

## Spring has Sprung!



It's time to get out and about and enjoy the spring sunshine, but watch out for lurking spring time dangers.

It's great to exercise off the winter blues, but build things up gradually and avoid over-exertion as excessive exercise can result in injuries, for you and your dog. So rest any lame legs and get them checked out promptly.

Avoid playing with **sticks** as they can cause throat injuries, that may necessitate emergency treatment. Specially designed dog toys are always a much safer option.



Remember to keep **flea** and **tick** control up to date (ask us for more advice on the best products available) as parasite numbers are building up now, and also be aware that levels of **pollens** and plants that can cause allergic skin disease and itchiness, are increasing too.



Out in the garden, be aware that **slug pellets**, **bone meal** and **weedkillers** are common sources of poisoning and try to ensure that pets don't dig up **spring bulbs** and eat them – since many are poisonous. Seek immediate veterinary advice if any case of poisoning is suspected.



Try to avoid growing or displaying **lilies** if you have cats, as the pollen can be very toxic, and enjoy your Easter **chocolate**, but don't let your pets share it! Chocolate can be very dangerous to pets and might necessitate emergency treatment. Finally, we hope you enjoy your spring safely and have fun!

## Getting off to the best start!

Introducing a pet into the family is a lot of fun and also a big responsibility. So – to help keep your new arrival fit and well, here is a short “to-do” list!

**Vaccinations:** In the very early stages of life, puppies and kittens gain immunity against disease from their mother's milk. This protection starts to fade when they are around six weeks of age and without vaccinations, they are left vulnerable to some potentially deadly diseases. This is why it is so important to have your pets inoculated as soon as they are old enough. Regular booster vaccinations, combined with a health check, are the best way of protecting your pet, plus at the same time we can keep a watchful eye out for any emerging problems.



**Worming:** It is very important to treat puppies and kittens for roundworms since they can acquire these from their mothers early in life. As they grow up, they are susceptible to infection with both roundworms and tapeworms and will require regular worming treatment. Additionally, lungworm is a problem for many dogs (see overleaf).

**Fleas:** Most puppies and kittens will arrive with a fair number of fleas, so it is a good idea for us to give them a check over on arrival! Spot-on treatments are ideal for treating your pets, whilst household sprays are great for treating your home.



**Life-stage diets:** We can now offer pets a tailored series of diets from kittens and puppies, through adulthood and into their senior years. The good news is that these diets can make a real difference to the health and well being of pets.



**Neutering:** Cats should be ideally neutered by six months of age, if they are not to be bred from. The situation for dogs is more complex and the timing of neutering, and if it is required, is very dependent on your dog and your situation. Our team will be very happy to discuss this with you.

**Pet insurance** is also highly recommended, covering your pet against those unexpected vet bills! Finally, we are here to help, so please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on any aspect of caring for your pets.



### Vaccination against infectious diseases

We recommend you regularly vaccinate your pets against the following, potentially fatal, infectious diseases:

**Dogs** are routinely vaccinated against: parvovirus, leptospirosis, hepatitis and distemper.

**Cats** are usually vaccinated against cat flu, panleukopenia, and feline leukemia virus.

Photos: Warren Photographic

## Kennel Cough – is your dog vaccinated?



If your dog develops a harsh, hacking cough, it could be Kennel Cough – which is a very misleading name – because your dog doesn't need to go to a kennels to catch it! It can be picked up anywhere other dogs go, although kennels, doggy day care and training classes, are all high risk places.

Kennel Cough is a very contagious disease. It can be transmitted through the air, on objects that have been in contact with an affected animal, and also by direct nose-to-nose transmission. It causes a harsh cough, an inflamed throat and sometimes nasal discharge. The symptoms can be dramatic, and it is not uncommon for owners to become concerned their pets have something stuck in their throats. The cough is often self-limiting, but can still persist for 2-3 weeks.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella Bronchiseptica*. Prevention is much better than cure, because without vaccination, treatment of kennel cough can be a costly and lengthy process. Only an annual vaccination with a specific kennel cough vaccine can offer protection against *Bordetella*. So – don't take any chances with this distressing cough – make sure your pet is vaccinated! Please contact us today to book an appointment!





## Lungworm alert!

As we get out and about, enjoying the lovely spring weather, it's worth being aware of lungworm since cases will rise as the snail population grows with the warmer weather.

Lungworm or *Angiostrongylus Vasorum*, is a parasite that can affect dogs and also local foxes. It can cause significant disease and in some cases, be fatal. Unfortunately, cases are becoming more common throughout the UK and Ireland and it is therefore very important



to understand how you can help protect your pet.

Dogs can be infected with lungworm larvae carried by **slugs and snails** (which are intermediate hosts). Slugs

and snails can be inadvertently eaten in grass, soil or whilst playing with toys in the garden. The disease is commonest in young dogs that eat or play with slugs and snails, and in dogs that eat or drink outside and may have had slugs or snails in their bowls.

Lungworm are swallowed as tiny larvae,



Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm

which migrate into the circulation of the liver and travel to the right side of the heart. Here they develop into adult worms (see photo left) which can build up in

the heart and where the adults mate and produce eggs. The eggs hatch into larvae and then migrate into the lung tissue. These larvae are coughed up and are passed out into your dog's faeces to re-infect molluscs. When in the body the larvae cause significant lung tissue damage, often causing a cough, breathing troubles and lethargy. This can result in bronchitis, heart failure and spontaneous bleeding. Affected dogs often become weak and lethargic, go off their food, and may cough, vomit, or pass blood. The disease can be so severe as to be fatal but, if diagnosed early, can be treated successfully. Blood or faecal testing can give rapid diagnostic results.

Lungworm is best prevented rather than cured, so do call us to discuss what protocol is most appropriate for your pet.

## Can you pinch an inch?!

Spring is here at last! But the dark winter months may have taken their toll on your pet's waistlines since it's very tempting to stay warm and cosy rather than go on that wet wintry walk. This is a problem because while it is all too easy to gain weight, it isn't nearly as easy to lose it!

With obesity becoming increasingly common, it is wise to look objectively at your pets and see if they are overweight or not. In a healthy pet with an ideal condition score, the ribs should be able to be felt but not seen, and there should be an obvious 'waist'. By contrast, if you can pinch an inch or more, and if your pet's tum sags down and bulges out, then a diet may be in order!

Carrying extra weight places extra demands on virtually all the organs of the body. Long term, this can have health risks since carrying excess weight can cause or worsen a range of conditions including skin, heart, respiratory and joint disease. Your pet may also be more prone to develop problems such as raised blood pressure, diabetes and pancreatitis.

Given the health problems associated with excess weight – it is important to address it, and it is here that we can help. If you feel your pet is getting a little portly we are happy to weigh him or her and advise you on their ideal weight. We will also examine your pet to check for any *medical* conditions (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged dogs) that may result in weight gain.

To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a

specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around  $\frac{2}{3}$  their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. All pets need regular exercise, and increased walks, more frequent play, or increased access to outdoors are all of help.

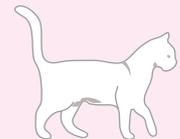
The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. So, if your pet has gained weight, or seems to have slowed down, then why not give us a call – we are here to help!



### IDEAL WEIGHT

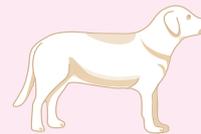


Outline of ribs can be easily felt through a slight fat cover



Outline of ribs can be easily felt through a slight fat cover

### OVER WEIGHT

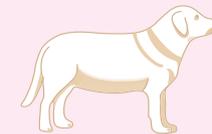


Ribs difficult to feel through a moderate fat cover



Ribs difficult to see or feel. Visible sagging abdominal fat pad.

### OBESE



Ribs very difficult to feel and cannot be seen through thick fat cover



Ribs very difficult to feel. Prominent abdominal fat pad.

## Chips with everything!



Having your pets microchipped is absolutely vital! Even the most loyal of dogs and the most indoor of cats can go missing and could mean days or weeks of worry for all involved. However the good news is that microchip implants offer a far more reliable method of identifying your pet.

Microchips are slightly larger than a grain of rice and contain a unique number which shows up on microchip scanners. This is held on a central database with all your contact details. It is important to register as many numbers and email addresses as possible, so if you can't get to the phone, another member of your friends or family can! Also, don't forget to keep the information up to date!

The only animals that have to be legally chipped are dogs and horses and we believe that cat microchipping will soon be made mandatory as well. Microchips are easy to implant and only need a routine consultation. If you need your pet microchipped or have any questions please don't hesitate to ask a member of staff.