

## The nights are drawing in -

as sad as it is to say goodbye to summer, Autumn is a lovely season. The downside for some pet owners is it's the firework season. We have an offer on Feliway and Adaptil products in this issue. Come and see us as soon as you can if your pet gets scared!

## In this issue:

- All in a day's work
- Regular vet checks; dealing with firework fears
- Canine aggression; doggy blood donors; unplanned kitten litters
- Could you be a veterinary nurse?



## All in a day's work...

While our vets and nurses try to present themselves in a professional way, each and every one of them becomes emotionally involved with every case they see, feeling as responsible for your pet as you do.

On average our vets see 30 appointments a day - that's potentially 30 ill animals, 30 emotionally charged cases and, most certainly, some difficult decisions. Between those 30 appointments, they check lab results, contact specialists, respond to client queries, inform owners of both good and bad news and make plans for treatment. They can't ask your pet what is wrong, where it hurts or if they have felt an improvement as a doctor would, so they have to rely on their skills and observation

They often work long hours, but if an emergency comes through our doors when our vets and nurses are heading for home, they don't think twice about dropping their bags, cancelling their plans or skipping a meal to help. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to prevent emergency cases, so these sacrifices are inevitable as they do what they do because they care about your pet!

All too often our vets go home feeling emotionally drained, with the weight of multiple animals' futures resting on their shoulders. For some pets the prognosis isn't great, for some it is, but it's dependent on an owners' financial constraints or time and commitments. It's understandably frustrating for owners when the treatment is costly but, while this is



a business, our vets and vet nurses are not just in it to make money - heart and soul are poured into helping each animal and they respect each owner's decision, especially when it's a hard one to make.

Don't forget our amazing receptionists, who take your calls, deal with a lot of the queries, do their best to accommodate you and your pet, calm and reassure you in an emergency and organise our day! All in a day's work, they keep smiling - they are simply fabulous!

# The benefits of regular vet checks

## The best way to keep your pet in good health and veterinary visits stress free!

According to MSD Consumer Attitudes Research, 96% of pet owners consider their pet an important part of their family, but 50% of owners only take their pet to the vet if it is sick - an alarming number when you consider how many life limiting illnesses can be easily dealt with if caught early.

Regular vet checks not only get your pet used to the veterinary environment, making visits less stressful, they also give your vet the opportunity to see your pet when it's healthy, so any changes are easier to spot. When your vet carries out a health check for a booster vaccination, new puppy or kitten check or for flea/worming treatment, it's a great opportunity to discuss any underlying worries you may have about your pet and for the vet to check their general health.

At a new puppy or kitten check the vet will try to avoid doing anything invasive, such as taking its temperature, partly to make the visit as stress-free as possible for your new pet and partly because it is easy for an owner to spot any 'ill behaviour. As we recommend regular treatment for fleas, there's no need to check for parasites.

The vet will listen to your pet's chest and abdomen for any abnormalities in gut movement or heart problems. Some dental, skin and ear problems can be identified by smell. Palpation, a gentle probing with fingers, is to check the condition of muscles, bones and abdominal organs, such as the liver and kidneys and a trained eye will spot conditions affecting the skin or coat.

It's important to perform a full examination as any problem you've spotted may just be a symptom

of something else, which is also why you'll be asked a number of questions. The aim is to get enough information to reach a firm diagnosis, in order to properly return your pet to full health. Sometimes the vet may recommend that you monitor your pet for a further changes, or more tests, such as x-rays, blood tests, ultrasound or biopsies, may be required to confirm a diagnosis in order to work out a treatment plan.

Routine, scheduled health checks can help to pick up on problems early and prevent them escalating, but if you have a concern about your pet at any time, book an appointment with the vet as soon as you can.

Many people say their pets are like their children and, in many ways, our cats and dogs are very like children in that they all react differently.

Anyone with more than one child will tell you that they all have completely different personalities. Our pets are no different - some are calm, some stoic, some nervous, some cheerful come what may.

Whatever their personality, like children they look to you (and us) to see how to react to something new, especially when they're young. So if a puppy screams when it has a jab (sadly some do, either at the time or a couple of minutes later, when they've 'processed' what's just happened), it's best to ignore it, to 'normalise' the experience. It's a bit like laughing when your toddler has fallen over. You know they're not really hurt, but if you show sympathy they'll cry - laugh and they'll join in!

## Helping your pet deal with firework fears

Firework Night and New Year's Eve come around quickly and it's easy to forget how badly your pets can be affected until these events are close. Here are some ways to help them through this stressful time:

- Walking them before dark (for fireworks) will help limit exposure to the noise.
- Providing a safe den (e.g. under the kitchen table, beside your feet or in the understairs cupboard) can help to alleviate stress.
- Closing curtains and putting on the TV or some music can provide a welcome distraction.
- Keeping things as normal as possible helps reduce anxiety - over-fussing can increase anxiety, although some pets derive comfort from cuddles, so if they seek this from you, do not deny them.
- Distraction with a favourite toy/games may help with a mild phobia.
- Anxiety-reducing products can be effective, even as close as the day before the event.

- Products such as ThunderShirts and ThunderCaps (available from good pet shops) work for some pets, by applying gentle pressure to make the pet feel safe and secure, calming them and reducing anxiety.

These ideas work well for mild phobias, but a pet with moderate to severe phobias may require a consultation with a veterinary surgeon, to assess the best form of treatment and the earlier this can be started, the better. Noise fear and phobia can be traumatic, for both pet and owner and it is worth noting that New Year's Eve and the weeks either side of Firework Night aren't the only occasions where loud, unusual noises can occur. Call us for more information or advice.





## Bad dog, scared dog or dog in pain?

Aggression is not a breed or personality trait in a dog but behaviour meant to enhance the dog's feeling of safety. It is a clear message that the dog is uncomfortable and needs to increase the distance between itself and whatever it sees as a threat. With training (of both dogs and owners) the initial signs of aggression can be recognised and addressed straightaway, the dog can be kept safe and under control and in most cases, an attack can be prevented.

Approximately eight postal workers are attacked each day, some of them suffering life changing injuries, such as loss of fingers or impaired limb function. Online shopping puts delivery staff at greater risk of direct contact with dogs as many customers have to sign for packages. Dogs can see their delivery round as a regular intrusion on their territory, which is appears to be seen off by their aggressive barking

If you are getting a puppy, always check that it has been allowed to become used to people visiting and passing the home prior to eight weeks of age, meeting a range of occasional and regular visitors. Once you have the puppy at home, continue this training. If you're expecting lots of visitors, the puppy should be given a toy in a calm, quiet area.

If your dog is older and more set in it's ways, you can prevent incidents by securing your dog in another room before answering the door or using a letterbox cage to prevent biting. If your dog is very territorial it should not be left unsupervised, either with children or outside if it could come into contact with visitors.

Any new behaviour problem in dogs merits a visit to the vets - aggression can indicate pain, possibly due to an underlying illness. Appropriate pain relief can reduce aggression immediately and any illness can then be treated. Once a dog has a clean bill of health, your vet should be able to recommend a good trainer or clinical animal behaviourist if problems persist.

## Could your dog be a blood donor?



Like humans, dogs sometimes need blood transfusions and the only place to get blood for transfusions is from willing donor dogs whose owners bring them to donation sessions. One donation can save the lives of up to four dogs: a large dog can comfortably give a half pint of blood, enough to help smaller dogs who have less overall blood in them.

The painless donation procedure does have some criteria that donors must meet. Donor dogs must:

- Have a good temperament
- Be between 1 and 8 years old
- Weigh more than 25kg
- Not have travelled outside the UK
- Be-to-date with their vaccinations

Donor dogs must be well-behaved as they have to sit still for around 10 minutes to complete the donation.

Cats also occasionally need transfusions but their blood cannot be stored, so blood has to be transfused directly from another cat. Feline blood donation is more difficult and can be dangerous for the donor, so it's important to do some research before putting your cat forward as a donor.

To find out if your cat or dog would make a suitable donor or how to donate, call us on 01453 752 555.

## Vets concerned about unplanned kittens

With over 140,000 cats rehomed every year, neutering is essential to reduce the population of unwanted cats in the UK. To find out more about getting your kitten neutered, call 01453 742555

The British Veterinary Association has revealed that a massive 93% of vets are worried about unplanned litters of kittens. Added to the many stray and abandoned kittens, unplanned litters put pressure on an already strained system trying to find them homes.

Neutering cats prevents unwanted pregnancies and can protect them from some diseases and infections. Behavioural issues (e.g. aggression and inappropriate urination) can be avoided and socialisation with other cats improved.

While most pet owners know the benefits of neutering, many do not know how early they should get their cat neutered. Traditionally the age to get a cat neutered is 6 months, but many vets and the BVA recommend neutering from 4 months. The operation is low cost and low risk. There's always a small risk with using anaesthetic, but it can be minimised by using a veterinary hospital, rather than a smaller surgery or animal hospital.

As a veterinary hospital we don't just undergo regular inspections of our premises, equipment, records and staffing, we also have be staffed 24 hours a day, so if your pet needs to stay with us overnight, there'll always be a qualified veterinary nurse here to take care of them.



## Could YOU be a Veterinary Nurse?

If, like us, you really love animals, there's a strong chance that, at some point, you've considered working with them. If so, why not think about becoming a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN)? Veterinary nursing is hard work, but very rewarding and a great career choice if you want a stimulating, challenging job with no two days the same!

As well as being passionate about caring for animals, you need empathy and compassion to be able to communicate effectively with the pets' owners - plus stamina (caring for animals is never 9am - 5pm and a veterinary hospital requires qualified staff on-site 24/7) and a strong stomach to cope with the sights and smells that go with caring for sick animals. Also, be prepared to work shifts, including nights and weekends.

RVNs certainly experience variety: from helping a veterinary surgeon in theatre, monitoring anaesthesia or performing radiography to giving advice on the most appropriate method of flea control. They also play an

important role in educating owners on good standards of animal care.

As with any worthwhile job, the training required takes time, hard work and commitment. Those willing to put in the effort will be rewarded with a career offering variety, interest and daily contact with animals and their owners. Training can be vocational, on the more hands-on diploma course, or a university degree course (see [BVNA.org.uk](http://BVNA.org.uk) for details). Once qualified, RVN's pay an annual fee to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) to remain on their Register of Veterinary Nurses.

Approved training practices are inspected annually. We currently have five trainees, attending various colleges and each has their own clinical coach at Clockhouse.

The good news is that there is a national shortage of veterinary nurses so your job prospects, once qualified, are excellent and can lead to many other opportunities!



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