

Practice News

Welcome to our Winter newsletter. We hope you and all your furies are well!

We are celebrating the fact we have been awarded Silver in the Cat Friendly Clinic awards for the second year in a row. We put a lot of effort into making sure all our feline patients have a positive experience when visiting us. To see all the ways we create a low stress environment for your cats please have a look at our website where we explain in more detail.

This Winter we are going microchipping crazy! From January until the end of March 2017 we have the price of microchipping your dogs, cats, rabbits or ferrets reduced from £25 to just £15! Appointments are available with our qualified microchippers 7 days a week.

Chips with everything!

It is now a legal requirement for all dogs in the UK to be microchipped. This is to try to reduce the stray population and encourage responsible pet ownership.



However, it is a very good idea to microchip **all** your pets, not just the dogs! **Cats** often

wander and lose collars, so it's just as important. We can also chip **rabbits, birds** and even **reptiles!**

Finally, don't forget to keep that information up to date! A chip loses its effectiveness if the numbers are no longer current!

Don't take any chances, call us today for further information to get your pets microchipped!

Avoiding Christmas calamities!

The festive season is an exciting time, with plenty of lovely food, chocolate galore, presents, visitors, not to mention all the decorations and the tree! So here are some tips to keep your pets out of trouble over this fun time.

Festive food alert! With so much extra food in the house it is essential to keep it well away from pets. **Rich foods** can lead to upset tummies, but be especially aware of **raisins** in puddings, pies and cakes, since they can be very toxic to the kidneys. **Chocolate** is another festive favourite, but as little as 50g of plain chocolate can be fatal in small dogs. Turkey meat is fine but if your pets get hold of **turkey bones**, there is the potential for dangerous gut blockages. Also, don't forget about the **presents** under the tree! Dogs, with their sensitive noses will be able to tell exactly which gifts are edible and the wrappings and ribbons won't do their tummies any good either!

Visitor alert! Christmas is a time for families and our homes are often full of visitors celebrating the festive cheer. Many pets



will revel in this extra attention but some will find it extremely stressful. If your animals are more shy than sociable, make sure they have a safe space they can retreat to undisturbed.

Winter walks: when going for an after lunch walk, take care of your dog's paws. Snow and ice can ball up between the toes, especially on furry feet, and road grit can cause nasty sores if it is not washed off once you are home. Also slim fine coated breeds such as whippets find it hard to conserve heat and will benefit from a dog coat in cold weather.

Pinch an inch! With many pets spending more time indoors during the winter months – they are getting less exercise and need correspondingly less food. Keep an eye out for any weight gain since excess weight can cause a range of health problems including heart disease and diabetes.

If you would like any further information on any of the topics mentioned in this article, please speak to a member of our team. Have fun with your pets and stay safe over the festive season!



Dastardly Decorations!

Make sure the decorations and the tree are either well out of reach or securely fastened down. Cats especially, find the twinkly lights, tinsel and baubles irresistible and will love to bat them about or, worse, chew on them. Which not only could ruin your lovely decorations but could cause them harm if they are accidentally swallowed or broken.

Toxic plant alert!

When cats are not going out as much they also like to amuse themselves by chewing house plants. Beware of **lilies** which are toxic to cats. All parts of the plant, including the pollen, are toxic, causing kidney failure.



E-Cigarette awareness

These are a new hazard for dogs that chew everything. The high concentration of nicotine poses a very serious risk to chewing pets.

Cat with wool, rabbit, dog in snow: Jane Burton



Fleas?! But it's freezing!

It's true! The winter months are often the worst for fleas because although it is cold outside, our houses are warm and just right for them to breed in their thousands. This is why it is important to continue with flea protection at this time of year because just one or two fleas can easily turn into an infestation. In many cases new flea problems are caused by flea eggs from **old** infestations hatching out and reinfesting your pets!

Common symptoms of bites include itchiness, red rashes, hair loss and severe irritation, which is particularly marked in pets with an allergy to flea saliva. Some affected pets develop secondary skin infections and may require antibiotics and treatment to relieve their itching.

To ensure your pet has year round parasite control, why not join our Pet Care Plan and spread the cost every month. Plus receive 10% off everything else at the surgery!

Guinea pigs are great!



Guinea pigs make lovely pets! They are easy to handle, very sociable and, provided they are well cared for, tend to stay in good health. Here are some tips to keep them healthy:

Firstly, guinea pigs should always be kept in pairs or groups; they will become stressed and anxious if they are on their own. The best combination is a same sex pair or group.

Although it is common to keep guinea pigs with rabbits, the rabbit often ends up bullying the guinea pig and sometimes cause nasty injuries.

Next, they will need a nice place to live! Get a large hutch with separate sleeping and living compartments but as guinea pigs often find the slopes in the two-level kinds too steep, get them a bungalow, not a house! They will also need lots of space to run around. A secure run is ideal, especially if it is attached to the hutch so they can shelter from bad weather. Guinea pigs can live outdoors all year round but you need to ensure the hutch is well insulated.

A well balanced diet is vital. They should have a constant supply of good quality hay (to help wear down their teeth), about half a handful of fresh vegetables per pig every day and a small amount of food in pellet form. Fresh vegetables are essential as a source of vitamin C.

You also need to play with your guinea pig every day. Unlike rabbits, who can be very flighty, guinea pigs are usually happy to be held and the more often you do it, the more relaxed they will be. Also, handling them regularly will allow you to pick up quickly on any health issues they might have.

Although they are generally healthy, common problems to look out for include:

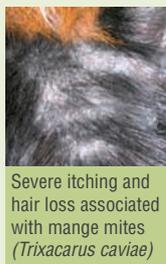
- **Respiratory problems** can cause persistent sneezing and discharge from the eyes, causing your pig to feel unwell and lose their appetite.

- **Skin problems such as mange and ringworm**

Mange: Guinea pigs can also carry mange and these burrowing mites can cause itching and hair loss (see photo right).

Ringworm: Guinea pigs can suffer from ringworm which can also be passed to humans. This causes scaly skin with sores and may be very itchy.

If you would like any further information on caring for your guinea pig or you are concerned about their general health – please contact us today!



Severe itching and hair loss associated with mange mites (*Trixacarus caviae*)

Winter aches and pains



The balmy summer months are sadly just a distant memory and as the colder weather kicks in, older pets often noticeably slow down and stiffen up. Just as in ourselves, the low temperatures can really affect their joints. Those pets already on medication for arthritis may need an increased dose, and we commonly diagnose the disease during this time of year.

Arthritis (also termed degenerative joint disease) is a condition in which the joints, which should be smooth moving and well lubricated become rough, cracked and swollen. In the early stages your pet may just seem a bit stiff after resting but still able to exercise freely once they have got moving, but as it progresses the signs become more obvious. They may really slow up on walks, struggle with stairs or start to limp. However, remember that our pets are brave! Very rarely do they cry out in pain, even if you have a good feel at their sore joints.

Arthritis is most common in older pets, largely due to “wear and tear”, but it can strike the youngsters too. For them, rather than simply an ageing change it is generally triggered by conformational issues – essentially malformed joints such as hip dysplasia, which puts a joint under unnatural strain and triggers the painful changes. Cats can also suffer from arthritis, with many surveys estimating between 60-90% of elderly cats being affected.

To help your pets with sore joints, especially in the winter, make sure they always sleep on a deep, soft bed and keep the ambient temperatures warm – you could even consider a pet safe heat pad or hot water bottle. Make sure they get out and about every day to keep their joints moving, and don't let them put on any extra winter weight! Obesity will really put their limbs under strain. Finally, make sure you keep up with their pain relieving medications and supplements, if they are on them, and if you are concerned that they may be struggling, please come and talk to us!

X-rays and arthritis

Radiography is commonly used to investigate joint problems.



X-ray of a **normal hip joint** – note the perfectly formed “ball and socket” joint of the hip joint.



Arthritic hip joint in a dog with hip dysplasia. Note the very shallow ball and socket joint and the secondary new bone around the joint (arrowed in yellow)



Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy supports and directs the body's own healing processes to ensure the best outcome. Rehabilitation can be defined as the ability to manage pain and restore movement. In much the same way as physiotherapy supports human medical practitioners, animal therapy is now finding its place as a valuable addition to veterinary care.

Indications that your dog or cat may benefit from Pet Physiotherapy are:

- Had recent surgery?
- Had an injury or accident?
- Lost the ability to jump into the car or onto a high surface?
- Developed difficulty going up or down stairs?
- Lost enthusiasm for playing and running?

- Become stiff or weak?
- Shown signs of tenderness to touch?
- Developed arthritis or other conditions associated with old age?

We can now offer rehabilitation and physiotherapy with Registered Veterinary Nurse Kelly who now holds a BSAVA Merit Award.

Your pet will need to be examined a veterinary surgeon prior to the start of a physiotherapy treatment course, then appointments with Kelly can be booked for Tuesdays or Fridays. The appointment fee is £30 and will last for approximately 30 minutes (some insurance companies may cover these costs).

Call reception on 01622 736677 to book in or to discuss further with Kelly.