

Practice News

We hope you are all enjoying the summer after all the rain we have had it is so nice to see the sun!

Over the Spring the surgery's waiting room and reception has had a make over, enabling us to increase the retail areas and separate the seating for our dog and cat patients. You will notice that we have widened the range of stock to include toys, food, shampoos, carriers, collars, wild bird and chicken supplies. On your next visit if you can not see a particular item please let us know as we can order special request products to arrive in the same week.

Remember that you will receive a 10% discount on all retail items if you are a Bearsted Veterinary Surgery VIP! See the article in the main text for more information.

Our resident dog trainer Sam Grice has been busy at the surgery helping many clients train their canine friends. Sam attends the surgery for a FREE behaviour clinic every Wednesday 1.30-2.30pm to provide advice and training tips. Pop in with your dog on Wednesday afternoons or give her a call on 07969552696.

We will be offering various monthly money saving deals over the year so please look out for these on our website, Facebook and at the surgery.

Topics in this issue:

- *Itchy scratchy – is your pet affected?*
- *Become a Bearsted VIP!*
- *Gum disease – a very common problem*
- *Don't get the summertime blues!*
- *Have a heart!*

Itchy scratchy – is your pet affected?

With the onset of summer weather, many pets will start to itch and scratch and two of the commonest causes are fleas and allergies.



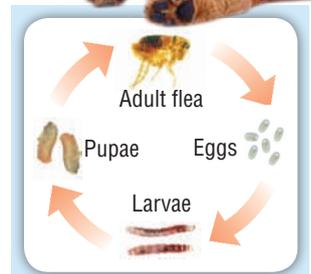
Fleas need little introduction to most pet owners! During the winter months, fleas usually only breed indoors – making the most of the central heating. However as the weather warms up, the problem becomes far more serious as fleas can *also* breed outside in parks and gardens. Here, any dormant flea eggs from last year will rapidly hatch out into adult fleas which will hop onto passing pets, bringing dozens of these tiny pests back to your home. Adult fleas feed on your pet's blood, causing a range of symptoms including: itchy skin, infections, rashes and hair loss, and they can also bite humans as well! Worse still, they hop off our pets and make their home in pet beds, carpets and soft furnishings, where the flea life-cycle is completed.



Allergies are another problem seen commonly in the spring and summer months. Allergies are immune reactions where an animal responds abnormally to a common substance – these substances are called *allergens*. (See box right for different types of allergies).

Inhaled allergies are a major cause of problems in humans and pets at this time of year. Every type of plant and tree produces pollen and the surge in pollen levels can lead to inhaled allergies. When outdoors, pets and humans inhale dozens of pollens, but the allergic symptoms are often very different. Whilst humans get 'hay fever', affected pets tend to show *skin* symptoms. Dogs may show generalised itchiness, but more commonly may show *localised* signs of paw chewing, face rubbing, and itchy ears.

So, if your pet is showing signs of skin problems, come and see us for a check-up! We can check for fleas (and other parasites) and advise you on the best preventative products. Diagnosis of allergies is more tricky, but blood tests and skin testing can help us identify the allergens. It is usually difficult to *cure* allergies, but modern treatments can be very effective in making pets less itchy.



The flea life-cycle:

Adult female fleas can lay up to 50 eggs per day and these fall off your pet and onto carpets, bedding and outside areas. Whilst the eggs can remain dormant for many months, in warm weather they will rapidly hatch out and develop (via larval stages) into adult fleas. With a life-cycle of about a month, flea numbers can rise dramatically in the summer.

Different types of allergies:

Our pets come into contact with allergens in three main ways:

- Inhaled (e.g. pollens).
- Ingested (e.g. food allergies).
- Contact (e.g. flea bite allergy where certain pets develop an allergy to flea saliva).

Photos: Warren Photographic

Become a Bearsted VIP!

Bearsted Veterinary Surgery are now running a pay monthly by direct debit 'Pet Care Plan'.

This plan enables our clients to receive annual vaccinations, a years supply of flea and worm treatment, a 6 month health check and also 10% discount on all other products and services at the surgery.

Plans start at just £12.00 per month for a cat and up to £23.00 a month for a giant dog. Not only do you save each time you visit it also allows you to spread the cost of preventative health care evenly across the year. This plan works great alongside pet insurance but also benefits the uninsured pets.

If you wish to become a VIP or require further information please contact the surgery at any time on 01622 736677.



Photo: istockphoto.com



Gum disease – a very common problem

If your pet's breath leaves a lot to be desired, it is likely that *gum disease* is the underlying problem! A healthy mouth usually has shrimp pink gums and bright white teeth. However problems will occur if plaque bacteria are allowed to build up on the surface of the teeth. Over time, accumulation of sticky plaque leads to *inflammation* and *reddening* of the gums – termed **gingivitis**. This is frequently accompanied by the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth along with very bad breath! However there is worse to come..! If the gingivitis is allowed to continue unchecked, plaque bacteria will start to penetrate *below* the gum line, resulting in destruction of the bone and tooth supporting structures – a painful condition called **periodontitis**. As the tooth support structures are progressively destroyed, the tooth will become loose and eventually fall out.

So what is the incidence of gingivitis and periodontitis?

Sadly – it is very common and unfortunately once a tooth becomes loose, the problem is usually too advanced to save that tooth. However if gum problems are identified at an *earlier* stage (where there are signs of *gingivitis*), a combination of a Scale and Polish and ongoing Home Care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health (and their breath!). Please contact us today for a dental check-up and to find out more about caring for your pet's teeth.



Gingivitis with swollen and inflamed gum margins



Periodontitis with redness and recession of the gum margin.



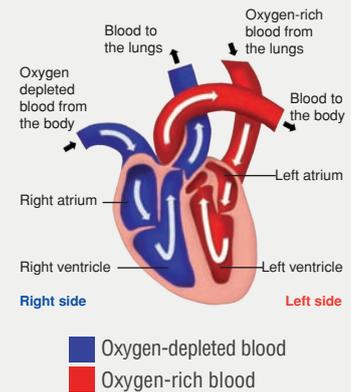
Scale and Polish: Removing the calculus using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing is a very effective form of treatment



Have a heart!

Whilst most of our pets take normal heart function for granted, it's a sad fact that heart disease is surprisingly common in dogs and cats.

The heart is a muscular pump that is responsible for supplying the tissues of the body with oxygenated blood. The heart receives de-oxygenated blood from the tissues of the body and pumps it to the lungs where it is re-oxygenated. This re-oxygenated blood flows back to the heart, where it is then pumped back round the body.



Heart disease – which can be gradual or sudden in onset, is the loss of the normal pumping action of the heart. Whilst there are many possible causes of heart disease, most problems are associated with the heart valves or the muscular walls of the heart.

In dogs it is generally more common in older pets, but in certain breeds it can be more prevalent at an early age. In cats it is often associated with an over-active thyroid gland.

Signs of heart disease include:

- coughing (excluding minor coughs lasting a few days)
- laboured or rapid breathing,
- reluctance to exercise,
- fainting or collapse.

If your pet is showing *any* of the signs listed above, come and see us for a full clinical examination. Happily, new diagnostic techniques and novel medications are now greatly improving and extending the lives of pets with heart problems.

Don't get the summertime blues!



We all love the summer weather – when it finally arrives! *But how prepared are you and your pets?*

Here we look at some simple steps to help to beat the heat this summer:

Play it cool! Remember to avoid walking dogs in the heat of the day, particularly old overweight dogs and those with heart



problems. Early mornings and evenings are best. If you have space, dogs love a paddling pool to cool off!

Sunscreen please! Cats with white noses and white ear tips are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes in the sunburnt areas. High factor sunblock applied to the at risk (white) areas helps to minimise this risk.



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes

Barbecue beware! Remember to ensure pets don't eat the barbecue leftovers – scraps and fatty leftovers can give your pet tummy upsets or pancreatitis, whilst also beware of corn on the cob husks which can easily become lodged in your dog's intestines.



Flystrike is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs

there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out on a daily basis. Call us immediately if you are worried.

Also remember that pets in outside runs need a *shaded area* to get away from the sun.

Grass seeds of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets, particularly dogs. They often migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears and between toes. Regular grooming, especially after walks is helpful in preventing problems associated with grass seeds.



Bee and wasp stings are another seasonal problem. Some pets are allergic to their stings and may need prompt veterinary attention.

And finally: Don't forget to keep treating your pets regularly against **fleas, ticks and worms** and **never ever leave a pet in a car on a hot day, they can die of heat stroke.**