

Fireworks Beware!

As autumn sets in we mourn the end of another summer, but our dogs have a very different concern; the impending firework season. What can be done to help them get through it?

Give your dog a quiet place to hide at any time when there are fireworks or other loud noises. Keep the windows and curtains in this room closed, and provide a comfy bed with lots of blankets to hide under. We also recommend installing a DAP diffuser in this hiding place as a source of additional comfort.

During fireworks try not to cuddle or soothe your dog because this can make you appear insecure, and only rewards your dog for remaining nervous. You need to be a good 'role model', so stay relaxed and carry on as if nothing is happening.

Firework phobia can also be treated using a special CD. By repeatedly playing the sounds of fireworks, starting at a low level and gradually building up, you can teach your dog to ignore the noises. This takes a few weeks, but is quite easy. We recommend a product that includes the sounds of fireworks, thunder and gunshots because most phobic dogs react to at least two of these noises.

Please feel free to ask us for more advice.

Reinventing the meal!

HAVE you ever wondered why there are so many different foods available for your dogs and cats? Well, 'you are what you eat' and as a result many food companies now make **lifestage** diets – *different* foods for young, adult and older dogs and cats which are *specifically designed* to meet the needs animals have at particular stages in their lives.

Our **young pets** can benefit from junior/growth diets which tend to be higher in

energy and protein to aid controlled growth (avoiding obesity) while having the right mineral balance to help pups and kittens bones and joints to grow healthily.

For **adult pets** (between around 12-18 months and 7-8 years), maintenance/adult diets are ideal, helping to keep pets healthy and active during their middle years, though dietary changes may be needed at times of increased activity or during pregnancy.

In **older pets**, geriatric/senior foods are ideal. These usually have a lower energy content to avoid weight gain as pets grow more sedentary; fibre levels are maintained to avoid constipation, and protein and mineral levels are al-



tered to reduce the workload of ageing kidneys, liver and heart. Essential fatty acids and other products may also be added to help to keep the skin and joints healthy.

Together with a growing range of **prescription** diets that help animals with specific diseases, lifestage diets help your pets to live lives that are as long and healthy as possible.

Please ask us for more information and we can help you choose the best diet for your pet.



Photos: Jane Burton.

Feline Leukaemia Virus – is your cat vaccinated?

IT'S a sad fact that Feline Leukaemia virus (FeLV) is now one of the commonest causes of premature death in cats.

Whilst the virus does on occasions cause true leukaemia, in many cases the effects are more related to suppression of the cats immune system, sadly leaving it fatally exposed to infections that a healthy cat would normally recover from. The virus is found in the saliva of infected cats and is mainly transmitted by licking or biting.

However the good news is that there are very effective vaccines against the virus, and your cat can be vaccinated at the same time as the annual health check and other vaccinations. Don't take the risk – please contact us for further information or an appointment!



"I can relax – I am!"

Cartoon: Gareth Davies

Keeping pet rabbits fit and well – some tips!



IT'S not just dogs and cats that need regular check-ups and vaccinations! Rabbits are also susceptible to two potentially deadly diseases:-

Myxomatosis is a distressing viral disease spread by rabbit fleas and other blood sucking insects. Swollen eyes are usually the first symptoms, rapidly progressing to blindness. Affected rabbits become very ill and most will die as a result.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is a very infectious disease that spreads easily between rabbits, or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. It can also be inadvertently transported by people or birds. Affected rabbits show a range of symptoms including loss of appetite, lethargy and nose bleeds. Sadly most will die.

Please contact us for further information on vaccinating your rabbit against infectious disease, or any other aspect of rabbit care including **dental care** and **neutering**.



Autumn alarm!

underside of the abdomen. Like fleas, the mites can cause intense itchiness in susceptible individuals at this time of year, with itchy crusty lesions developing on affected areas. Please contact us for more details.

WITH the onset of cooler autumn weather, we look at some of the issues facing our pets at this time of year.

Although the temperature is dropping and the nights are drawing in, it is important to remember to continue **anti-parasite treatments** to prevent disease associated with **fleas**. These tiny wing-

less insects are a major cause of irritation to both pets and their owners and, with our centrally heated homes, are a year round menace!

Harvest mites are another problem seen in the late summer and autumn. The mites are picked up in long grass and tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and



to avoid **firework** injuries. Dogs with **noise phobias** may benefit from medication to help relieve anxiety associated with fireworks; habituation to loud noises over a long period of time can also be helpful. Please ask us for an appointment to discuss this further.

This is also the time of year that many car owners prepare for winter. **Antifreeze** (used in car radiators) is a very palatable poison. If ingested, even small amounts

Fleas: what to look out for!

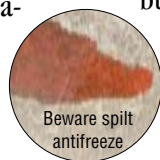


One of the commonest signs of fleas is finding specks of flea "dirt" (flea faeces) in the coat.

can cause serious kidney failure and usually death.

The autumn is also the time for **tortoise** owners to ensure that their pets are adequately prepared for hibernation. Please come and see us for a pre-hibernation check-up!

And finally... don't forget that old dogs and cats tend to feel their **joints** more in the cold weather – make sure they have plenty of warm bedding, but ensure they don't snuggle up too close to the radiator or burns can result. Keep an eye on their mobility and contact us for an appointment if they are getting stiff and sore.



An eerie tale! Ear Disease: is your pet affected?



DID you know that ear disease is a fairly common problem, affecting pets of all ages? Whilst the ear is a very complex structure, most of the ear problems seen in pets involve disease of the *external* ear canal. Disease of this area is called **otitis externa** (also termed *canker*). Symptoms, which can be gradual or sudden in onset, include head shaking, ear rubbing, reddening of the skin lining the external ear canal, and frequently a discharge (as seen in the case below).



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites. Note the characteristic crusty brown discharge.

There are several underlying causes of otitis externa.

These include **ear mites, trapped foreign bodies** (such as grass awns) and **localised inflammation** of the skin lining the ear canals. Worse still, the condition is often complicated by opportunistic bacterial and fungal infections.

Early diagnosis and treatment gives us the best chance of curing this often painful condition. So if your pet is showing *any* signs of ear disease, please bring them in for a thorough examination.



Microscopic view of an ear mite (x40) (*Otodectes cynotis*)