

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – MAY 2023

HYPERTENSION IN CATS

What is Hypertension and why is it important in Cats?



This month is Feline Hypertension Awareness Month. Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure, this is also a common and well known disorder in humans. Hypertension is where the blood, circulating within blood vessels, is under excessive (higher than normal) pressure. As in people there are no visible signs and hypertension may stay undiagnosed for a long period of time. Things to look out for would be change in behaviour, personality or showing signs of pain or discomfort.

Hypertension is harmful to the body, in cats it can cause damage to key body organs including eyes, kidneys, heart and brain. Other organs in the body may be affected too; bleeding in the brain can cause neurological signs such as wobbly gait, seizures, dementia and kidneys can also become damaged, so it is important to look out for any abnormalities in the behaviour of our pets. If the blood pressure stays high for too long, cats can suffer a loss of vision due to bleeding in the eye or detachment of the retina; more than 80% of cats with high blood pressure present with sudden onset blindness. Measuring blood pressure regularly in older cats is important because of the severity of these consequences.

Who does it effect?

Hypertension is more common in middle-aged and older cats. 1 in 5 cats from 9 years of age suffer from high blood pressure, with no obvious clinical signs. Regular checking of blood pressure in older cats is vital. In most cases there may be an underlying cause; this could be chronic kidney disease or an overactive thyroid gland (hyperthyroidism).

How do we measure a cats blood pressure?

Our vet nurses are very experienced at taking accurate blood pressure readings, this is a quick non-invasive procedure, very similar to the way blood pressure is measured in humans. It may seem a daunting experience bringing your cat in for blood pressure appointments, but it is important to remember that this is a quick and painless procedure. The blood pressure is measured using inflatable cuffs applied to the leg or tail of the cat. Depending on the patient, it usually takes 5– 10 minutes to determine blood pressure. We take a series of readings to get the most reliable result. It is really important that cats are calm when their blood pressure is measured, a high blood pressure could be a cause of stress and not a result of an underlying medical condition.



How is high blood pressure treated?

If your cat is diagnosed with high blood pressure, there are two important initial aims. The first is to reduce the blood pressure, using medication. This is important to reduce the risk of damage to different organs and in particular to protect the brain, eyes, heart and kidneys. The second aim is to search for, and treat, any underlying disease, such as kidney disease or hyperthyroidism. High blood pressure itself can be easily treated with medication but, as in humans, this is often needed for the rest of the cat's life. Making an early, accurate diagnosis is really important to help prevent any damage, or further damage, to the kidneys, heart, eyes and central nervous system by treating the hypertension and closely monitoring the blood pressure. As your cat starts getting older, seeing your vet for a regular blood pressure reading will become part of their life-long care. It will also be crucial as part of the evaluation and monitoring of diseases such as hyperthyroidism or kidney disease.

WATCH OUT FOR TICKS ...

As the weather gets warmer, hungry ticks begin to emerge to feed from passing hosts. Ticks are most common in woodland and overgrown areas awaiting a host whilst clinging to tall grass and shrubs. They are a member of the spider family which feeds on various species for blood. Ticks transmit bacteria which can cause Lyme disease. A large percentage of ticks feed on wild animals such as hedgehogs, deer, rabbits and birds, but they occasionally attach to family pets as well as humans! It's important to remain vigilant when walking in high risk areas. Keep your pet up to date with a veterinary prescription parasite control, and also carrying a tick hook ensures that ticks can be removed prior to disease transmission.



It is vital that we know the risks associated with ticks. If a tick attaches and it is not removed correctly, it can lead to infection at the site and the transmission of disease with potentially serious health implications.

TOP TIPS TO AVOID TICKS:

- * **STICK TO PATHS** -Walking on designated paths where maintenance is carried out will decrease the risks of ticks clinging to tall grass and shrubs. If there are no paths in your area, try walking where grass is shorter avoiding overhanging vegetation.
- * **CLOTHING**-In high risk areas remain covered by wearing long-sleeve tops and full length trousers. Protect areas such as the back of the knees, armpits and groin area. Opting for lighter coloured clothing will make it easier to identify any ticks present that may become attached.
- * **FOOTWEAR**- Wellies are not just for rainy days; they are also great for protecting the feet and ankles from ticks whilst on walks. Tucking trousers into socks is also a good defence if wellies are not an option.
- * **REGULAR CHECKS**- Ticks are very small and hard to identify. Check regularly whilst outside and when at home in order to remove any feeding ticks. The longer a tick is left attached the harder it is to remove, and the higher the risk of disease transmission.
- * **CORRECT TOOLS**- Avoid home remedies to try and remove ticks, instead use a tick removal hook. This will help avoid aggravating the tick and lower the risk of secondary infection. Using this effective tool also ensures full removal of the tick reducing the risk of an abscess or secondary infection. When removed, use an antiseptic wipe to clean the hook ready for future use. Be aware of any symptoms of Lyme disease and contact your GP if you believe you may be at risk.

For more information on parasite control, please contact the surgery, a modern veterinary oral or spot-on medication will very effectively prevent ticks on your pet.

5 STAR TREATMENT FOR YOUR ANIMALS....

We all know that a visit to the doctors can be stressful and it's no different for our pets! We work hard to try and make things more comfortable and reassuring when our patients come to see us.

Please feel free to take advantage of the following:

Cats –

- * High up cat basket stands
- * Fleece blankets to cover cat baskets
- * Dedicated cat waiting area

Dogs –

- * Thick Vet Beds (especially good for our older arthritic patients)
- * Dedicated dog waiting area
- * If available, treats and cuddles from our lovely receptionists



When in the consult room, where we can, we also encourage our canine patients to have a sniff around and acclimatise themselves to their new surroundings. We will also offer treats and encourage positive interactions as much as possible. In addition all our waiting and consulting rooms use Pet Remedy plug-ins which help to create a calm environment. Lastly, please come in and say hello when your pet is not due to visit us, for dogs especially this can be a very useful way of reducing anxiety while they just have a quick weigh, then a treat and a cuddle with our friendly frontline staff!



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

