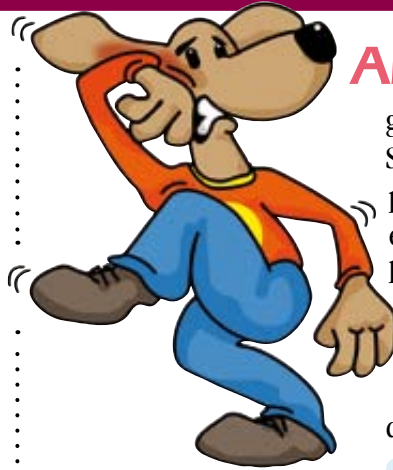




Chocolate, flowers... what not to buy the pet lover...

Did you know that, like chocolate, flowers can be extremely toxic to pets, with some flowers causing rapid death even if only a small amount is eaten. Lilies are particularly risky as all parts of the plant can contain a toxin that causes acute and severe kidney failure in cats. In fact, they are so poisonous to cats that even a tiny mouthful of a leaf or petal, or, indeed, pollen from a flower could be fatal. Other cut flowers and garden plants can also cause problems including Poinsettias, Daffodils, Foxgloves and Castor Oil plants. Though many pets are sensible and don't attempt to eat plants, pups and kittens are particularly vulnerable, as are indoor cats which tend to investigate plants and flowers in the house.

Symptoms of poisoning include being off colour, vomiting, diarrhoea and collapse. If pets are known to have eaten plants, chocolate or other poisons, or if they show these types of signs then please get in touch straight away so we can do our best to treat them. And, if you do have chocolate, flowers, medicines or other toxins in the house – please keep them away from your pets!



Allergies in dogs and cats

gies is intensely itchy skin. Signs include face rubbing, paw chewing, recurrent ear problems, persistent licking and over grooming. Food allergies can present both with symptoms of diarrhoea and/or dermatitis (itchy skin).



Foot chewing in a dog

WE all know about allergies in people, but can our pets be similarly affected?

Allergies are immune reactions in which an animal responds *abnormally* to common, usually harmless substances; these substances are called *allergens*.

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

- **inhalation** – e.g. pollens and house dust
- **contact** – e.g. flea bites
- **ingestion** – e.g. foods

The main symptom of contact and inhalation aller-

Sadly, allergies cannot be cured; instead humans and pets either have to avoid contact with the allergen or they need medication to alleviate the symptoms. The best approach is to find out what the patient is allergic to, and with the advent of new diagnostic tests this

can be very helpful in devising a suitable treatment. The best form of treatment is to minimise the exposure of the pet to the allergen. Flea saliva allergies are greatly improved by effective flea control, whilst food allergies may be improved by a new diet that avoids the problem. Inhaled allergens are more difficult to control, but new forms of medication can be really helpful in reducing itching. If your pet gets itchy for no obvious reason or has a sensitive stomach, it could be an allergy. Let us give your pet a check-up; they may be eternally grateful!



Cartoons: Gareth Davies

Is your dog at risk from Kennel Cough?



DID you know that infectious bronchitis (commonly called "kennel cough") is a highly infectious cough that can be picked up wherever dogs meet – on walks, at training classes, dog shows and of course in boarding kennels.

Affected dogs typically start sneezing, usually progressing to a harsh dry hacking cough that can last for several weeks and often requires antibiotic treatment.

The disease is caused by a complex mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Although regular booster vaccinations offer protection against many of the airborne viruses, it is only intranasal vaccines that can offer protection against *Bordetella*. Don't take any chances with kennel cough – contact us now to ensure your dog is adequately vaccinated!

Lost, stolen or strayed?



Microchip implant x1

NOW you see them, now you don't! Sadly it's all too easy for pets to go missing and if this happens it could mean days or weeks of worry for all involved. However the good news is that microchip implants now offer a far more reliable method of identifying your pet than the traditional collar and tag (which can all too easily become detached and lost). A range of pets can be microchipped, including dogs, cats, horses, small pets, birds and even fish! However the system is most commonly used by dog and cat owners.

The procedure involves implanting a tiny microchip (smaller than a grain of rice) under the skin, permanently identifying your pet. Each microchip carries a unique code which – together with details about your pet and your contact details – are held on a central computer database. Veterinary practices, the police and pet rescue organisations have special hand held scanners that can detect and “read” the information on the microchip – identifying your pet and your contact details. So should the unthinkable happen and your pet goes missing, you have the best chance of being reunited. Don't take the risk – for further information, or to have your pet microchipped, please contact us today!



Thyroid gland disease – is your cat affected?

DID YOU know that thyroid gland disease is surprisingly common in older cats?

The thyroid gland consists of two tiny lobes situated at the base of the neck. These lobes produce thyroid hormone which regulates the rate of your cat's metabolism – too much thyroid hormone speeds up the metabolism, whilst too little slows it down.

Excess production of thyroid hormone is termed **hyperthyroidism** and is a relatively common condition in cats over 8 years of age. Affected cats tend to burn up energy too rapidly and lose weight *despite* an often ravenous appetite. In addition, excess thyroid hormone usually increases the heart rate, potentially leading to abnormal thickening of the heart muscle and increased blood pressure. As well as the above, a variety of other signs may also be seen including hyperactivity, vomiting and diarrhoea.

However the good news is that in most cases, hyperthyroidism in cats can be very successfully treated. So if you are worried your cat is losing weight or showing any of the other signs described above, please arrange for us to examine him or her.

Could my pet have worms?



Typical roundworms
e.g. *Toxocara canis*



Tapeworm segments
e.g. *Taenia taeniaeformis*

Did you know that when you give your pet a wormer, its only job is to kill any worms present at that time?

This means that wormers need to be repeated periodically to keep your pet (and the environment) worm free.

ALTHOUGH it's not a pleasant thought, your pet is in fact *constantly* exposed to worms. Dogs and cats can be infected when out in the garden, on walks, or just by having fleas (see later – fleas can carry tapeworms). Most pups and kittens are heavily infested and many adult pets suffer from worm related disease. Common symptoms include weight loss, diarrhoea, vomiting and bowel damage.

There are *two* major types of worms affecting our pets:

Roundworms can grow up to 20 cm in length and live in the intestines. Adult worms shed thousands of tiny eggs per day, which pass out in the faeces and contaminate the environ-

ment, where the eggs can survive for years. Dogs and cats are then reinfected by inadvertently eating the eggs. The eggs also pose some risk to children if they are unwittingly swallowed.

Tapeworms also live in the intestines and can grow up to 5m in length. They shed small segments containing eggs which pass

out in the faeces or which may be found around the tail area. As the segments break down, the eggs may then be eaten by an *intermediate host*; these include small rodents (such as mice and voles) and fleas. Cats commonly catch and eat small rodents and both cats and dogs swallow fleas as they groom, thus reinfesting themselves with tapeworms.



Photos: Janie Burton

To help keep your pet *and* the environment worm free, just follow these three simple steps:

- Use regular wormers
- Use regular flea control
- Clean up pet faeces

Please ask us to advise you on the most effective forms of worm *and* flea control for your pet.