



Rabbiting on!



Rabbits can make a lovely addition to the family but despite their small size, they do need a lot of care and attention!

Keep it social!

A bonded pair of rabbits (a neutered male and neutered female is best) is ideal to give them companionship. They can even be litter trained and become house rabbits.

Housing: Rabbits, whether kept indoors or outdoors, need space to exercise (with toys, tunnels and areas to dig), areas to hide, areas to sleep and eat. Rabbit hutches should allow them room for three hops minimum.

Teeth: Rabbits have constantly growing teeth – as a result they need a high fibre diet to wear the teeth down (dental issues are common in rabbits).



We suggest a diet composed of: 85% hay or grass, 10% leafy vegetables and about an egg cup full of commercial all-in-one rabbit nuggets. Signs of dental disease include excess salivation.

Fly Strike: Some rabbits can get fly strike, where flies lay eggs on them, which then hatch into maggots. This tends to occur if the rabbit has a wound or a dirty bottom. As the weather warms up, we strongly recommend all rabbits are checked twice a day for any signs of maggots. Fly strike is a true emergency in rabbits.

Vaccines offer protection against Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease. Both of these can be rapidly fatal. There are vaccines available that give good protection that are recommended for yearly use. Since Myxomatosis is spread by flies and mosquitoes it is highly recommended to have indoor rabbits vaccinated as well.

Rabbit photo: Warren Photographic

Welcoming your new arrival!

Welcoming a new puppy or kitten into your family is a super exciting time! To give your new family member the best start, it is important that they have their vaccinations, a microchip and are regularly treated against internal and external parasites.

Vaccinations: In the early weeks of life, puppies and kittens gain immunity against disease from their mother's milk. This fades over time and they will need a course of vaccines to ensure they are protected against infectious diseases (see box right).



Microchipping is a legal requirement in dogs over eight weeks of age. Even without legislation, we recommend microchipping cats and rabbits, hopefully ensuring that if they become lost or injured, a veterinary practice, the police or an animal sanctuary can scan your pet and identify you as the owner.

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



Fleas: Puppies and kittens often arrive complete with a small army of fleas, so it is a good idea for us to give them a check over on arrival! We can recommend the most appropriate treatment for your pet, whilst household sprays are great for treating your home.

Neutering: Cats should be ideally neutered by six months of age. The situation for dogs is more complex and the timing of neutering, and whether it is required, is very dependent on your dog and situation. Our team will be very happy to discuss this with you.

Other things to consider include **diets**, **dentistry** and **pet insurance**. We are here to help, so please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on any aspect of caring for your pets.

More about vaccinations

As soon as you collect your puppy or kitten, we would recommend you contact us regarding their vaccination requirements. They will need a course of vaccines as a puppy/kitten and then we will advise you regarding their individual requirements thereafter (usually the next set is one year after the initial vaccination course).

Dogs are vaccinated against a range of infectious diseases: parvovirus, leptospirosis, hepatitis and distemper.

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

Puppy and kitten photos: Warren Photographic

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. The first 16 weeks of age is a time when they are taking in new experiences, smells and sounds around them, so that they are happy with these things as they get older. Pets that miss out on this key stage tend to be more anxious and unsure of how to react to new things. This can result in behaviour problems as well as fears and phobias.

Socialisation needs to be done carefully – they should be positive experiences to a variety of situations but with exposure to situations being gradual. It is better to go for a small amount of short positive experiences on one day and to build from there. Too much, too soon can be overwhelming for them. So, 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 in the future. Please get in touch if you would like any further information on this very important topic.



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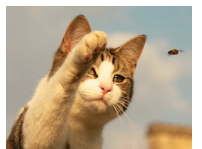
Brushing up on dental care!



Did you know that by the age of just three years old, the majority of our pets are suffering with dental disease? Poor dental health is painful, causes tooth loss, and infections can spread throughout the body – potentially causing significant organ damage.

So, it is important for us to regularly check your pet's mouth and instigate a care regime at home to ensure their teeth and gums stay in good condition.

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.



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 toothache.

Treatment and prevention: 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.



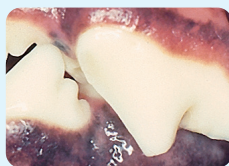
Is your pet insured?

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. We know that vet bills are often unexpected and can mount up over time, so having a good policy will really combat the worry of being able to afford their care.

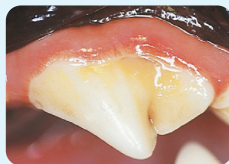
There are different types of cover to choose from. The top cover is a **lifetime policy** where your pet is covered for a condition for life, usually up to a certain amount of money per year. A **time-restricted policy** means that you can claim per condition, usually for 12 months only. If your pet has an on-going condition such as diabetes or arthritis, the cover expires after the time period. A **condition-restricted policy** means that you can claim up to a certain amount per condition.

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. So – if you would like further information on the benefits of insuring your pet, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our team.

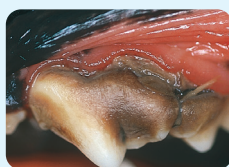
Gallery of dental conditions in pets



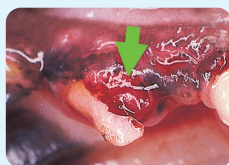
Healthy mouth with bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums



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.

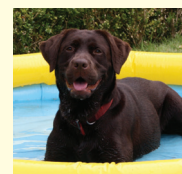


Scale and Polish: Removing the tartar using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing is a very effective form of treatment and should ideally be followed by effective home care.

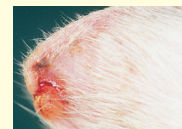
Surviving the summer!

Summer is finally here and as the weather warms up, we can look forward to some lovely sunny days, balmy evenings and BBQs! But we do also need to consider our pets, who can often find the warmer summer months quite a challenging time. Here are a few tips to keep your pet fit and well at this time of year:

Keeping cool! It is vital to ensure your pet keeps cool in hot weather. Dogs should be walked early or late in the day and should never be left unattended in cars. Paddling pools may help keep dogs cool and they should have free access to water at all times. Heat stroke is a common, and serious, problem and overweight or heavily coated dogs are most at risk.



Sunburn: Thinly haired or white coated pets are at risk of sunburn, especially if they are dedicated sun worshippers! White cats are particularly vulnerable to developing skin cancers on their ears and noses, so pay close attention to these areas. To protect your pet, you can apply high factor sun lotion specifically designed for pets.



Ear tip of a cat showing early cancerous changes

Grass awns 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 awns.



Grass awn lodged in the external ear canal.

Tick alert! It's important to check your pet after every walk to spot if any **ticks** have become attached. 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. Using prescription strength veterinary only medication (which very rapidly kills ticks) is key to preventing a range of deadly diseases that ticks can transmit.



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 our practice team.