



We achieved Cat Friendly Clinic status



We are very proud to confirm that we achieved Cat Friendly Clinic status from the International Society of Feline Medicine late last year. It was a

result of a huge team effort from all the staff and we love all the changes we have made to make your cat happier when visiting the vet. For more information see the article in the newsletter.

As you know, we vaccinate dogs against a variety of diseases including parvovirus, leptospirosis, distemper and hepatitis – all of which can sadly be fatal. Diseases do not stay the same. New strains can emerge from time to time, which is why our vets continue to clinically review our vaccination policy and take advice from leading experts. As a result, we are pleased to tell you that we are one of the first practices in the country to provide our clients with a completely new vaccination range called Versican Plus®, which we believe offers your dog the most up-to-date protection available. Parvovirus is a highly contagious and nasty disease which is potentially fatal and this innovative vaccine range contains a new strain offering excellent protection, particularly against the most common type of Parvovirus seen in the UK.

Another reason for selecting this vaccine is its broader protection for Leptospirosis. This disease is widespread, carried by rodents such as rats and other animals too. It is a serious disease infecting both dogs and people. Traditional vaccines tend to cover only two types, however this new vaccine provides additional protection covering four strains of leptospirosis.

To book your vaccination appointment please call reception on **01622 736677**.

What is a Cat Friendly Clinic?

The International Society for Feline Medicine (ISFM) is the veterinary division of International Cat Care (www.icatcare.org), a charity dedicated to improving the health and welfare of cats worldwide.

The **ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic** scheme means that accredited clinics have reached a higher standard of cat care in that they:

- Understand the needs of cats and have made vet visits more cat-friendly
- Understand how to approach and handle cats gently and with care
- Have good knowledge and equipment to manage the care of cats



As mentioned in our practice news we are proud to announce that we have just received our Silver accreditation on the scheme.

We understand that there are unique difficulties in bringing a cat to a veterinary clinic:

- Cats often do not travel well and feel unsafe away from their home
- They are highly sensitive to new sights, sounds and smells
- Most cats prefer quiet and solitude and are highly susceptible to stress
- Most cats are highly stressed by nearby dogs in a vet clinic
- Cats need to be handled gently and with respect in the clinic

At Bearsted Vets we have a separate waiting area for cats, we advise that cat carriers are placed on the chair next to you and covered in a blanket or towel to help them feel secure.

We have a separate cat hospital ward, with deluxe sized kennels including comfortable bedding, large litter trays, different types of litter and a wide range of feeding bowls and plates- we will ask you what your cat prefers when they are admitted to the ward. Each kennel also includes a 'Feline Fort', designed for the cat to sit inside or perch on top for the best view out!

As a cat friendly clinic all of our vets and nurses understand that cats need to be approached in a gentle, calm and empathetic way to minimise their anxiety during their visit to us.

Starting early in 2016 we will be offering cat only consultation times, run by our 'Cat Advocate' Karen Jarvis. Please ask at reception for any further information about the scheme, our facilities or services we provide.

Kennel Cough – is your dog vaccinated?



Kennel cough is a highly infectious, but rarely life-threatening, respiratory infection that can spread from dog to dog wherever they socialise – in kennels, at dog training, dog shows or just out on walks.

Affected pets usually develop a harsh "honking" cough, which often sounds as if they have got something stuck in their throats (but don't worry – this is very rare!). Other symptoms include loss of appetite and breathlessness. In the worst cases, dogs may cough for weeks and some may get more serious complications such as pneumonia.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and one particular bacterium – *Bordetella Bronchiseptica*. Although your pet's regular booster vaccinations should provide protection against the *viral* components of the cough, only an annual vaccination with intranasal drops can offer protection against *Bordetella*. So – don't take any chances with this distressing cough – make sure your pet is vaccinated. Please contact us today for further information or to book an appointment!

Spring time itches – is your pet affected?

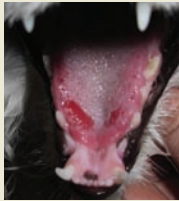


Cats: Toxic alert!

Cats are uniquely vulnerable to poisons due to their curious nature, outdoor access, tendency to groom contaminants from their coats and feet, and their unique physiology which means they struggle to rid themselves of some poisons.

The most common causes of poisoning include **lilies**, **permethrin** (a chemical in dog flea products, which should never be applied to cats), **ethylene glycol** (antifreeze, found in car radiators, screen washes and de-icers), **benzalkonium chloride** (found in disinfectants and patio cleaners), **paracetamol** (highly toxic to cats) and **white spirit** or turpentine.

For lilies (*Lilium* species and *Hermercallis*) the pollen, leaves and petals are all toxic – even drinking from the vase can make cats very unwell. Other toxins cause less serious but still unpleasant signs, for example benzalkonium chloride found in many disinfectants, can cause severe ulceration of the mouth and tongue as shown in the picture (right).



Signs of poisoning can often be vague so owners should be vigilant when it comes to their cat's health. So contact us at once if you notice any signs of unusual behaviour or illness. Some of the most common causes of poisoning: lilies and antifreeze, cause severe kidney damage in very small quantities, so vigilance is needed.

Last year **International Cat Care** (www.icatcare.org) launched their 'Keeping Cats Safe' campaign to promote awareness of substances that are poisonous to cats. For more information and advice on keeping your cat safe visit:

<http://icatcare.org/about-us/our-campaigns/keeping-cats-safe>.

Spring has arrived! However, although most of us look forward to the warmer weather, the budding trees and the colour returning to our gardens, it can herald the start of 'itchy season' and misery for sensitive pets, especially dogs.

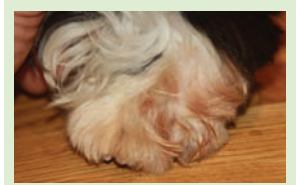
Many animals will start to lick or scratch themselves at this time of year. It is their version of hay fever but while we react to the pollens going up our noses and into our eyes, they are affected by them simply contacting with the skin. This is why the most commonly affected areas of the body are those close to the ground or often in contact with foliage, such as the feet, tummy and ears.

Once the skin flares and the dog starts to bother at it, the situation quickly escalates (this is known as the itch/scratch cycle) and inflamed, red, sore and infected areas will appear. There is often a change in the coat colour, most often on the feet, to a reddish-brown colour. This is staining from the saliva because of the excessive licking. It is most obvious on lighter coloured dogs and is another thing to look out for.

Diagnosis of allergies can be tricky, but blood tests and skin testing can help us to identify substances in the environment that individual animals are allergic to. Common culprits include various pollens, fleas and housedust mites.

When treating this condition we need medication to reduce the itching, combat any infections introduced by scratching or licking, and also to reduce the exposure to allergens if possible. It is also essential to keep up your anti-parasitic treatments to ensure that parasites are not playing a role in causing the itching! Longer term treatments may include attempting to identify the underlying cause of the allergy (see above) and then creating a 'vaccine' to gradually desensitise the pet to the allergy and this can prove helpful in many dogs.

So – if your pet is plagued by itchy skin, please come and see us. Although allergies are usually managed rather than totally cured, modern medications can make our pets' lives a lot happier.



Paw chewing in a dog: Discoloured hair is a sign of excessive grooming.

Fact File: chronic kidney disease



Kidney disease is one of the most common conditions our pets, especially cats, face. It is irreversible and progressive. However, if caught early enough, treatment can be very successful at slowing the destruction of the kidney cells; increasing both the length and quality of life.

The early signs of kidney disease are subtle. They include weight loss, a reduced appetite and an increased thirst. As the condition worsens, the pet may start to vomit, develop bad breath and other even more severe symptoms.

The condition is triggered by a slow death of the cells in the kidneys, called nephrons. However, the body has an excess of these, so no symptoms or abnormal test results become apparent until at least 70% of them have been destroyed. This is why chronic kidney disease is such a challenging problem; by the time it is discovered the process is already well underway.

However, once we have passed that point, the diagnosis is easily made using standard blood and urine tests and checking your pet's blood pressure may also be recommended.

The body cannot replace dead nephrons, so treatment is aimed at supporting those that remain and slowing any further destruction. The mainstay is a dietary change to a prescription food. This provides targeted nutrition for the kidney and reduces toxins in the bloodstream, which are very damaging. In addition we can prescribe medications to control blood pressure and excessive stomach acid, food additives to bind toxins and replace vital, lost vitamins and, for some animals, regular fluid administration under the skin helps combat the chronic dehydration.

If you are concerned that your dog or cat may be showing any signs of kidney disease (such as increased thirst or weight loss), please contact us for a check-up.