



# Drumahoe Veterinary Clinic

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## NEWS

Cat photos: iStockPhoto

### Everyone meet Grace & Harris

Grace is from Waterford, Ireland and graduated from UCD in 2016, and joined the team in March 2017.



Grace enjoys travelling; she was in New Zealand last year working in a volunteer medical group with small animals. She has a keen

interest in all aspects of veterinary medicine. In her spare time she enjoys horse riding, keeping active and also has chickens at home!



Aisling graduated from University College Dublin in June 2016 and joined the team in July 2017. Aisling is from Louth, Ireland and

has 2 dogs, one is a retriever and the other is a terrier. Aisling has a keen interest in all aspects of a mixed practice and hopes to develop her small animal skills here at Drumahoe Veterinary Clinic. In her spare time she loves to socialise with friends and enjoys outdoor activities.

### Consulting Times

**Monday – Friday:** 8.30 – 9.30am, 1.30 – 4.00pm, 5.00 – 7.00pm

**Saturday:** 8.30 – 9.30am, 1 – 2pm

**Consultations by appointment**

### Topics in this issue:

- *Feeling ticked off?*
- *A word in your ear!*
- *Autumn Awareness!*

### Cats

Most cat owners will have received 'presents' from their feline friends. Finding dead animals in your house is never pleasant. However why do cats do this?

In the wild cats have evolved to be very effective hunters, and this can be seen in our domestic cats as well and this instinct is never far from the surface. Cats in the wild would eat prey as soon as they catch it, however if prey is in good supply cats will hide some of their catches away from others to be consumed later. Domestic cats have no need to do this, therefore if they bring something home with them it shows that they feel it is a safe place and they trust you.



#### Having a tippie?

Have you ever seen your cat drink from his water bowl? No? Some cats are reluctant to drink from a bowl. Tap water can be treated with chemicals. Cats have very sensitive noses and the smell of chemicals can put them off. Rain water, puddles or a pond can have a more appealing smell for cats. It may look disgusting to us but they love it!

Some cats may only drink from a running tap or the toilet! This could relate back to the cats wild instincts as they prefer to drink from a moving water source. Or some cats just find it fun and treat it like a game!



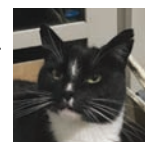
#### Personal space?

We all love it when a cat rubs against us, but why do they do that? All cats have scent glands on their face, body and tail. When they rub against you they are spreading their scent to you. This is a very important part of communication as they are marking what they consider to be their own! If you notice them going away after you greet them and grooming it means they are trying to spread your scent.

## We're sure about insurance, are you?

Are your pets insured? If not, it is definitely something worth considering and we would certainly recommend it! When looking for policies there are a few things to consider; some will offer 'lifetime' cover, which means they will pay for any on-going conditions for the lifetime of your pet, whereas others will have a time limit, usually twelve months, which means they will cover costs for that period and then exclude that problem from the policy. Others will set a limit on how much they will pay per condition (and this can include lifetime policies, so you need to read the small print!).

With appropriate pet insurance we can hopefully ensure that any treatment decisions are made on the basis of need rather than cost, so be sure to get your pets insured today!



Although we tend to think of traumatic emergencies (such as bone fractures) as the main reason for insurance, many *medical* conditions,



such as **heart disease** or **skin problems** can be very costly to treat – especially so if they are life-long conditions.



## Feeling ticked off?

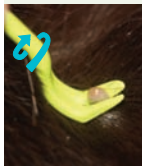
Autumn is the prime time of year for ticks as they thrive when the weather is still mild, but moist. They are particularly prevalent in areas with livestock, especially sheep, and where the undergrowth is thick, waiting to hop on to passing pets as they brush by.

Ticks will attach themselves to your pet and feed on their blood for several days. Although pets are rarely bothered by them, they can leave skin irritations behind and have the potential to pass on some nasty infections. Ticks can spread: **Lyme Disease**, an inflammatory infection which causes lameness and fever, **Babesiosis**, which can lead to life threatening anaemia and **Ehrlichiosis** which also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal. The latter two conditions are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

Pets should be monitored daily for ticks and if any ticks are found, these should be promptly removed with a specially designed tick remover. Treatments and preventions for ticks are available as spot-ons, tablets and collars and are generally very effective.



Grooming reveals an *Ixodes* tick. These are widespread across the UK and Ireland and may be infected with Lyme disease.



Ticks can be carefully removed using a tick hook.



## Autumn Awareness!

Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year – the trees are turning to glorious golds and the weather is crisp. However, here are some things we need to be aware of to ensure our pets stay happy and healthy as the seasons change.

**Parasite alert!** Firstly, keep up your **flea** protection! Turning on the central heating means our homes become their ideal environment when it is too cold for them outside. Continue to treat your pets and come and talk to us about how to protect your home as well. **Harvest mites** and **ticks** (see above left) also thrive at this time of year and again we are happy to advise you on how to prevent problems.

**Toxic alert!** Cars often have anti-freeze added to their engines around now which means bottles are often left out and spillages can occur. Unfortunately, cats find it very tasty despite the fact it is highly toxic and often fatal. Make sure you keep anti-freeze well out of reach, clean up drips and if you think they might have eaten some, bring them to us immediately.

**Outdoor pets** like rabbits or guinea pigs are usually able to cope fine as winter approaches but we can help by ensuring their cages are free from drafts and that they have enough bedding to create a cosy bed. However, they still should have as much freedom as possible, so do keep allowing them outdoor access in a secure run, they are active creatures and will be miserable cooped up for months.

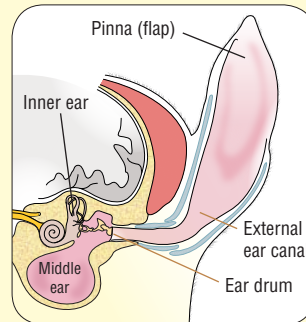
Finally, watch out for **conkers!** For some dogs they can seem like fun play things or tasty snacks! However, they are poisonous, causing nasty tummy upsets, and can potentially lead to dangerous blockages in the intestines.



## A word in your ear!

Ear disease is common in our pets and being able to quickly recognise the signs is very important.

Anatomically, our pets' ears are very similar to ours, with a canal extending from the ear flap into the skull with a drum at the base protecting the middle ear. The main difference is that their ears are positioned towards the top of their heads, rather than the sides, and the ear canals are longer. Sound travels down the ear canal and vibrates the ear drum, stimulating tiny bones in the middle ear, which in turn transmits sounds onto the inner ear and brain.



A dog's ear in cross section. Most ear problems occur in the external ear canal

The vast majority of ear problems affect only the external ear canal but repeated infections and some growths will cause middle ear disease. Middle ear disease (which is more common in cats) can be a challenge to diagnose, and treatment is difficult owing to the depth of the middle ear.

Signs of ear problems include: head shaking and scratching or rubbing at their ears. Discharge is common and can be black and waxy or creamy or pus-like and is often very smelly. You might also notice inflammation and reddening.

Ear infections can be triggered by objects getting into the canal (grass seeds are a common culprit), skin allergies, excessive wetness after swimming (but not for all pets, so if your dog enjoys a dip, you don't necessarily need to stop them!), bacterial infections or ear mite infestations (seen commonly in cats). Sometimes we might recommend sedating your pet so we can fully examine their ears, and run tests such as swabs, bloods or X-rays.

Treatment of ear problems usually involves topical liquids but these can be a challenge in some pets! If you think you might struggle, please ask us about other options. Some drops only require once daily, or even once weekly application, which we can always do for you, and occasionally we will prescribe tablets.

To prevent or reduce ear problems it is important to promptly identify the cause and start treatment as soon as possible to avoid longer term problems. In addition, regular cleaning will help affected pets – once or twice a week is enough and always use a veterinary standard ear cleaner. Ask us and we can show you what to use and how to do it effectively.



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites with a typical crusty brown discharge.



Photo of a grass awn lodged at the base of the external ear canal. Pets with trapped grass awns will usually present with severe head shaking.



Spilt antifreeze is sweet but also **deadly** to pets

