

practice news...

For those of you who don't already know Tony and Marie had their second baby 'Archie' in January - congratulations to them. Mother and baby doing well - Tony has slightly less dark rings under his eyes so we think Archie is sleeping better too.

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE AT ST BONIFACE VETS

We have taken possession of the equipment to perform laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery. This has two main uses in the veterinary profession; the routine neutering of bitches and exploratory surgery in sick animals. Where keyhole neutering is performed the main advantages are reduced wound size and a shorter recovery time. In diagnostic surgery the need for a very large abdominal wound in a (usually) very sick patient may be avoided. Speak with John if you think your pet may benefit from keyhole surgery.

PARASITES...

Devon is a beautiful warm county which supports a high population of animals both domestic and wild. Unfortunately this allows for an increased environmental source of parasites. The main offenders are fleas but we have also had problems with fox mange, ticks, lice, intestinal worms and some, as yet unconfirmed, lungworm cases. It is well worth speaking to a vet or nurse about your individual circumstances at there isn't really a one size fits all approach for parasite control. The best value products are those which work well for your circumstances.

DENTAL MONTH...

Watch out for Dental month in May - free dental check ups, oral care work-shops and discounted dental procedures will all be on offer.

And finally

What does a fish say when it runs into a wall? Dam!

St Boniface Veterinary Clinic
47 Mill Street, Crediton, Devon EX17 3AA

St Boniface Veterinary Clinic

www.stbonifacevets.co.uk

SPRINGTIME feature...



by Ann Noble VetMB, MRCVS, Paragon Veterinary Group

The importance of Vaccination!

Whether to vaccinate and what we should vaccinate against has in recent years caused a lot of debate in human medicine. A similar debate has taken place in the veterinary field. Our aim is always to provide adequate protection for our pets without 'over vaccinating'.

All animals will acquire a certain amount of immunity via their mother. This is called maternal immunity and is usually present until approximately 10 weeks of age. The protection provided by this immunity will depend upon the mother's immunity. It is therefore essential that if you are planning on breeding from your bitch or queen, you ensure that they are fully vaccinated. If puppies or kittens are born to unvaccinated mothers, be aware that they may be vulnerable and an extra early vaccination may be appropriate.

The diseases which we vaccinate dogs against are all potential killers. The viral diseases can rapidly make a puppy or vulnerable adult dog seriously ill, requiring prompt, intensive veterinary intervention. Vaccination offers protection from these diseases which, although not common, are a huge risk to the wellbeing of your pet.

In general, dogs are usually vaccinated as puppies between 8 and 12 weeks old, with kittens being vaccinated between 9 and 12 weeks. Boosters are required every year. To establish exactly how long immunity lasts it would be necessary to blood sample the animal and vaccinate accordingly. It is well established that for most vaccine brands, immunity to Distemper, Parvovirus and Canine hepatitis will last for 3 years. Immunity to Leptospirosis however, is not long lived and it is advisable to vaccinate every year. Distemper and Canine Hepatitis are seen particularly in areas of high density dog populations. Leptospirosis is always a risk, particularly in rural areas with water courses readily accessible. Parvovirus has caused major

problems in the past and in recent years has become more controlled. However, beware that numbers of cases of this disease are on the increase, and we are once more seeing puppies dying from Parvovirus.

Cat Flu is always a potential problem, both for the acutely sick cat, but also for the longer term welfare of the chronically ill cat and incontact cats. Recovered cats will often become carriers, and with the distance that rural cats travel, any unvaccinated cat is vulnerable. Feline Leukaemia is a silent killer. The virus can remain dormant for many years often becoming active and causing disease later in life. A cat that has a leukaemia associated disease is very difficult to treat and many die or are euthanased on humane grounds. Leukaemia virus is commonly present in apparently healthy cats therefore initial infection may happen without your knowledge.

Rabbits are routinely vaccinated against Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) and Myxomatosis. VHD is rapidly fatal often with very few signs of illness, and Myxomatosis causes a miserable lingering illness which is also invariably fatal. Direct contact with other rabbits is not necessary to become infected, so vaccination is the only reliable option for prevention.

Prevention of disease is much cheaper, easily performed and significantly more reliable than treatment. We would therefore always recommend both primary vaccinations in the young animal, and booster vaccinations to maintain an adequate level of immunity throughout life.

If you would like to discuss this further please contact your veterinary practice.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Small talk

St Boniface Veterinary Clinic

SMALL ANIMAL NEWSLETTER

All the Latest News from your XLVets Practice...

Fleas

...the effect on cats!

...The Importance of **VACCINATION**

STOP WORMS DEAD!



Exotic pets are becoming increasingly popular, with approximately **1.9 million exotic pets** in the UK today...



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Welcome...

Verity J. Griffiths BSc(Hons), MA, VetMB, GPCert(SAS), MRCVS, Southfield Veterinary Centre

The recent good weather has certainly heralded Spring and this time of year also sees the release of the Spring Edition of Small Talk. I do hope you will enjoy the fascinating articles which appear in this Edition. I certainly have learnt a lot about the care of exotic pets, particularly Bearded Dragons. For any client considering keeping an exotic pet, be it a lizard, a snake or any other of the more unusual pets, there is a multitude of things to consider before embarking upon their care.

Included we also have articles relating to our more 'usual pets', with a gentle reminder about how important vaccination is to protect them against potentially life threatening diseases. We also look

at why we should worm our pets and the consequences of not doing so. Then the final article touches on the irritating problem of fleas in cats, like worms we may not actually see them but they can cause untold misery to our much loved companions if not dealt with.

So if you have a spare moment, when not enjoying the sunshine with your pets, please take a look at this Newsletter. If there are any topics which you might want us to cover in future articles why don't you let your practice know and maybe it will be covered in a future edition.



WORMS DEAD!

by Lucy Rivett BVSc, MRCVS
Summerhill Veterinary Centre

In the UK the two main groups of worms that are a problem for dogs and cats are roundworms and tapeworms.

Roundworms look like thin white earthworms and can be up to 8cm in length. They may be seen in vomit or in faeces. In dogs they are passed from pet to pet via eggs in the faeces. This is also the main route of transmission in cats, but in addition they can be passed by an intermediate host, such as a mouse (the mouse eats the roundworm eggs, and the cat eats the mouse) or via the milk from queen to kitten. Large numbers in puppies and kittens can stunt growth, and cause serious digestive upsets.

Tapeworms are made up of a head with a segmented body. Mature segments can be seen in faeces or around your pet's bottom, and look like flattened grains of rice. In puppies and kittens they can also cause stunted growth, digestive upsets and occasionally can lead to intestinal blockages, and even death. Tapeworms need an intermediate host and so don't pass directly from pet to pet. The intermediate host in one of the commonest types of tapeworms is the flea. Flea larvae eat tapeworm segments (which contain tapeworm eggs), the larvae develops to an adult and then is accidentally eaten by your pet while they are grooming themselves. Therefore in order to control worms, good flea control is extremely important too.

Adult pets are often infected with few outward signs, and owners often question why they need to worm an animal that appears healthy. The main reason is the small but very real risk of

transmission of certain worms to humans. This is more common in children who are less good at hand washing after handling pets. Although rare there can be serious if not fatal consequences.

Over recent years lungworm in dogs (and to a lesser extent in cats) has emerged as a potential cause of disease. Dogs tend to show non specific signs of lethargy and weight loss, but can also have breathing and blood clotting problems. The lifecycle is completed in an intermediate host (either slugs or snails) and so was previously restricted to certain areas of the UK. However, now with a warmer, wetter climate, slugs and snails can be seen more widely. Many of the routine wormers are not effective against lungworm and so, if you think your pet may be at risk, speak to your vet practice for further advice.

Dogs and cats can be affected by many other different types of worms, but heartworms, hookworms and whipworms are usually only seen when a pet has travelled abroad. Always seek advice prior to foreign travel.

The frequency of worming depends on a number of factors. As a general rule puppies and kittens should be wormed every 2-4 weeks until they reach six months of age. Then adults should be wormed at least every three months for the rest of their life. Struggling with tablets is no longer necessary as there are lots of different worming preparations available such as 'spot-ons', liquids, injections, pastes, granules and 'treats'. For tailor made advice for your pet and household speak to a vet or nurse at your local practice.



DID YOU KNOW...
Bearded Dragons can grow up to 24 inches long!

DID YOU KNOW...

For every adult flea, there are 500 potential fleas at various stages in your house



EXOTIC PETS...

by Emma James BVSc, BSc (Hons), MRCVS,
St Boniface Veterinary Clinic

Owning a pet is a privilege 47% of households in the UK enjoy; currently an amazing 13 million households have pets. Exotic pets such as snakes, lizards, tortoises and spiders are becoming increasingly popular, with approximately 1.9 million exotic pets in the UK today! Keeping exotic pets can be relatively straightforward once the animal's individual requirements are met, but the initial cost of a vivarium with specific lighting, heat, humidity, and slightly unusual food can reach hundreds of pounds before an animal is even purchased.

Your vet will be able to discuss all of these essential requirements with you, advise you on where and what to buy, and will be able to help if that animal becomes sick. Most exotic pets if kept in the correct environment rarely become ill so getting their husbandry right is absolutely vital.

One example are bearded dragons or 'beardies' which originate from the Australian desert. To mimic this lizard's natural environment we need to create an artificial sun using a special mercury vapour bulb which provides a source of daylight, heat, and ultraviolet (UV) light. Alternatively a spot light and ultraviolet strip light can be used as long as UVA and UVB are emitted by the bulb; these UV strips will need replacing every 6 months as the UV radiation deteriorates over time. All heating and lighting is usually placed at one end of the vivarium to create a temperature gradient which allows the bearded to choose where it feels comfortable. Several hides or shelters need to be included,

a minimum of one at the 'hot end' and one at the 'cold end'. Thermometers at each end of the vivarium allow you to monitor the environment closely and adjust the temperature accordingly. A hygrometer which measures humidity should also be installed.

Beardies need to bask, or sunbathe, for up to 12 hours per day to warm their bodies, kick starting their metabolism so they will eat and function normally.

Insects such as locusts, crickets, mealworms or wax worms, should be dusted in calcium powder, which is important to maintain healthy bones, and fed 3-4 times weekly. Bugs can be bought in tubs from your local exotic pet shop and are fed live. Beardies also need a varied diet of vegetable and plant material available daily, along with a wide shallow water bowl to bathe in and drink from.

Each species will have individual requirements and as long as we try to understand where they come from and how they live in the wild hopefully we can create an environment that closely matches their natural one. If you're thinking of getting an exotic pet your vet will be able to provide you with advice.

The effect of fleas on cats

by Nicky Lumley BVM&S, MRCVS, Toft Lodge Veterinary Centre. The cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*) is responsible for most flea infestations seen in pet cats (and dogs). Rabbit and hedgehog fleas are also occasionally found. Fleas are extremely common, and can cause a variety of symptoms. Often cats can have a mild infestation of fleas whilst showing no obvious signs, although they are probably irritated. Common signs are itching and hair loss.

Adult fleas feed on blood, so severe flea infestations can cause their host cat to become anaemic leading to weakness and sometimes even death, especially in young kittens.

The cat flea is also an intermediate host for the tapeworm *Dipylidium caninum*, one of the most common gut worms found in dogs, cats and, rarely, children. Immature flea larvae eat the egg of the tapeworm, the egg develops into the next life stage inside the adult flea, and is swallowed along with the flea during grooming.

The other major problem fleas cause to cats is Flea Allergy

Dermatitis (FAD). We see FAD frequently, and it is in fact the most common cause of itchy skin disease in cats. Unfortunately it is often difficult to prove that fleas are the cause, as allergic cats tend to groom much more than normal and often remove the adult fleas and their 'dirt'.

FAD is seen in cats which develop an allergic reaction to flea saliva and can affect cats of any age, sex or breed. The symptoms are secondary to the constant itching caused by FAD, which leads to overgrooming, hair loss, broken hairs, scabs, skin infections, and sometimes restlessness and weight loss. Because allergic cats are so sensitive to flea bites, only one or two bites a week can be enough to keep the cycle of itching going for the poor animal.

Treatments to kill and eradicate fleas have improved dramatically in recent

years. There is however, a vast and confusing array of products available. What is not always apparent is that these products vary markedly in their composition, mode of action, effectiveness and safety.

Fleas are incredibly efficient breeders, one adult can become 1,000 fleas within 21 days! If you find adult fleas on your pet, these represent about 5% of the infestation, the other 95% will be in your home as flea eggs, larvae and pupae, **SO FOR EVERY 1 FLEA YOU SEE, THERE MAY WELL BE A FURTHER 19 YOU DON'T SEE.** Because of this rapid life cycle, effective treatment of a flea problem requires an understanding of both the cycle and where different flea products can break it. Whichever product you choose for your pet's flea control, make sure it will work for you by getting the right advice from your vet first.