



Companion Animal Newsletter - February 2020

CONSIDERING GETTING A FELINE FRIEND?

Here are 10 top tips to help you make the right choices! We also offer a free telephone consultation with our experienced veterinary nurses for you to discuss any concerns or queries and ask any questions you may have prior to purchase or adoption.

TIME AND LIFESTYLE

Consider how much time you have each day for care and companionship. Cats need stimulation and play as well as feeding, grooming and litter tray duties! Cats can be destructive to carpets and furniture. Would your lifestyle suit having a cat or kitten?

MALE OR FEMALE?

Although this may not seem like a major decision, this could have implications for the future, including neutering costs, behaviour, pregnancies.

BREED TYPE

There are hundreds of breeds/crossbreeds out there so careful consideration of which type is right for you is key. For example; coat length, breed traits (vocal, hairless).

CONSIDERING THE LONG TERM COSTS

- Initial cost of kitten/cat
- Tattery fees
- Toys
- Insurance
- Vet fees
- Food

WHERE IS THE KITTEN COMING FROM?

Seeing a kitten with its mother is always the best start in life and any reputable breeder would be happy for you to visit. In some cases this may apply to farm cats as well. Do remember that there are always plenty of cats and kittens in rehoming centres that need a loving forever home.

OUTDOOR OR INDOOR?

Depending on the breed of the cat or it's previous history if it is a rescue animal, there may be important considerations regarding lifestyle:

- Home/location
- Previous environment
- Breed type
- Vaccination history/status

CHECK HEALTH RECORDS OF MOTHER AND KITTEN

Always check the health status for example: Have they been vet checked? Have they been microchipped? Have they been vaccinated? Any additional health information you may need to know, for example; pre breeding tests or Feline Aids if the cat or kitten was a stray.

HELPING YOUR NEW CAT TO SETTLE IN

Welcoming a new cat into your home can be an exciting experience. It can also feel slightly scary, you may even feel unprepared. Have you got enough litter trays? At least two per cat are recommended. Are there other cats in the house? How do you introduce them? We can help with advice in all these areas.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Are you aware of all the dos and don'ts of owning a cat? We offer advise on:

- Health care
- Litter Training
- Diet advise
- Poisonous items
- Common signs of illness to be aware of

MAKE A LIST OF QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO ASK

Once you see a kitten it is hard to make an objective decision of whether it is right for you, so make a list of any queries you may have. You can also make a list of questions to ask us, we will be happy to go through these with you in a free nurse telephone consultation.

LOOK AFTER THAT SMILE!



Unlike us, our pets are not able to manage their own dental health and rely on us as both owners and veterinary professionals to take care of their teeth for them and preserve that smile!

The importance of good dental hygiene cannot be overstressed. Poor hygiene can be the source of long term pain and discomfort for our pets, who may be suffering in silence. Many pets in long term, chronic discomfort simply tolerate their pain without giving any outward signs.

As pets age and may not appear to thrive as they once did, we may be guilty of putting this down to the fact that they are just 'getting old'.

In fact, in many cases there will be underlying health issues which, if investigated and diagnosed, can be treated with potentially life changing results, prolonging the lifespan of your pet and improving their general wellbeing as well!

Poor oral hygiene can just be the tip of the iceberg, it is important that tartar, decay and gingivitis are prevented or dealt with as soon as possible before they lead to other potentially serious problems. Bacteria and possible infection in mouth can be very nasty. The infection can enter the animal's blood stream causing serious problems elsewhere; for example in the liver, heart, lungs or kidneys.

What do we need to look out for?

Prevention is always better than cure and we can do a lot to keep our pet's mouths healthy and get on top of any dental problems before they progress into serious conditions. Our vets carry out a comprehensive health check at each annual vaccination. Vaccinations are essential for disease protection but this annual vet visit also gives the opportunity for a full health check and with a follow up complimentary well pet check 6 months later, you can be sure that your pet is under our watchful eye. One part of these consultations is a dental examination to check oral health and give any advice or book in early treatment if required.

Diet is very important in helping to prevent the build up of tartar, and we stock the Hill's Vet Essential range of pet food which is specifically designed to promote oral health. If you would like advice on diet please contact our companion animal nursing team who are able to advise on this subject.

Dental chews and toys which encourage chewing are also helpful in reducing the build up of tartar but it is of utmost importance that pets are given something suitable and safe for this. In the wild, carnivores would gnaw on raw bones and skin which would help to keep their teeth and gums clean but we would never recommend that you feed your pet bones. Cooked bones are prone to splinter and can cause gut damage, and raw bones can cut gums, fracture teeth and chip enamel.

As part of your pet's daily routine you could introduce brushing their teeth, starting with a finger brush and specialist pet toothpaste. Do not use human toothpaste which contains fluoride and is harmful to pets. By starting when your pet is young, brushing becomes a normal interaction and also allows examination of the mouth more easily because the pet is used to being handled in this manner. Both cats and dogs tolerate this well, with many of them enjoying it! We have a selection of brushes, pastes and other dental products available at the surgery.

Prevention is the gold standard but even with use of the correct food, brushing and chew toys, some animals are prone to dental problems. Here are some signs to look out for which may indicate your pet has a dental issue:

Bad breath: This is caused by bacteria in the mouth. It is important to investigate whether bacteria from dental disease is the cause or whether there is another underlying reason. Plaque mineralises on the teeth making tartar, a build-up of tartar leads to gingivitis, causing sore, red gums which can often bleed. If not treated, the next stage is periodontal disease with inflammation causing damage to the surrounding gum tissue, possible infection and loosening of teeth.

Loss of weight and body condition: Your pet may begin to lose weight, be reluctant to eat, lick their lips or drool and paw at their mouth. These are all signs which could indicate a sore mouth.



Other signs could include the **reluctance to groom** in cats and **chewing only on one side or favouring one side of the mouth** during play.

Time to see the vet!

If your pet is coming in regularly for their booster examination and Well Pet Check, hopefully any early signs of dental disease will be picked up and dealt with before becoming a major problem but if you suspect that there is an issue or if your pet breaks a tooth, it is important to get it checked out by the vet sooner rather than later.

Accidents involving teeth can lead to infections and abscesses in the jaw or may even be disguising a worse injury such as a split in the palate or a break to bones in the jaw.

The vet will make an initial examination, discuss their diagnosis and talk through a suggested treatment. If dental treatment is needed this will usually be carried out under general anaesthetic so that a full and unrestricted examination of the face, mouth and throat can be undergone whilst your pet is unconscious.

So what are we looking for?

Quite often, it is not until the animal is anaesthetised that the vet is able to assess the full extent of their dental problems. If gingivitis is found, then this is checked to see if it has progressed to periodontal disease? Have the gums shrunk away from the teeth? Are there any diseased, loose, broken or fractured teeth? Do any teeth need to be extracted? The conformation of the mouth is assessed and tooth root abscesses are checked for. Young animals may have had problems shedding milk teeth, and dogs can develop painful cavities in their back molar teeth causing pain. Cats can develop lesions if they develop a condition where their immune system can attack their own tooth enamel which damages the teeth. As well as recession of gums, gums can also over grow, or there can be masses in the mouth. Quite often benign but in some cases of a more serious nature.

There can potentially be a lot going on in there, but there is also a lot we can do to treat and help. We are always here to offer advice, provide those vital regular check-ups to detect any early signs of a potential problem and to look after that smile!

KEZ TO THE RESCUE!



Mountain Rescue Search Dog Kez who lives in Stainforth, has been very busy searching for missing persons in both urban and mountainous terrain since she qualified two years ago as a fully operational Search Dog.

Kez and Handler Andy Colau are both members of The Cave Rescue Organisation (Clapham) and Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association (Grassington) and are on call 24/7 to assist in searches across the country.

Both she and her brother Griff from Derbyshire qualified to become Mountain Rescue Search Dogs at just nineteen months old during a rigorous three day winter assessment in The Lake District two years ago.

Kez is the only Mountain Rescue Search Dog living in The Yorkshire Dales and she is kept very busy undertaking training and searches, and is just one of England's 30 Mountain Rescue Search Dogs.

During the evening of January 2nd 2020 Kez made her first operational 'find' on the moors above Skipton when she located an ill equipped gentleman in poor weather conditions. At the time the gentleman was heading for dangerous terrain and the outcome may have been much worse had Kez not located him.

Andy Colau



VALENTINE BUNNY LOVE - GEORGE'S STORY



When George and Molly came in to see the vet for their annual boosters the other day we were all entranced with their wonderful love story, so asked mum, Linda, to send us a few photographs tell their tale for Valentine's Day...

The New Year got off to a bad start for George, his life long mate became very ill and after extensive treatment from the wonderful vet Beccy Frost, nothing could be done for her so we had to say goodbye. George was devastated, he spent the following days looking all round the garden for her. He was so sad and lonely, not really interested in food or anything, so we decided we needed to find him a mate.

We started searching rabbit rescues but nowhere seemed to have any females needing a home, then up popped Molly at RSPCA, Halifax. Her story was very similar to George's: Just before Christmas she lost her husband and her home, finding herself in the animal shelter. She had the same sad look on her face as George had so we decided to go and have a look at her.

After the adoption process; form filling and home check, we brought her home. It was love at first sight! After a few days introduction in the form of 'play dates' they became firm friends and in less than a week they were living full time together. Each day their bond gets stronger and hopefully they will have a lot of happy years together!



SPAY DAY! WHAT HAPPENED WHEN TIG CAME IN TO BE NEUTERED



Tig at home

Tig is a lovely little Border Terrier cross belonging to veterinary receptionist Ruth Parker. Having worked in the industry for over ten years, Ruth is aware of the many benefits of spaying your dog including: Preventing unwanted pregnancies and life threatening illnesses such as pyometra (an infection of the womb) and mammary tumours. With this in mind, Ruth booked Tig in to be spayed—the everyday term used for an ovarian hysterectomy.



Anaesthetic induction

Tig's operation was booked in for 24th January and preparation for the procedure began the night before when Ruth gave her a shower to ensure she was nice and clean for theatre. Tig was then fed her last meal prior to the operation early in the evening, allowing her to be starved overnight so that she would not have a full stomach prior to the anaesthetic. General anaesthetics can induce nausea and it can be dangerous if an unconscious patient vomits as their airway might be compromised. This is why it is imperative that animals do not eat prior to routine operations. In the morning Tig was taken on a short lead walk to allow her to empty her bladder and bowels before coming in to the surgery for the day.



Clipping the site

When Ruth arrived with Tig at the surgery, she was seen by one of our nursing team, in this case it was Head Nurse, Katherine McNamee. Katherine gave Tig a full health check, ensuring she had no mammary development which may indicate she was in season, she also weighed Tig and enquired as to whether Ruth would like Tig to have pre-operative bloods before going under anaesthetic. Pre-op bloods give the veterinary team a snap shot of your pet's health on the day of the operation. They assist the vet in tailoring the anaesthetic to your pet's requirements, can help to uncover hidden illnesses and provide a baseline for future reference in your pet's future health.



Cleaning the site

Katherine also explained the procedure to Ruth explaining what would happen to Tig that day, and asked her to sign the consent form to say that she had understood the procedure and any risks involved with surgery and that, as Tig's owner, she was happy for the procedure to take place. Tig was then admitted to the kennels ready for the next step.



Making the incision

Rebecca Frost, the operating vet, gave Tig a second health check to ensure that she was satisfied Tig was in good health and a suitable candidate for surgery and then both she and nurse Natalie Pattinson, prepared her for theatre. Tig's foreleg was clipped and a catheter placed which was then used to administer the pre-medication prior to the anaesthetic being given.



Closing the wound

The pre-med can be a combination of medications depending on the needs of the patient but usually consists of pain relief and sedatives. By administering these prior to the operation we can be sure that analgesia is in the animal's system and has already taken effect before they wake from the anaesthetic post operatively. The use of sedation means that we can reduce the amount of anaesthetic gas required for the operation which carries less risk for the animal and has fewer side effects.



7 day post op check

Tig was returned to her kennel to wait for the pre-med sedation to take effect and once this had occurred, the anaesthetic was administered via the catheter and Tig was intubated: A tube is inserted into the trachea or windpipe in order to maintain Tig's airway, and control the depth of the anaesthetic through the gas administered via this pipe. The operation site was clipped and swabbed with surgical disinfectant and Tig was taken through to theatre where she was kept warm using heat mats and insulation material whilst vet Rebecca performed the procedure.

Throughout surgery patients are constantly monitored by a nurse who constantly checks their blood pressure (using a monitor attached to the animal's paw), breathing, heartrate and depth of consciousness whilst under the anaesthetic. Tig's procedure, the removal of the uterus and ovaries, took approximately forty minutes and then she was returned to her kennel, wrapped in blankets to keep warm whilst she came around from the anaesthetic, monitored by the nursing team.



Happy Tig!

Once fully conscious and having been re-examined by the vet, Tig was given a drink and a small meal before being taken out to see if she needed to empty her bladder. She went home with Ruth that afternoon taking pain relief medication and a special easily digestible food for her recovery. Tig required two post operative checks, one on the third day and one on the tenth day following her operation so that the wound could be checked, healing monitored and her general wellbeing assessed.

The tough job for Ruth was keeping Tig nice and quiet during this recovery period, restricting her to lead walking and not letting this tip top terrier get too exuberant!



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