



Dalehead  
Veterinary Group Ltd

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## Companion Animal Newsletter - May 2020

### COVID-19 Update

These are unprecedented times that are presenting challenges to everybody right across our society. We at Dalehead support the changes that the government are making in order to control the spread of Covid-19. These measures will make day to day life difficult for us all, but they are vital for the long term common good.

As a Rural Community practice, the health and welfare of our pets and farm livestock as well as our clients, staff and the people around us are our sole concern. We are making temporary changes during this period to the way we work in order to safeguard these things.

We have temporarily suspended routine, non-emergency work in order to reduce our staffing numbers to a core that can still look after our companion animal and farm animal welfare needs, whilst allowing us to comply with the essential social distancing measures that we all need to observe. These reduced staff levels, along with essential changes in working practices of our suppliers, mean that we need your help and patience when ordering and collecting supplies and prescriptions, as well as response to telephone queries that require a conversation with a vet.

In line with government guidelines during the Covid-19 situation we are supporting our clients and their pets with a social distancing companion animal veterinary service for urgent cases including consultations for the relief of pain and the treatment and prevention of disease. If you have a concern with your pet please telephone the surgery. We will assess need on a case-by-case basis and make you either a video or telephone consultation appointment with the vet. These consultations do incur a reduced charge to a normal face to face consultation.

Currently we are postponing routine booster vaccinations (apart from rabbits) and routine operations (unless needed to alleviate pain).

If absolutely necessary we can arrange a social distancing consultation at the surgery - please bring your mobile phone with you - you will remain outside the building.

Home visits are not available at this time.

Please allow 72 hours (at least) notice for repeat medications.

Please ring with any queries or concerns to speak to a member of our reception team.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation and patience at this time. These measures will allow us to continue to provide veterinary services for your animals whilst protecting both you, our clients and our staff.



# WHAT TO DO WITH LUMPS AND BUMPS



We are often presented with animals that have lumps of various sizes. Unfortunately, for most lumps, we are unable to identify them by just looking and feeling. Some lumps are obviously a cyst or a wart. Other lumps we may be able to make a 'best guess' (based on age of an animal and location of the lump), but we cannot be 100% certain. Most lumps will require further testing or we may choose to watch and wait. Lumps can either be benign or malignant.

Benign lumps do not spread to the rest of the body, but may cause localised problems such as soreness or large size, and therefore may need removing. When removed, these lumps are very unlikely to come back at that site, so surgery is usually a cure. Benign lumps may be a type of cancer (tumour means the same thing) or non-cancerous e.g. cyst like, haematomas or abscesses.

For malignant lumps, they may spread to other parts of the body and cause problems. Sometimes we need to plan our removal of these quite carefully and try and take a margin of normal tissue around them. Incisions and wounds may be much bigger than the original lump

to prevent them coming back. Before proceeding with surgery we may also need to consider staging tests such as x-rays or ultrasound to assess whether there is any evidence of spread to other parts of the body.

When presented with a lump, we will usually discuss with you the following options: taking a small needle sample (fine needle aspirate or FNA), taking a biopsy, removing the lump surgically or watching and waiting.

## **FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATE**

This is commonly used as a first line in diagnosis. It is relatively non-invasive and can usually be done within a consultation. We will take a very small sample of cells from the lump, using a needle and syringe. We will usually try and take several samples, from each lump, as this gives us a better chance of a diagnosis by taking more cells. We will smear these on to a slide. Usually we will send them to an external laboratory to try and make an identification. Occasionally we may look at the samples in our lab here at the surgery.

The down side of this method of testing is that the sample size is very small and sometimes the cells are impossible to identify. It is an excellent way of trying to get an answer before an anaesthetic, but it is not always possible. Occasionally we will need to sedate an animal to take a sample due to the location (sometimes internally) or the temperament of the animal. Some lumps may simply be too small to sample.



## **BIOPSY**

This is something we don't use quite so often, but is actually a more accurate way of diagnosing a tumour. It would be ideal to carry this out in every case, but the downside is that it does require an anaesthetic, so often people choose to do what's called an 'excisional biopsy' which is essentially removing the whole lump.

With a biopsy we take one or more samples of the affected tissue and sometimes healthy looking surrounding tissue. This process doesn't damage the cells like the needle sample approach and there are whole sections of tissue to look at, rather than a few cells. This means a diagnosis is usually achieved.

These samples will always need to be sent to an external laboratory where the samples have to be fixed and prepared by special processes. The pathologist will give an expert opinion on the type of lump and its behaviour. This is very helpful for planning further surgery or screening tests.

## **SURGERY TO REMOVE A LUMP**

Surgery does require an anaesthetic. Surgery may be the first option that is chosen. Ideally we try and identify the lump first for surgical planning, but this is not always chosen nor is it always possible. In any case we may then send the whole lump, with surrounding healthy tissue, to the laboratory to be looked at, as in the biopsy above, for a diagnosis.



Identifying a lump prior to surgery can help us decide how much healthy looking tissue to take surrounding a lump as some lumps can be invasive locally. You may feel the wound was much bigger than the original lump, but sometimes this is the only way to ensure it has all gone. Sometimes subsequent surgery is needed, depending on results.

We will try and work with you to develop the best plan for each case and situation. Each case is different, so each case will have its own plan, depending on circumstances. Some people prefer to watch and wait, in which case, if things change, we may still have all the options available to us. Surgery can be less difficult and more successful if the decision to

operate is made before the lump has grown too large.

# WHATS NEW WITH RABBIT VACCINES?



Currently we vaccinate rabbits against Myxomatosis and two strains of Viral Haemorrhagic disease named VHD 1 or VHD 2 (may also be seen as rabbit haemorrhagic disease or RHD).

Up until recently we have had a combined vaccination for Myxomatosis and VHD 1 and then a separate vaccination that overlaps and covers VHD 1 and VHD 2.

Soon we will have available a newer vaccine called **Eravac** which only covers VHD 2. This means there is no longer any overlap between vaccines. The newer VHD 2 vaccine is thought to be much more effective and can be given from a much younger age (now from just 30 days of age) so rabbits can be protected sooner. It also now offers a whole year of protection, so both vaccines can now be on a yearly schedule.

Please check when your vaccines are due and if you are unsure then call us and we can get them back up to date as well as getting your rabbits checked over. For newly acquired young rabbits, we can vaccinate with **Eravac** from 30 days and **Myxo-VHD** from 5 weeks of age so they can be protected from a very young age, so don't leave it too late.



## COMMON SIGNS YOUR PET HAS SENSITIVE SKIN

On a daily basis we see conditions which affect the skin and coats. In dogs, there are certain breeds that may need more support for their skin and coat than others e.g. West Highland Terrier. Allergies, External parasites and infections can all be a cause for your pet to become itchy. Your pet's skin has a multitude of jobs to do, so it's essential to keep it in good condition to ensure your pet is healthy and happy.

Common signs that your pet may need support for their skin and coat could include:

- Thin or balding patches
- A dull or greasy coat
- Persistent itching and scratching
- Dry or flaky skin
- Hair loss or moulting
- Constant grooming or licking
- Redness and inflammation
- Scabs and crusts on the skin

Depending on what is making your pet itchy will depend on the treatment prescribed by our vet. Some treatments, such as fleas, may require a course of treatment followed by preventative treatments, others, such as allergies, may take further investigation followed by long term medication.

Seeking Veterinary treatment sooner rather than later will result in a faster recovery. Scratching can cause secondary infection and inflammation which can be uncomfortable and painful for your pet. How would you like to be itching all the time?!

Under Covid-19 restrictions we can arrange for a vet to view photographs of your pet's skin condition and arrange a telephone or video consultation. Contact the surgery on 01729 823538 to discuss.



# WATCH OUT.. TICKS ABOUT



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.

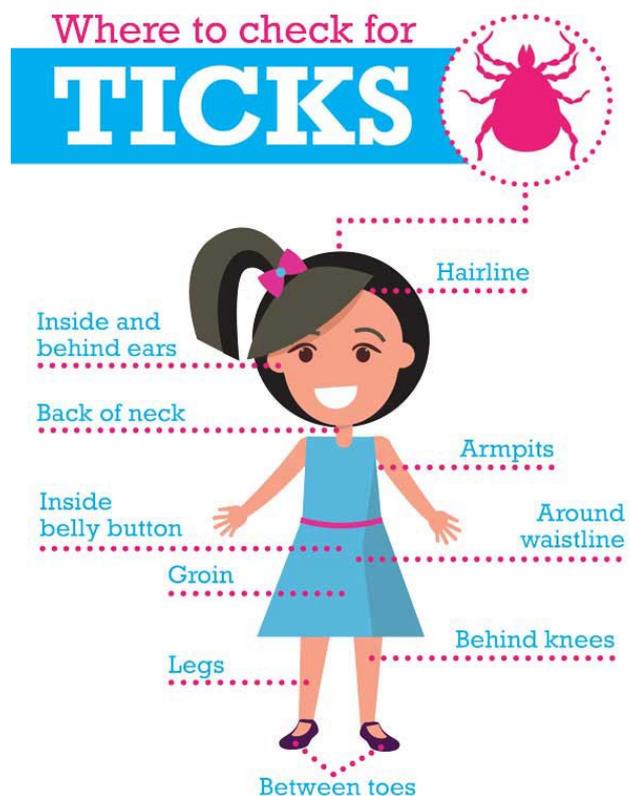
### REGULAR CHECKS

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.



Check out our website [www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk](http://www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk) for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

