

Winter - a great time to fire up the central heating and light the log fires

Welcome to the Clockhouse Vets winter newsletter, with some timely advice about antifreeze, general health check-ups and a voucher for money off pet toys!

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But baby, it's cold outside...!

Busy schedules and dull, cold, wet weather are not conducive to healthy habits, yet finding ways to exercise your dog and cat during the winter won't just save your pet from becoming podgy, but could benefit the whole family.

It's no surprise that dog owners walk almost twice as much in a week than non-dog owners - the surprise is that around 50% of dogs and cats are either overweight or obese. The health problems associated with obesity in pets are the same as in people: diabetes, heart and lung disease, skin conditions, arthritis, high blood pressure and even cancer.

A healthy, portion-controlled diet is important but exercise is considered a cornerstone of preventive care, with huge benefits to you and your pet, including:

- Improved overall health
- Weight control: you should be able to feel your pet's ribs beneath the fur. Looking down at your pet, you should be able to see a waistline.
- Reduction of unwanted behaviour, such as chewing, digging, vocalising.
- Stronger muscles and improved flexibility, decreasing risk of injury.
- A stronger human-animal bond.

If the cold weather keeps you inside, there are fun ways to create both physical and mental

enrichment for your pet:

- Fetch: great for dogs and cats.
- Hide and seek: low-calorie treats hidden around the house provide cats with mental stimulation.
- Food puzzle toys to make dogs or cats work to get their food.
- Laser pointer: both dogs and cats enjoy chasing the light.
- String: a cheap and easy cat toy and a great way to get them up and moving, as long as they don't try to eat it.

But, if the temperature will allow, bundle up and take your dog for a brisk walk. Start out quickly and only allow pausing and sniffing on the return route.

After the winter, more rigorous exercise should be gradually reintroduced. As with people, excessive activity, especially after being sedentary for several months, can cause injury.

For advice on diet and exercise to keep your pet active and healthy, give Clockhouse a call on 01453 752555.





Is your rabbit lonely?

A recent survey by the British Veterinary Association has shown that 1 in 5 vets are concerned about lonely pet rabbits. Rabbits are perceived as an easy to care for animal, good for beginner pet owners or as an introductory pet for children. A single rabbit is one of the UK's most popular pets.

Rabbits are, however, social creatures and keeping a rabbit on its own can lead to a range of problems including boredom, frustration, fear and stress. Comments from vets included:

Rabbits should not be solitary animals left in the hutch 23 hours a day.

'Rabbits are often bought for children who grow bored of them – rabbits can live for a very long time in a small hutch and often get quite neglected.'

'Rabbits need the companionship of other rabbits and should never be kept alone or with guinea-pigs. The best combination is a neutered female and a neutered male rabbit.'

Rabbits do make excellent pets and are, in many ways, far easier to care for than a cat or dog, but it's important to do your research before getting a rabbit to ensure it lives a healthy, happy life. Other things to consider before buying a rabbit include making sure it has a large enough hutch and run. The minimum recommended hutch size for a pair of rabbits is 6ft x 2ft x 2ft with an 8ft attached run.

It's also important to know what kind of diet your rabbit needs. Rabbits teeth constantly grow,

so it's important they they eat enough grass or hay to wear their teeth down. Feeding them only muesli-style dry food will result in the rabbit picking out their favourites, and their health will suffer as a result.

It is very important to get your rabbit's teeth checked at least once a year, at the time of their vaccination, as dental problems in rabbits are sadly very common due to bad breeding or poor diet. To get your rabbit's teeth checked, book an appointment today.

Beware unscrupulous online pet adverts

Trained volunteers, from various animal welfare organisations, carried out a six month pilot scheme to trial a set of minimum standards introduced in 2013 by the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) for online pet adverts and PAAG chairman, Clarissa Baldwin, was staggered by the number of adverts that had to be blocked in the pilot scheme. In the first six months of this year, a total of 100,000 unscrupulous adverts were removed from some of the UK's largest websites for classified ads, showing the scale of the problem in the UK.

At the launch of the standards PAAG revealed some of the worst examples of online pet adverts - including adverts for underage puppies, illegal pit bulls, a cat in need of veterinary treatment, marmoset monkeys, even an arctic fox and offers to swap pets for mobile phones or watches.

Unfortunately, despite the fantastic efforts of a number of the biggest UK websites, thousands of other websites continue to accept illegal,

unethical and unscrupulous adverts. The sites taking part in the pilot scheme were: Gumtree, Pets4Homes, PreLoved, EPupz, FridayAds and Vivastreet, who removed ads picked up by their own filters as well as those highlighted by PAAG volunteers.

These standards are designed to protect animals, improve animal welfare and protect consumers from buying sick, dangerous or illegal animals online and are just the first step in solving the problems caused by online pet sales. They will hopefully help to make the internet a safer place to look for a new pet, but if you see a suspicious advert, please report it to the site owners. If they fail to remove it, please contact PAAG.

For advice on buying a new pet, please contact us on 01453 752555 and we'll be happy to talk to you about the best type and breed of pet for you, your family and your lifestyle, what to look for and importantly, the questions you need to ask.

Cold weather care

The weather last summer was great and the warmth lasted well into the autumn, but now the weather is feeling colder (and wetter) it's important to know whether you need to take any special precautions to keep your pet happy and healthy during the winter months.

A concern of many small animal owners is whether or not they need to bring their rabbit or guinea pig in for the winter. In most cases, as long as they're in a well-insulated hutch with plenty of bedding, they should be fine so there is no reason to bring them indoors for winter. If you're worried about them, you can give them extra hay or nesting materials, or cover their hutch or run with blankets. It's important to clean out hutches more often in winter as wet bedding stays far colder than fresh bedding. Extra food (and good variety) can also help keep energy levels up and immune systems strong.

Dogs and cats who have the option to come indoors are often assumed to be fine for the winter months. However, they too need additional thought as the frost rolls in. Dogs paws can accumulate lumps of snow in between their pads, which can be painful. This can be avoided by keeping the fur in-between their pads short. Dogs who walk on pavements treated with antifreeze or salt can get chapped or sore paws. As they often lick their paws, they can end up ingesting these harmful substances, so it's worth washing your dog's feet or wiping them with a warm wet cloth as soon as you get back into the house. It's also worth investing in a hi-viz coat for cold dark mornings and evening walks - very short-haired dogs will appreciate the padded versions.

Another consideration in the cold is for cats that hide in tyre wells, where residual heat from



an engine can create a warm, dry space for them. Knocking on the bonnet of your car or idling for a few seconds before you start driving can give cats time to vacate before they're in any danger.

Lastly, be careful when topping up your antifreeze! Having antifreeze in your car is essential, but it's easy to forget that antifreeze is massively toxic to pets: just a teaspoon is enough to kill a cat and just a tablespoon enough to kill a dog.

Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol which is poisonous to humans as well as pets. Unfortunately ethylene glycol tastes sweet, making it appealing to household pets. This means it's essential to keep antifreeze closed and out of reach of pets, in robust and safe containers. It's also really important to clean up any spillages immediately, before any pets can lick up the spill.

The symptoms of antifreeze poisoning are:

- Vomiting
- Seeming depressed or sleepy
- Appearing drunk and uncoordinated
- Seizures (fits)
- Difficulty breathing
- Increased thirst
- Increased urination

Signs of antifreeze poisoning can show 30 mins after ingestion but symptoms can take up to 3 days to appear. If you think your pet has ingested antifreeze you must get them to your vets as soon as possible. Consuming antifreeze leads to kidney failure, so the sooner they are seen, the better their chance of survival.

Some antifreeze manufacturers have begun adding extra ingredients to make their product taste bitter, putting pets off the taste, so if you have a cat or dog it's worth looking out for an antifreeze that contains an embittering agent, such as denatonium or Bitrex. Several charities are calling for bitter tasting ingredients to be added to all antifreeze products to help reduce the numbers of poisonings they see each year - in children as well as pets. Keeping antifreeze in closed containers, out of reach, is essential.

Easy-to-keep New Year's Resolutions

The new year is upon us and many people will have new year's resolutions. These are usually about taking care of yourself: losing weight and quitting smoking are common examples, but what about taking care of your pet?

The new year is a great time to ensure your pet has a clean bill of health. Microchipping, vaccines, check-ups, nail clipping and dental work can all give your pet a happy start to the new year and help them stay healthier throughout 2015.

Microchipping is essential for all cats and dogs. A quick and painless procedure, the microchip is injected just under the skin at the back of the neck. It is a cheap solution that allows your pet to be identified quickly and easily in any number of circumstances.

Vaccines are important to ensure your pet stays healthy. Many people know the significance of making sure their pet is vaccinated in its infancy, but it's easy to forget that, in order to maintain immunity from the diseases they're vaccinated against, adult pets need regular booster injections too. Rabbits in particular, need regular vaccinations against Myxomatosis to keep them healthy.

Regular check-ups help to ensure your pet stays in good health. They are a great opportunity to ask the vet any questions you might have about your pet, discuss any unusual behaviour or concerns you might have and just to feel reassured that your pet has been checked over.

Nail clipping and dental work can both greatly

improve your pets quality of life. Quick and easy, both these procedures are important to ensure that your pet isn't having trouble walking or eating and can prevent far more serious problems.

At Clockhouse you can save money on all of these procedures and receive discounts on others, when you sign up to our Paws & Claws plan. It's a great way to spread the cost of your pet's care and an amazing gift for your pet to help them have a happy and healthy new year.

PUTTING YOU AND YOUR BEST FRIEND FIRST

Spread the cost of your pet care with easy monthly payments and enjoy a **15% inflation-proof discount** over the year for complete peace of mind.

CAT	DOG
£13 per month	£11* per month

*depending on size and weight, contact us for a more detailed price



PAWS & CLAWS

MONTHLY PET HEALTH PLAN

See our website or ask us for details of the many member benefits!



Special Winter Offer to help keep your pets fit and active!

**£1 OFF TOYS FOR CATS & DOGS
THROUGHOUT FEBRUARY
WITH THIS VOUCHER.**



*Subject to availability, but some products may be ordered from reception at the discounted rate during February on production of this voucher, so please ask.