

## Pet Travel Update



Although at the time of writing we are facing severe travel restrictions as part of the fight against **Covid-19**, we can still dream of a holiday abroad with our pets when things do – hopefully, finally improve.

If things do improve later in 2020, you should be able to take advantage of the “transition period” which runs until December 31st, 2020. Travelling pets will require:

- A microchip.
- Rabies vaccination: If this is the first time your pet has had the injection, then you will have to wait at least 21 days before travel. If the vaccine is given in the UK, it typically lasts three years, and as long as it is repeated before this time, there are no further restrictions on travel.



- An EU Pet Passport: We can sort this out for you, and your pet is identified by their microchip.

- Tapeworm treatment: Dogs re-entering the UK and Ireland must be treated for tapeworms by a vet between one and five days before entry. It is currently uncertain what rules will be in place after the end of the year. If the UK becomes an unlisted country after the transition period, then a rabies blood test and a 4-6 month (and sometimes longer) wait after vaccination and blood sampling will be required.

Check for updates on GOV.UK and if you need to travel with your pet in the first half of 2021 then consider a rabies blood test in August 2020 at the latest. Plus in the meantime stay safe and follow government advice in the current **Covid-19 crisis**.

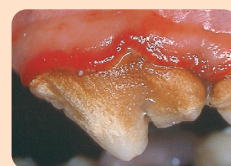
## Dentistry: getting to the root of the problem!

Did you know that dental disease is a very common, but also very *hidden* problem? The sad thing is that most pets will start life with a healthy set of teeth and gums, but – over time – painful dental problems can easily become an issue for them.

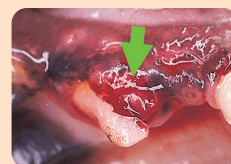
A healthy mouth typically has bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums. However, over time, accumulation of a biofilm of bacterial plaque on the surface of the teeth leads to *inflammation* of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis**. At this stage you might notice reddened gums, bad breath and some accumulation of tartar on the tooth surface. Continued tartar build-up will inflame the gums further and also allow bacteria to penetrate below the gum line, progressively destroying the periodontal ligament (the fibrous ligament that anchors the tooth to the bone). This painful condition is called **periodontitis**, and if left untreated, leads to tooth loosening and eventual tooth loss.



Gingivitis with swollen and inflamed gum margins.



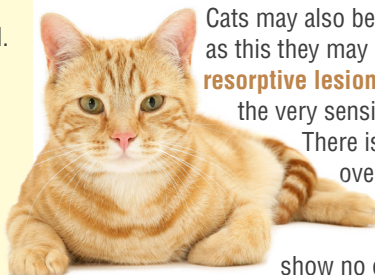
Periodontitis with redness and recession of the gum margin.



Tooth resorptive lesion in a cat: Typical lesion (arrowed). The tooth is progressively destroyed and is usually very painful.



Scale and Polish: Removing the tartar using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing is a very effective form of treatment and should ideally be followed by effective home care.



Cats may also be affected by gingivitis, but as well as this they may also suffer from one or more **tooth resorptive lesions**. Here the enamel is lost, exposing the very sensitive underlying dentine of the tooth.

There is often an area of bright red gingiva overlying the affected area which usually hide a painful cavity in the underlying tooth, although cats will frequently show no obvious outward signs of tooth ache.

**Treatment and prevention:** As with many conditions, the sooner any dental problems can be identified, the sooner treatment can be started and dental pain and tooth loss hopefully avoided. The good news is that if dental problems are identified at an *early* stage, a combination of a scale and polish and ongoing home care can make a big difference to your pet's oral health. With a clean mouth, daily teeth cleaning is a great way to try to prevent future dental disease. However not all pets are amenable to this and there are many alternative products available, which we would be happy to discuss with you.

## Insurance – is your pet protected?



It's a worrying thought that in an average year, one pet in three will require veterinary treatment for some form of illness or accident.

There are many different types of policy including time limited cover (typically 12 months of cover), money limited policies (up to a set amount) and lifetime cover policies (where the pot renews on an annual basis) so it's important you assess which policy is right for you and if you are at all unsure, then pick up the phone and we'll do our utmost to help you through the maze! We highly recommend insuring your pet – giving you peace of mind that with appropriate pet insurance cover, any decisions regarding the best course of treatment for your much loved pets can be made on the basis of *need* rather than cost.

We naturally tend to think of **surgical emergencies** (such as this sock which was removed at great expense from the small intestines of a dog) as the main reason for insurance. However, many **medical conditions**, such as **heart disease**, **skin problems** or **diabetes**.. to name just a few, can be equally costly to treat – especially so if they are life-long conditions.





## Caring for older cats

Thanks to improved veterinary care and nutrition, our cats are living longer and cats of over 20 are not uncommonly seen in veterinary clinics. Age is not a disease in itself, but it brings with it some conditions that owners of our senior kitties need to be aware of. Some of the most common conditions affecting older cats are an **over-active thyroid gland**, **chronic kidney disease**, **dental disease**, **arthritis**, **diabetes** and **high blood pressure** – to name just a few!

At home, it is important to watch out for changes in appetite (both eating less and more), crying at night, hiding away from the family, reluctance to jump up or down, drinking more than normal and changes in toileting habits. Cats with over-active thyroid glands will often have ravenous appetites, whilst cats with chronic kidney disease may eat less and often drink more. Increased thirst is also a feature of diabetes. High blood pressure is often associated with over-active thyroid glands and chronic kidney disease.

As you can see it is a complicated picture and if you see any of the above changes come and see us for a chat and an examination.

Older cats can also suffer with **cognitive dysfunction**, a form of senile dementia, and exhibit behaviours such as confusion, withdrawing from the family, meowing aimlessly or wandering around the house.

Our feline OAPs need regular veterinary check-ups to monitor for early signs of the above conditions, and also to check their dental health. We can also keep a close eye on body weight and notice any small changes that might indicate a problem developing. There are often very effective treatments for the management of age-related conditions, so if you have any concerns about your senior cat, please discuss them with us and don't just put changes down to old age itself.

Rabbit photo: Warren Photographic

## Don't get the summertime blues!

We all love the summer weather – when it finally arrives! *But how prepared are you and your pets?* Here we look at some top tips to help to beat the heat and keep your pets safe this summer:

**Slip-slap-slop!** The sun is a particular problem for white eared pets – especially cats. Cats with white ear tips (and also white noses) are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes in the sunburnt areas. Early on, cancerous areas can initially look like a scabby patch which then becomes more raw and painful over time. High factor **special sunblock for pets** applied to the at risk (white) areas helps to minimise this risk.

**Play it cool!** The summer heat is also a huge problem for many pets and it is essential to ensure free access to water at all times.



**Dogs** can quite easily overheat – leading to heat stroke, with signs of panting, disorientation, collapse and sometimes death. To keep dogs safe, we suggest shorter walks in the coolest parts of the day – either morning or evening. If you have space, dogs love a paddling pool to cool off!

**Rabbits and guinea pigs** are very susceptible to problems arising from excess heat and it is vitally important that they have access to shade at all times, plus cool water – preferably in a bowl.

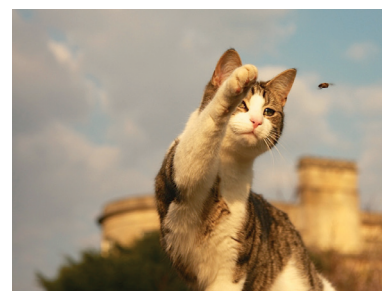
**Grass awns** of the meadow grasses can be a particular issue in dogs. These innocuous looking awns have the ability to penetrate tissue and migrate vast distances. The most common locations are as a foreign body in the ear or foot. We would always be suspicious with a sudden onset ear problem after exercising in long grass. We suggest grooming after every walk so that any awns can be found and removed before they can cause trouble.



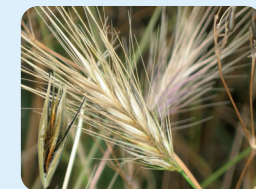
**Flystrike** is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected **daily** for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out on a daily basis. Speak to us about options for flystrike prevention.

**Parasite alert:** It's important to ensure you are using adequate flea and tick protection. Check your pet after every walk to spot if any **ticks** have become attached. These can be anywhere – around the head, under the belly or in armpits. Ticks can be removed using a special tick device or in the surgery. There are a range of tablets, collars and spot-on products to kill ticks and fleas. **Fleas** can quickly multiply, especially in multi-pet households, so make sure all your animals are up to date with their treatments.

Finally, please remember that the temperature in cars can rise rapidly and death from heat stroke can follow in minutes, so **pets should NEVER be left unattended in cars.**



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes – note the reddening of the skin. If your pet is showing signs of skin changes on their nose or ears, please call us.



Grass awns of the summer grasses are a perennial hazard

## Rabbit vaccines....we're not just rabbiting on!



The warmer spring and summer months are also a peak time for the spread of a couple of life-threatening infectious diseases in rabbits.

**Myxomatosis** can be caught from an infected animal or from being bitten by fleas or mosquitoes that have fed on an infected rabbit. Other possible transmission risks include on your clothes or by using shared bowls or brushes. The clinical signs include puffy fluid filled swellings on the face and head, swollen eyes and swellings around the genitals. It is a very unpleasant disease causing inappetence and blindness and usually death.

**Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)** is another deadly infectious disease that pet rabbits are at risk from. VHD has two strains: VHD-1 and a newer VHD-2. Both strains of RVHD are spread by direct contact with infected rabbits or indirectly via their urine or faeces. Both strains can cause sudden death.

We recommend annual vaccination against Myxomatosis and both strains of RVHD.