

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2026

IT'S AN OUTSTANDING TRIUMPH!

In mid-December Dalehead Veterinary Group had our Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Practice Standards inspection. The RCVS Practice Standards Scheme is a voluntary initiative to accredit veterinary practices in the UK.

Through setting standards and carrying out regular assessments, the scheme aims to promote and maintain the highest standards of veterinary care.

We had an inspector in for the day assessing both companion animal and the farm departments. They look at all areas of the practice from our facilities, services we offer, equipment, processes and procedures. There is a need to demonstrate the practice team's involvement in auditing and quality improvement activities to maintain high standards of patient and client care. The feedback we received was fantastic -

"The atmosphere of the practice is warm, friendly and welcoming" and we passed with flying colours!

Being part of the RCVS scheme offers peace of mind to clients of accredited practices and a more informed choice to the animal-owning public. For peace of mind, look for the RCVS accredited practice logo, which indicates that the practice has passed an independent assessment and one we display with pride.

Well done to all the team at Dalehead Veterinary Group.



OBESITY AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

A little extra "padding" can be easy to ignore, but overweight pets represent a medical problem not just a cosmetic one and one which affects nearly half of dogs and cats in the UK. Carrying too much body fat puts strain on almost every organ system and can shorten quality and length of life.

The health impacts we commonly see are:

- Overweight pets are more likely to develop painful joint disease (such as osteoarthritis) and find exercise harder, which then makes weight gain more likely.
- Obesity also increases the risk of metabolic disease. In cats, excess weight is strongly linked with diabetes mellitus; in dogs it can contribute to insulin resistance and other hormonal and inflammatory changes.
- Large studies in pet dogs show a clear association between being overweight and a shorter lifespan (up to around 2.5 years less in some breeds).

The safest way for a steady weight loss is to start with an assessment. We will weigh your pet, calculate a body condition score, check muscle condition, and look for factors that can affect weight (treats, activity level, other illnesses, and medications). This helps us set a realistic target weight and plan, this is assessed by one of our veterinary surgeons.

We will then create a calorie-controlled plan (diet is the main driver). Most pets gain weight because intake is higher than needed. We usually recommend weighing food with kitchen scales (cups are often inaccurate), swapping "free feeding" for measured meals and setting a daily "treat budget" (and using low-calorie options).

Using the right nutrition is important, veterinary therapeutic weight-loss diets can help because they're designed to reduce calories while keeping key nutrients balanced, often with higher protein and fibre to protect muscle and help pets feel full when they eat. These are often referred to as prescription diets and these can be discussed with one of our registered veterinary nurses to tailor your pet's needs.

We then add sensible activity to your dogs routine, extra movement helps but it's a support act to diet. Short, frequent walks, gentle play, food puzzles, and for cats, timed play sessions can all help. Monitor and adjust; regular weigh-ins keep things safe and motivating. A typical target is about 1–2% body weight loss per week in dogs and 0.5–2% per week in cats (cats must lose weight gradually to reduce the risk of serious liver problems).

If you would like to discuss any issues regarding your pet's weight please contact the surgery - our experienced team have a great track record of helping pets overcome weight problems.



IS NEW YEAR THE TIME TO NEUTER?

We are all making our plans for 2026, including plan for our pets. Is your pet neutered?

The importance of neutering:

Neutering is a routine surgical procedure that prevents pets from reproducing. In males this involves the removal of the testicles, and in females, removal of the ovaries (and usually the uterus). It is carried out under general anaesthetic, with pain relief provided before, during and after the procedure to keep your pet comfortable.

Neutering significantly reduces the risk of serious health conditions and preventing unplanned litters. In females, neutering prevents a life-threatening uterine infection called pyometra and greatly reduces the chances of mammary cancer, especially when done early. In males, it eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and lowers the chances of some prostate diseases later in life. Studies have shown that neutered pets tend to live longer, healthier lives due to the reduction in hormone related illnesses.

Hormones can strongly influence behaviour. Neutering often helps reduce roaming, spraying, aggression, and excessive vocalisation, making your pet easier to manage at home. While it won't change your pet's personality, it can help promote calmer, more settled behaviour.

Some owners worry about weight gain after neutering, but this is something that can be easily controlled with diet management. When pets are neutered, it slows down their natural metabolism, and this can then lead to weight gain. If a pet is receiving more calories than is needed for their body's requirements and exercise, the body will store it as fat. It is important to reduce your pet's calorie intake from the day of their neutering surgery as they will be resting for at least 10-14 days post operation. This exercise can be gradually increased after they are all healed, but it is important to still give a reduced number of calories.

When should I neuter my pet?

For cats, both male and female we recommend getting them neutered around 5 months of age

For larger dogs our practice policy is to allow their joints to fully develop before neutering, our recommendations are:

Male Dogs

- < 20kg castrate at 9-12 months old
- 20-40kg castrate at 12 months old

Giant Male Breeds

- > 40kg castrate at 2 years old

Female Dogs

- < 20kg spay at 6 months old
- 20-40kg spay at 12 months old

Giant Female Breeds

- > 40kg spay at 2 years old



Neutering is a positive, proactive choice for your pet's health. If you would like more information, please contact a member of the companion animal team.



A WARM WELCOME TO BABY MACKENZIE!

Exciting news and the best start to 2026 - we have a new addition to the Dalehead family!

HUGE congratulations to Hollie and Matt who have welcomed their daughter Hannah Patricia Mackenzie into the world.

An early Christmas present, Hannah arrived on 21st December weighing 6lb 10oz

We know you will all join us in congratulating Hollie and Matt and send a big welcome to the world to Hannah.



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