



Practice News

In our Leominster Main Surgery we have installed a new digital phone system to improve our handling of incoming calls. By selecting the designated extension, faster contact can be made with departments to which you would wish to speak or to leave voice-mail messages for veterinary surgeons or other staff members. We hope that this will improve the service we offer to our clients.

We welcomed two new veterinary surgeons in September. Rachel Davis and Ed Jones. They replace Doreen and Tracey who have both returned to Australia.

Lisa and Christina have joined the nursing team; we now have eight qualified nurses as well as Becky Smith as trainee nurse to assist the team of vets.

The full-time veterinary surgeon team now numbers nine but in addition John Horlock senior acts as an equine consultant and John Davies, a small animal orthopaedic specialist, works from our surgery.

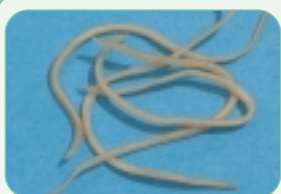
On the subject of horses, we are proud to now have our Equine Treatment and Operating Unit open at Kingsland.

Also in this issue:

- *Winter awareness!*
- *When the chips are down...*
- *Keeping an eye on things!*

Make sure your pet stays worm free!

NO MATTER how careful you are, unless you worm your pet regularly, it is difficult to avoid your pet playing host to worms. Worse still, worms can also cause a variety of problems in pets, including weight loss and digestive upsets.



Typical roundworms – in this case *Toxocara canis*



Tapeworm segments e.g. *Taenia taeniaeformis*

Roundworms are spaghetti like in appearance and live in the intestines. They shed thousands of tiny eggs which pass out in the faeces, and infect the environment. As well as reinfecting our pets, the eggs - if swallowed - also pose some risk to children.

Tapeworms live in the intestines and shed segments (containing eggs) into the faeces. The eggs are in turn ingested by an *intermediate* host; these



Photos: Jane Burton



include fleas and mice. Both cats and dogs regularly swallow fleas whilst grooming, and so reinfect themselves with tapeworms. To help keep your pet *and* the environment worm free, it is important to follow these three simple steps:

- Worm your pet regularly
- 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.

Keeping your Guinea Pig fit and well!

GUINEA PIGS make fantastic pets – they are inquisitive, friendly creatures that are easy to look after. Coming from the South American grasslands, they do well on a diet of grass, hay, fruit and vegetables together with some commercially prepared food.

During the winter months it's important to make sure they have plenty of bedding to keep them warm. At night, hutches should either be covered with a thick blanket or rug or moved into a shed or garage. Water should be checked regularly to ensure it doesn't freeze.

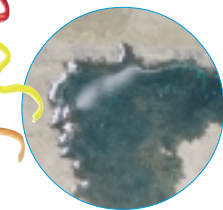
Throughout the year, guinea pigs should be checked every day; problems to watch out for include *overgrown teeth and nails, hair loss and itching* (which can be due to mange), *eye infections and breathing problems*. Any signs of *reduced appetite or thirst, abnormal faeces, or lethargy* should also be investigated promptly. If you have any concerns please give us a call!





Winter awareness!

BOTH the colder winter weather and the festive season bring hazards for our pets. When out on walks it's worth remembering that just because we can easily put on an extra coat, some dogs may find the cold weather more of a challenge. This particularly applies to slim fine coated breeds who find it harder to conserve their body heat in cold conditions. It is also during the colder winter months that many people top up their car radiators with antifreeze and spillages can occur. Antifreeze tastes sweet to



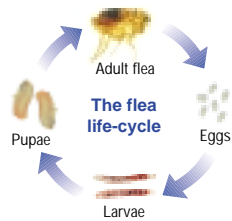
Antifreeze is sweet tasting



Chocolate is irresistible



Tinsel is attractive to pets



Fleas are just as much of a problem in the winter!

pets, but most brands are very poisonous if consumed and can be fatal. Thus it is very important to ensure that any spilt antifreeze is promptly cleaned up.

Inside the house, remember that items such as ribbons and tinsel are attractive to kittens and may be swallowed leading to an intestinal blockage. Similarly, make sure that turkey carcasses and string (used to tie up the carcass) are safely disposed of.

Chocolate, especially the plain varieties, can be very toxic to dogs. Special pet chocolate is the safe option.

And finally, now is **not** the time to lower your guard against fleas! They never take holidays and just love central heating!

Keeping an eye on things!



WHILST the eye is an incredibly complex organ, it is easy to take normal eye function for granted. Here we look at two problems commonly seen in older dogs.

'Dry eye' is a condition seen reasonably commonly in dogs and is caused by a *reduced or total lack of normal tear production.*



Normal eye

It is easy to overlook the role tears play in keeping our pet's eyes healthy, in particular tears lubricate the movements of the eyelids and provide oxygen and nutrients to the cornea (the clear outermost part of the eye).

There are many different signs of dry eye and these can develop over time. Affected eyes commonly develop a thick yellowish discharge and may be reddened.



Dry eye

Eyelid tumours are another condition seen commonly in older dogs. They occur on the margin of the eyelid (see right) and have the potential to cause marked corneal irritation.



Typical eyelid tumour

Early diagnosis is the 'golden rule' with eyes. For example, early diagnosis and treatment of dry eye can make a real difference to the vision of affected dogs. Don't delay! If your pet is showing *any* symptoms of eye problems, come and see us for a thorough health examination.

When the chips are down...

HAVE YOU ever wondered how you would cope if your pet went missing? Regardless of how much you care for them you can't be in control all the time. An open door, a loud noise, an accident – suddenly your pet is now a stray; sadly 50% of strays are never reunited with their owners since they cannot be reliably identified.

If you are worried about losing your pet, the good news is that in addition to the traditional collar and tag (which can unfortunately become detached and lost), there is now a far more reliable form of pet identification – the microchip implant.



Microchip implant (x1)

A tiny microchip (about the size of a grain of rice – see photo) is quickly and easily implanted under the skin, *permanently* identifying your pet. Each microchip contains a unique code which identifies your pet and these details are stored on a central computer database. Should your pet go missing, when found, the chip can be read using special hand held scanners. Veterinary practices, the police and animal welfare organisations routinely scan all strays, hopefully ensuring that if the unthinkable happens, you can be speedily reunited. For further information or to arrange to have your pet microchipped, please contact us today!



Scanning for a microchip

Cartoon: Gareth Davies. Springer Spaniel: Jane Burton