even with the smoothest of house moves. With nervous dogs it may be prudent to keep them away from the house during packing. Some dogs also benefit from wearing a dog appeasing pheromone collar (Adaptil™) during the period of settling in to their new house. Make sure your dog is well identified with a collar and microchip in case they stray during the settling in process.



Clinical problems in senior cats

by Graeme Stevens BVM&S MRCVS
Minster Veterinary Practice

The average life expectancy of our domestic cat population is increasing with most of our indoor feline friends expected to live to 15 years of age and many living to 20 years or beyond.

As a result, owners are seeing many more age related problems in their pets and are often concerned with quality of life in their older cats and how to recognise health problems. Cats are adept at hiding signs of clinical disease or distress and do not generally respond in a manner owners associate with ill health. Advances in veterinary medicine and therapeutics have significantly contributed to the increased life expectancy of the feline population and continue to play an important role in maintaining a good quality of life in our older cats. The most common age-related problems in cats are listed in table 1. Regardless of the pet there are several important environmental considerations that can significantly improve quality of life in the geriatric cat.

Older cats will often have an increased water demand due to developing kidney problems, hyperthyroidism and a reduced intake of food associated with arthritis, lethargy and dental disease. Allowing access to more water bowls in easy to access locations at ground level and provision of running water will aid water intake. Allowing adequate litter trays away from food and water bowls in easy to reach locations will reduce stress associated with toileting and identify any alteration in toileting that may indicate a health problem. As a rule households should have one litter tray per cat, plus one.

As osteoarthritis can lead to older cats being unable or unwilling to climb or jump, due consideration should be given to placement of food, water, shelter and toileting access.

A combination of arthritis, dental disease, inadequate shedding of claws and senility

can result in matted coats and overgrown claws. These changes are not always obvious. Grooming and trimming of your cat's claws regularly will help prevent this.

While most of our cats enjoy outdoor adventures older cats will generally seek shelter more often in colder, inclement weather, or if younger cats entering their garden or territory confront them. It is important that cats in general, and specifically geriatric cats, are allowed access to shelter either via cat flap, or an outdoor shed/garage that can be accessed at all times. If you notice your older cat is spending more time indoors check your cat is not suffering from ill health or environmental stressors.

There are ways to identify early clinical disease or distress in older cats; monitor your cat's food and water intake, urine and faecal output (including colour and consistency), check for any skin lumps, bumps or wounds, monitor activity, weight loss and breathing rate. If any changes are observed consult your local vet as soon as possible.

Veterinary practices are always keen to help in the care of older animals and regular six monthly 'wellness checks with your vet are advised for any cat over eight years of age. These checks will normally comprise a full clinical exam, claw clip, weight check and urine and or blood analysis to detect any health issues as early as possible.

With a few simple measures in place older cats can enjoy a more comfortable, stress-free 'retirement', with early detection of health problems resulting in better management and a greater chance of recovery.

Table 1

Health Problem	Clinical Signs	Owner's Observations
Overgrown nails	Pain, inflammation of pads, lameness.	Reduced activity, less tolerant of handling.
Osteoarthritis	Reduced range of movement, swelling of joints, pain on movement, lameness.	Reduced activity, reluctance to jump/climb, aggression, less sociable.
Dental Disease	Gingivitis, resorptive lesions, halitosis, gum recession.	Smelly breath, wet food preference, chewing on one side of mouth, reduced appetite.
Chronic Renal Insufficiency	Polyuria (PU), polydipsia (PD), weight loss, reduced appetite, ill-thrift.	Drinking and urinating more, dull coat, losing weight.
Hyperthyroidism	Polyphagia, weight loss, increased activity, PU/PD, hyperthermia, tachycardia.	Hungry, eating more, more active despite ageing, drinking and eating more.
Dementia	Reduced environmental awareness, vocalising, periuria.	Unable to locate food, water or litter tray, voiding outside litter tray, vocalising, getting 'lost' in house.
Cat Fight Injuries	Inflammation, purulent discharge from wounds, abscess formation, lameness, pain, pyrexia, inappetance.	Bleeding, obvious wounds, dullness, reduced appetite, skin swelling.
Vascular Hypertension	Retinal detachment, blindness, engorged retinal vessels.	Change in appearance of eyes-speckled, or red, apparent sudden onset blindness.
Retinal Degeneration	Loss of clarity of retina on exam, loss of vision.	Sudden onset blindness.
Diabetes Mellitus	PU/PD, often concurrently overweight, dull, lethargic.	Drinking more, urinating more, dullness, inactivity, often overweight cats.
Gastro-Intestinal Disease	Vomiting, diarrhoea, maelena, abdominal pain, inappetance, hypersalivation.	Vomiting and or diarrhoea, eating less, eating grass, change in colour of faeces.
Anaemia	Pale mucous membranes (mm), prolonged capillary refill time, tachycardia.	Pale gum colour (should be salmon pink) weakness, lethargy.
Cancer	Abnormal growths, lymphadenopathy, cachexia.	Any new skin lumps or bumps, dullness, weight loss.
Heart failure	Tachycardia, tachypnoea, dyspnoea, pale mm, weak pulses. Lethargy.	Panting, open mouth breathing, rapid breathing, inactivity, unable to stand or walk, pale gums.
Skin Disease	Inflammation, erythema, pruritus, self-trauma, pyoderma, alopecia.	Change in colour or appearance of coat, hair loss, over-grooming, redness.
Stress	Cystitis, self-barbering, change in habitus.	More frequent urination or in abnormal places, overgrooming, chewing at coat, altered food/water intake or insomnia.

Age



1	15
2	24
3	28
4	32
5	36
6	40
7	44
8	48
9	52
10	56
11	60
12	64
13	68
14	72
15	76
16	80
17	84
18	88
19	92
20	96

Bad Behaviour Is my dog dominant?

by Vicki Harrington RVN DipCABT (COAPE) NOCN Hook Norton Veterinary Group

It is still commonly believed that many dog behaviour problems such as pulling on the lead, guarding objects or locations and aggression are the result of dominance behaviour from the dog.

We were told that with the introduction of 'pack rules' based on wolf behaviour we can resolve the problems, by showing them we are the boss or 'Alpha' member of the pack. Advice includes eating before your dog, sitting in its bed, and ignoring the dog.

The basis for this theory is based on observing captive wolf packs and applying the same strategies to our domesticated dogs. As discussed in my previous article, domestic dogs are not wolves, having evolved over several thousand years their behaviour and its interpretation are no longer comparable to that of wolves.

In recent years we have studied free wolf packs; behavioural observations are very different to those in captive packs. We now have a greater understanding of how both wolves and dogs actually behave which makes us better equipped to assess and re-evaluate the validity of 'pack rules' and their effectiveness with behaviour modification and training in domestic dogs. Obvious flaws emerge when compared with our current understanding of their behaviour.

Neither wolves nor dogs have an understanding of dominance or status; these are human concepts. It is our perception that dogs will understand that by sitting in their bed or eating before them we have a higher status, and are therefore the Alpha member.

Typical pack theory myths dispelled:

- The Alpha wolf always eats first.

In reality if pups are hungry, they feed first. If the kill is big enough the whole pack eat together.

- Do not play tug of war with your dog. Referring to wolves tugging on a piece of meat, the higher status wolf wins. You MUST always win, or your dog will know he is the Alpha member.

The real reason for this behaviour is that wolves help each other pull apart tough parts of the carcass.

Further examples of myths and rank reduction rules:

- Always walk through doorways before your dog.
- Never allow your dog to initiate the beginning or end of a game or attention.
- Do not let your dog sleep on the bed or on furniture.

Behavioural problems associated with dominance have now been proven to have significantly different causes, needing careful investigation by a qualified animal behaviourist.

Instead of trying to dominate our dogs we should concentrate on socialising and training them, teaching obedience, house rules and manners. As dog owners it is our responsibility to guide and influence their ongoing behaviour, training, and socialisation with consistent and fair, reward based methods based on a scientific understanding of behaviour and how dogs learn.

Who's the boss...



For further reading on this subject please take a look at Dominance: Fact or Fiction? By Barry Eaton, The Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson

Can your kitten eyes help find the differences?



Spot the difference

Find the differences between the two pictures below but how many can you spot?



WIN!

One of these great prizes...



Prizes kindly supplied by Ancol

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The closing date for entries is November 16th 2012

HOW TO ENTER!

Number of differences:

Please tick your preferred competition prize:

- Dog Toy Cat Tunnel Rabbit or Guinea Pig Toy

Send your completed entry to: Small Talk Competition No.2 XLVets, Carlisle House, Townhead Road, Dalston, Carlisle, CA5 7JF

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Telephone Number

Address

Email

XLVets Practice Name

- I do not wish to receive further information from XLVets
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