



Is old age catching up?

Has your dog (or cat, rabbit or other pet) started to slow down as he's got older? Does he seem stiff to rise? Is he less keen to take exercise? Does he pant and puff if he does? Is he lethargic? Has he gone off his food? Does he drink more?

These are all symptoms which are often put down to old age and may seem an inevitable consequence of passing years, but in most cases these symptoms are caused by specific problems which, if treated, can relieve the signs of ageing resulting in a much happier and bouncier pet.

So if you have noticed such symptoms, do bring your pet in for a check – we can make sure his heart and lungs are working properly, check for lumps and bumps, examine his teeth and gums (see article right), give him a thorough MOT, and – if necessary, perform further tests to accurately identify any problems.

Once we know what's causing your pet's symptoms of ageing we are in a position to help him. Appropriate changes of diet, exercise regimes, medication and even surgical treatments can all help give your pet increased comfort and longevity. So, if old age seems to be catching up – do please give us a call.

Getting to the root of the problem!



YOU TAKE care of your own teeth – but what about your pet's? Without regular dental care, pets (like us) will develop gum disease, leading to **mouth pain** and eventually **tooth loss**.

Our pets usually start life with shiny white teeth, and healthy shrimp pink (or pigmented) gums. However, over time, accumulation of plaque bacteria on the surface of the teeth leads to inflammation of the gums, a condition called **gingivitis**. This is frequently accompanied by the accumu-

lation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth, and also very bad breath!

If the infection continues unchecked, bacteria start to penetrate *below* the gum line, destroying the tooth supporting structures – a painful condition called **periodontitis**. If left untreated, this leads to tooth loosening and eventually tooth loss as the disease progresses.

Recent surveys have shown that 85% of dogs and 70% of cats over three years of age have some form of dental disease. Prompt recognition of any problems in the mouth gives the best chance of successful treatment. Please contact us if you would like a check-

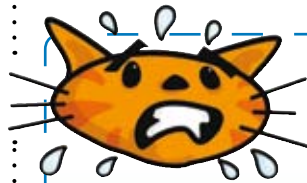
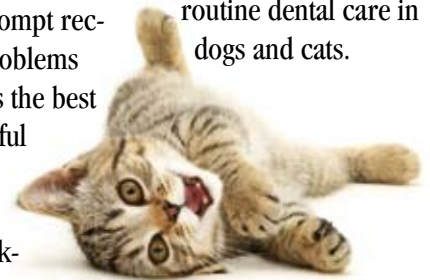


Healthy Mouth in a dog, with white teeth and healthy pink gums.



Gingivitis with mineralised plaque (calculus, or tartar), and inflamed gum margins

up for your pet, or would like to learn more about routine dental care in dogs and cats.



Summer parasite alert!

THE summer months are peak season for pesky parasites and two of the most annoying are fleas and ticks.

Fleas need little introduction to most pet owners! Adult fleas are 2-3mm in length and can be seen without magnification. These tiny wingless insects survive by feeding on your pet's blood, causing very intense irritation and sometimes allergic skin disease. Fleas also play a major role in transmitting tapeworms in dogs and cats.

Ticks tend to be a problem in the warmer months and commonly live in areas of heathland, moorland and woodland, waiting to attach themselves to passing pets. Ticks feed on your pet's blood and can cause problems in two ways – firstly they can cause a tissue reaction at their site of attachment and secondly they can transmit serious diseases such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis.

Please ask us to advise you on the best form of flea and tick control for *your* pet.



Adult tick (life size)



Don't get caught on the hOp! – caring for your pet rabbit!

RABBITS are becoming increasingly popular as pets and, like all pets, your rabbit needs to visit us from time to time for a routine health examination and vaccinations. Here we look at some of the health issues facing pet rabbits.

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. This is a very painful and serious condition, which frequently can be fatal. Throughout the summer months, rabbit rear ends

should be inspected **daily** for fly eggs and maggots. Soiled bedding should also be removed on a daily basis to minimise flies being attracted to the hutch.



Vaccination

We recommend vaccinating your rabbit against:-

- **Myxomatosis:** a distressing viral disease spread by rabbit fleas, mosquitoes and other blood sucking insects. Affected rabbits typically suffer from swollen eyes, leading to blindness and death in most cases.

- **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)** is another very serious viral infection. It spreads easily between rabbits or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. Infected rabbits may show a variety of signs includ-

ing nose bleeds, loss of appetite and lethargy. Sadly most will die.

Feeding your rabbit the correct diet is very important. Their ideal diet includes plenty of good quality hay, together with a selection of fresh food and a small amount of commercial rabbit food. High fibre diets promote dental health, reduce obesity and keep them occupied for several hours each day!

Commercial rabbit foods are now also available as extruded pellets and this helps to avoid the problem of rabbits selectively feeding – leaving vitamins and minerals uneaten.



Please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on these or any other health issues affecting your rabbit.

Beat the heat!



We all love summer, but there's no getting away from it – heat's a real killer. So here are some top tips on how to survive it!

- Make sure fresh clean water is always available to all pets – you may even need to take some on walks.
- Don't leave pets in cars.
- Avoid exercise in the heat of the day – particularly with old, overweight dogs with heart problems; stick to early mornings and evenings.
- Consider trimming dogs' coats – old dogs and dogs with heart problems need to be kept cool.
- Get a fan, or use a plant mister to cool old dogs if necessary.
- Put a daily daub of high factor waterproof sunblock on un-pigmented areas of skin that are poorly covered by hair to help prevent skin cancer. This is particularly important in white cats whose ears and noses are predisposed to skin cancer.
- Watch out also for grass seeds (awns) of the meadow grasses. They commonly become trapped in dogs ears – causing violent head shaking, or may become embedded in the feet or other areas.
- If your pet is going into kennels this summer, don't forget to make sure they are up to date with their vaccinations!



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes



Grass awns



Fit not fat – fighting the flab!

DO YOU have a podgy pet? With around 25% of dogs classified as obese (that is more than 15% above their ideal weight) and more than one third being overweight, this is a common problem in all species, and given the health problems it can cause, it's important to address it.

Unfortunately, weight gain is frequently overlooked, since it usually occurs gradually. In essence, pets gain weight when the energy level in their food is *greater* than their daily requirements, and this excess energy is laid down as body fat.

Excess weight is known to cause or worsen a variety of conditions including heart disease, arthritis (joint disease), diabetes mellitus and heat intolerance (a big problem in the summer months), to name just a few!

So, don't delay – if your dog or cat (or other pet) is piling on the pounds – we are here to help! Having ruled out other medical disorders which can be a cause of weight gain, we will recommend a diet and exercise programme for your pet – both to help them lose weight, and following this, to keep them fit and trim.