

animalism veterinary surgeons

4 St Stephens Hill, St. Albans, AL1 2DS

SUMMER 2016

NEWS

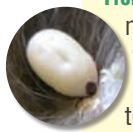
Parasite Alert!



Everyone loves the summer – us, our pets and, unfortunately, the pesky parasites that live on them!



Fleas: The balmy weather allows fleas to breed both inside and outside our houses. Pets who hunt are at particular risk because the fleas will be alive and well in large numbers on their prey. Fleas also carry worms, so always de-worm and de-flea pets at the same time. There are now several combination products on the market.



Ticks are particularly numerous on moors and scrubland or where there are lots of sheep. They are most often found attached to the head and neck of pets and look like small, grey warts or peas. If you find a tick, it is best removed with a specially designed tick remover, using a twisting action to remove them. Spot-ons, collars and tablets are all available to kill, and in some cases, repel ticks.

Harvest Mites are a late-Summer and Autumn problem. The mites tend to attach themselves to our pets' paws and ear flaps and can make them very itchy. They are visible to the naked eye as tiny orange specks on the skin but they can be difficult to spot. Treatment is with a flea spray, rather than a spot-on medication.

If you have any questions about parasites and how to treat them in your pets, we are happy to help!

Walk-in Surgeries:

Monday to Friday:
9–10am and 6–7pm

Saturday: 9–11 am

Appointments

Monday to Friday:
10.30am–12 noon and 4–6pm

Looking after your new arrival!

Getting a new pet is an exciting time and there will be a lot to think about! Once you have collected your new arrival, please bring them in to see us for a full health check to make sure there aren't any problems. As well as giving your pet a check-over, we've put together a handy list of things you need to do to keep them fit and well:

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.



Roundworms

Worming: Regular worming is absolutely vital in the early weeks of your puppy's or kitten's life. Not only are they more likely to pick up worms than adults (because of their curious natures) they are also more vulnerable to their effects due to their immature immune systems. A good breeder will worm their litters regularly from birth and you should continue this monthly until they reach six months of age. As adults, cats and dogs should be wormed at least

every three months, and if they are hunters or are out and about



monthly is better to prevent significant worm infestations.

Microchipping is now compulsory for all dogs in the UK and it must be carried out before they are eight weeks old. This means that in the majority of cases it will have been done by the breeder, but if not, then speak to us about booking them in. It is a quick and relatively painless procedure and vital to ensure your pet is permanently identifiable. Although it isn't law for cats to be microchipped, we think it is very important, especially as they often wander more than dogs.

We can advise on other topics such as **diets and feeding, dental care, flea and tick control, and pet insurance.** Please contact us for further information or to book an appointment.

The importance of early socialisation



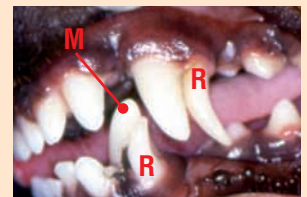
The early experiences a puppy or kitten has of people and their surroundings has a huge impact on their behaviour and personality for the rest of their life. When considering a new pet, it's really important to make sure the breeder or rescue centre has fully socialised them – it could save you a lot of problems and heartache in the future.

It is vital puppies and kittens stay with the litter and mother until at least 8 weeks old, to learn good dog or cat manners and behaviour. After their first few weeks, puppies and kittens should have regular contact with all kinds of people; adults (both men and women), children and the elderly. They should ideally be reared in a home environment, so they get used to the sights, sounds and smells of family life. Once puppies are fully vaccinated it's a good idea to get them out and about – gradually introducing them to loud noises, cars, horses, fire engines – pretty much everything and anything!



Early Dental Care Guide

Pets have two sets of teeth, and their "milk" teeth progressively fall out from about 12 weeks of age to make way for their adult teeth. If this doesn't happen the corresponding adult tooth may erupt in the *wrong* direction. This is usually only a problem in **dogs** and is treated by extracting the retained teeth.



R = retained "milk" canine teeth
M = mal-aligned adult canine tooth

Puppy and kitten photo: Jane Burton

Our telephone number is 01727 854787 (24 Hours)

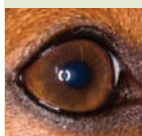
Dry itchy eyes?



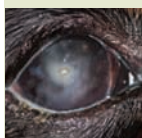
Did you know that keratoconjunctivitis sicca, commonly referred to as “Dry Eye”, is one of the most common eye problems in dogs. Dry Eye affects 1 in 22 of all dogs in recent surveys.

In most cases, Dry Eye is caused by destruction of the tear glands by your dog’s own immune system, leading to partial or total loss of tear production.

Tears play a key role in keeping eyes healthy. They lubricate and cleanse the eyes, carry vital nutrients and oxygen to the surface of the eye and help protect against infection. Healthy eyes are bright and clear (see photo left).



Healthy eye



Severely affected case of dry eye

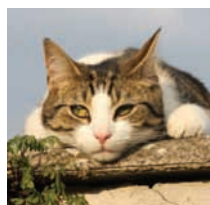
Without tears, the eyes will become progressively more dry and uncomfortable (see lower photo). However Dry Eye has a very variable appearance, with some pets’ eyes appearing relatively normal *despite* little or no measurable tear production.

Happily there is a quick and simple test to diagnose Dry Eye in your dog. Better still, medication for Dry Eye, usually in the form of an ointment, can improve tear production and reverse many of the signs of Dry Eye, maintaining vision and keeping pets comfortable. So, if your pet has any of these symptoms, let us know since the earlier the problem is diagnosed and treatment started, the better the long term outlook for affected pets.

Watch out, the sun’s about!

Finally, the summer is here! Most of us, and our pets, love the warmer weather but it brings with it its own particular set of challenges and potential problems. Here are a few tips to keep your pet fit and well at this time of year:

Heat Stroke is an extremely serious problem and can even be fatal. Although all dogs are at risk, the shorter faced breeds, like Staffies, Pugs and Bulldogs are most vulnerable, and the danger is even greater if they are overweight. To prevent problems, avoid exercising your pets in the midday heat and make sure they don’t over-exert themselves at any time. If you become worried, move them to a cool, shaded place, give them lots to drink and call us immediately.



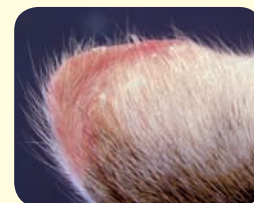
Slip, slap, slop! Most cats are real sun worshippers, which doesn’t tend to be a problem unless they have white ears or noses. These areas are vulnerable to sun burn because the hair is so thin, which is painful in itself but can also trigger skin cancers (see photo right). To protect your pet, apply high factor waterproof sun lotion to their ears and noses. This is sometimes easier said than done but there are pet specific products out there to help you.

Grass seeds are another summer problem – the grass awns of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets, especially dogs. They then migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears and between the toes. It is always a good idea to groom your pets regularly, and especially after walks, to keep a close eye out for grass seeds.

BBQ Beware! Lovely weather and longer evenings mean lots of people break out the barbecue, and dogs often have a great time hoovering up the left-overs! This can cause tummy upsets, but more seriously, if anything like bones, kebab sticks and sweetcorn cobs are snaffled, they can lead to serious blockages requiring life saving surgery to remove. So keep your pets away from the barbecue!

Itch alert! For sensitive dogs with allergies, the flowers and grasses that thrive in the summer months can cause real problems. Dogs will often break out with nasty skin rashes, especially on the feet, tummy and ears. If your pet is affected, please come and see us for a check-up as there are usually treatments we can give them to improve the situation. Also – don’t forget to keep up to date with anti-parasite treatment, since fleas can be a big cause of itching!

So – enjoy the summer months, have fun and keep your pets safe. We are here to help, so if you would like any further information on summer hazards, please just ask a member of staff.



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

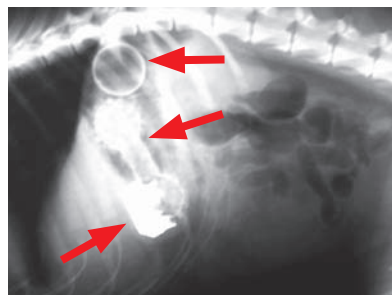
Better safe than sorry! Is your pet insured?

Did you know that you are more likely to claim on your pet insurance than either your house or car policies? The good news is that the majority of policies represent very good value for money and can take a great weight off your mind if you are faced with large vet bills.

There are several different kinds of policies; ‘12 month’ ones will only cover a condition for the first year after diagnosis, whereas ‘life long’ will continue to pay for treatment for as long as is necessary. Some will pay up to a certain amount per condition, whereas others are unlimited. So you really need to understand the policy before taking it out!

On a daily basis we see the heart wrenching decisions some of our clients face regarding the treatment of their pets, but with appropriate pet insurance, we can hopefully ensure that any treatment decisions are made on the basis of need rather than cost.

Don’t take any chances – make sure you get your pet insured today!



Case Study: Harry needed veterinary treatment because he had been vomiting, refusing food and was generally miserable. X-rays showed that Harry had been treating his toys as after-dinner snacks! Harry needed an operation to remove the toys – happily the bill was covered by Harry’s pet insurance!