

Blaircourt  
PET CLINIC

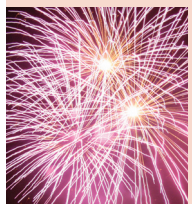
01245 324437  
www.blaircourtpetclinic.co.uk

NEWS



AUTUMN 2022

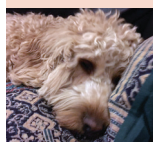
## Firework Fright!



The firework season is nearly here! The early nights are perfect for displays, but if your pet finds them frightening, then night-time can become a nightmare for pets.

During firework season itself, there are many ways in which you can try to keep the peace in your home – even if it is anything but peaceful outside!

Plan a good dog walk earlier in the day and a big meal early evening, both of which will make them sleepy. Also, make sure you keep the cat flap locked and that all your pets are microchipped, just in case they take fright and escape.



Offer an anxious pet a place of safety such as a makeshift den. Pets feel much more secure in small

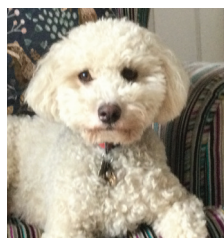
spaces and it will help to muffle the noises – as does keeping the curtains closed and the TV on. Offer them fuss if they require it but stay calm and try not to overly reassure them as this may worsen anxious behaviour. The best time to praise them is when they are being calm and relaxed.

For many pets, calming supplements or anti-anxiety pheromones (Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats) are a gentle, but effective, way to help them relax. Pheromones need to be started 1-2 weeks in advance for the best results. For more severe anxiety, sedative medications can be prescribed.

Additionally, some pets will also benefit from sound desensitisation programmes, but these need to be started many months in advance.

We are here to help, so please come and have a chat with us!

## To neuter is cuter! Benefits of pet neutering



Neutering your family pet is an important decision and comes with a range of health and welfare benefits. Apart from avoiding unwanted pregnancies, neutered pets are likely to live longer lives thanks to surgical procedures which are safe, quick and relatively painless.

**Dogs:** Un-neutered female dogs usually come into heat (season) every six months. During this time your dog will be receptive to the advances of entire male dogs in your area. The urge to mate can lead to roaming, with the associated risk of becoming permanently lost or seriously injured.

In female dogs, neutering avoids any unplanned pregnancies and reduces the risk of two important conditions later in life: If they are left un-neutered, around 25% may suffer from mammary (breast) cancer and a similar proportion are at risk of developing an infected uterus (pyometra). Both of these are very serious, require surgery and are potentially fatal.

In male dogs, castration eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and makes prostate problems less likely as well. Also, for some it can have very positive effects on their behaviour.



**Cats:** Female cats will start their first season from as early as four months of age and may come into heat every three weeks during the breeding season (in the spring and summer months). By neutering your cat early, as well as avoiding unwanted litters of kittens, you will also reduce the risk of mammary cancer later in life, which is often very aggressive in cats.

Male cats who are not castrated are more likely to roam, looking for females, increasing their risk of being in car accidents and cat fights. Some cats can spread Feline Leukemia from bites which can be life threatening. Male cats are also more likely to spray strong smelling urine inside the house, marking their territory.

As you can see, the good news is that there are a huge array of benefits from having your pets neutered. If you would like further information – please contact a member of our team!



### Don't forget Rabbits!

Rabbits are social animals who like to live in pairs. Neutering is very important in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies in pairs of male and female rabbits. However, even pairs of the same sex can benefit from neutering as they are less likely to fight and will be easier for you to handle. Neutering also removes the risk of uterine tumours in female rabbits.

Tabby cat and rabbit photos: Warren Photographic

## Dietary dilemmas: choosing the correct diet!



The choice of dog and cat foods out there are vast and choosing one can often seem overwhelming. The most important thing is that the diet for your pet needs to be balanced and in the correct quantities.

To help with this, many pet foods have a selection of age ranges, such as puppy or kitten, junior, adult and senior. These are to help tailor the calorie and nutritional contents to the age of your pet. Some also have specially designed breed types or breed sizes, such as giant and large breed dogs.

It is very important that your pet stays a healthy weight to reduce illnesses in later life. Neutered diets and lower calorie diets are available to help maintain a balanced weight.

If your pet has an illness, a specific veterinary diet may help with your pet's condition. Kidney diets are low in some toxins and waste products to reduce the chemicals your pet's body needs to eliminate. Intestinal diets are designed to help with short and long term digestive issues. With diets designed for fur balls in cats, diabetes and liver disease, the choice is endless. So – if you need any advice regarding your pet's diet, please don't hesitate to ask!



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## Autumn aches – is your pet affected?

Just as in ourselves, the colder, damper, autumn weather can make your pet's joints feel stiff and painful. With 80% of older dogs and cats suffering from arthritis, it is important that as pet owners, we know the signs to look out for.

Any joint can be affected, but the hips, knees and elbows are the most common ones – these are all synovial joints (see diagram below). The ends of the bones that meet at these joints are covered by smooth articular cartilage. Arthritis develops when this articular cartilage becomes pitted and cracked, exposing the underlying bone and causing joint pain. These changes are commonly due to age related wear and tear, but can also be secondary to joint trauma and also joint issues such as hip and elbow dysplasia.

Affected pets typically show signs of lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising, and problems negotiating steps. They may also become slower, less active, more grumpy, and may show obvious signs of pain such as whimpering, crying out, and avoiding contact with painful areas. Signs of arthritis can also be very subtle, and the absence of an obvious limp doesn't mean a pet isn't in pain. Cats can also suffer from arthritis, with surveys suggesting 60-90% of elderly cats are affected.

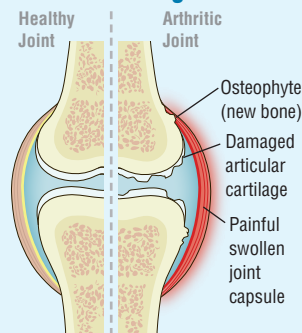
Arthritis is usually diagnosed using a combination of a clinical examination (looking for stiffness, pain and roughness in the joints), plus a history of changes compatible with the disease. X-rays can also be very helpful in assessing the joints.

*So what can be done for pets with arthritis?*

Although arthritis cannot be cured, most pets will benefit from a wide range of treatment options. A key consideration is **weight loss** for any pets carrying excess weight, as this hugely impacts on the joints. Many pets also benefit from prescription medications, **such as anti-inflammatories** to reduce the soreness and pain. **Dietary supplements** (such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate) are often beneficial. Many arthritic pets struggle with long **walks**, so little and often is the key. Please get in touch if you think your dog or cat may be showing signs of arthritis, and let us help you get the spring back in their steps!



### Understanding arthritis:



**Healthy Joint:** The ends of the bones are covered by smooth articular cartilage and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid, achieving pain free movement.

**Arthritic Joint:** The protective cartilage is damaged and worn away, resulting in exposure of the underlying bone causing pain and inflammation.



## Autumn alert!

As temperatures drop and the nights draw in, it's great to get out and active in the Autumn, but there are some factors that still need to be considered to keep our pets fit and well. With this in mind, here are a few topical tips:

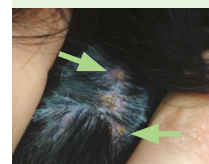
**Flea alert:** Autumn is the favourite time of year for fleas! Although it is colder outside, our homes have everything fleas need: warmth, carpets and soft furnishings to breed in, and a readily available source of food in our pets. So it's essential to keep up your flea treatments!



**Ticks** are particularly active in the Autumn months, living in long grass and woodland areas. Ticks clamber onto passing pets, firmly attaching themselves and feeding on their blood. Worse still they can also spread a range of infectious diseases such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis.



**Harvest mites** are a problem in late-summer and Autumn. These seasonal parasites are picked up in woodland and long grasses and



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes

swarm onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and the underside of the abdomen.

They are identified as tiny bright orange dots adhering tightly to the



Harvest mite down the microscope

skin and are usually a cause of great irritation with itchy, crusting lesions developing.

So – make sure you regularly check your pet's coat for any signs of parasites and let us advise you on the best treatments for your pet.

Around the house and garden, keep a wary eye out for toxins at this time of year. Pets are very attracted to **ethylene glycol (antifreeze)**, which is easily spilt when topping up radiators. It is very sweet tasting and extremely toxic to pets, causing kidney failure and often death. In the garden, try to ensure pets don't eat **fermenting apples** and also **conkers** – both of which can lead to digestive upsets.



Spilt antifreeze is sweet but also deadly to pets

Enjoy the autumn weather, keep a watchful eye out for parasites and other autumn hazards and contact us if you have any problems!

## Alabama Rot



Alabama Rot is a disease that most dog owners are now aware of. It has gained media attention because it is hard to diagnose and can sometimes be fatal. However, it is important to remember that it is also extremely rare.

In affected dogs, tiny blood clots form in blood vessels, blocking them. This causes ulceration in the skin (especially the lower legs, paws and face). In rare cases, blood clots may form in the kidneys, which can lead to kidney failure, which is of course very serious, but thankfully uncommon.

At the moment, the cause of the condition is poorly understood. It is often seen in dogs who have recently been walked in muddy or wet weather and there are in addition, certain 'hot spots' in the UK and Ireland where it is more frequently found. Fortunately, it is still very rare and additionally, most skin lesions will not be related to Alabama Rot; however, if you notice any unusual skin patterns on your dog's skin and need any advice please contact us straight away at the surgery.



Typical photo of a suspected case of Alabama Rot with skin lesions