

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER– May 2021

Pet Travel Essentials

With Lockdown restrictions easing we might be able to squeeze in a stay-cation in our beautiful country. Whether it be a countryside or beach retreat we have all the essentials you will need to ensure your holiday companion stays safe.

1. Don't forget bowls, bedding, poo bags, food, treats and any medication your animal is on; check you have enough for your entire holiday.
2. Is your flea and tick prevention up to date? Different areas of the UK can have much higher flea and tick populations. Prevention is better than cure! Make sure your parasite control is up to date and you have a tick-hook at the ready for any unwanted guests.
3. Make a note of where your nearest vets will be when your away, in an emergency situation you will want this information close to hand.
4. Pick up one of our handy First Aid kits. With everything you should need for any injuries. Perfect for a trip away or holiday. Easy storage for the home or car.



Wound Management

For the past few months we have been treating Ged and Nell, farm dogs from two separate farms who were injured in the line of duty whilst working. They both presented with traumatic wounds: Ged had an open joint space on his toe and Nell had what we describe as a degloving injury to her foot – essentially she had removed the skin from the underlying tissues.

With cases like this, it is vital that we keep the environment around the wound sterile and ideal for healing. The best way of doing this is with bandages. Bandage care is intricate, with fifty percent of the success of the treatment being based on dressing the wound and the other fifty percent coming from the care the animal receives when they are at home with the owner. Bandages must be kept clean and dry, if they get wet or dirty this can track up to the wound causing contamination and often infection. If your dog is having regular bandage changes, you will be supplied with a waterproof cover to prevent this happening. Getting bandages wet can also cause the bandage material to contract. This, in turn, can cause further issues such as bandage rubs. These can often be worse than the actual wound we are trying to treat!

We have been seeing Ged and Nell twice weekly for bandage changes and are pleased to report they have now both been signed off. They have both been model patients and their owners have been managing their bandages fantastically.



Disease in Guinea Pigs

Three reasons to visit the vets!

1. Dental Disease - Dental disorders are very common in guinea pigs. The problems are often missed for some time until the animal is in an advanced stage of disease. The most common causes of guinea pig dental disease are a poor-quality low fibre diets and lack of vitamin C. Guinea pigs have open rooted teeth, with incisors (front teeth), premolars, and molar cheek teeth growing continuously. Overgrowth and malocclusion (misalignment) of any of these teeth is possible, there are several possible reasons for this such as genetic factors (affected animals should not be used for breeding), poor diet (low fibre and deficient in Vitamin C), trauma (fighting and chewing on inappropriate objects) and infection/abscess.

Clues to dental disease and malocclusion can often be missed, common signs are: Overgrown incisors (they become misaligned when cheek teeth are overgrown), pain (often caused by ulcerated gums caused by spurs on the upper cheek teeth), food grabbing but not swallowing (spurs on lower cheek teeth can protrude inwards into the tongue - in severe cases with spurs on both sides these can trap the tongue making it difficult to chew or swallow), slobbers (difficulty in swallowing due to spurs will result in saliva drooling, wet chin and skin problems from moist dermatitis around the face and front feet).



If you suspect your guinea pig has a tooth problem please bring them in to visit one of our vets sooner rather than later!

Prevention - high-fibre diet is absolutely essential to avoiding dental disease in guinea pigs, so you should feed your pet plenty of hay and grass.

2. Respiratory Disease - Pneumonia is the most important respiratory disease in guinea pigs. Stress increases susceptibility to disease, as does a too damp or too humid environment. Young guinea pigs are most often affected.

Signs of respiratory problems:

- Respiratory distress – check for abnormal sounds such as wheezing, clicking and rattling noises
- Nasal discharge – check for sneezing with watery pus or bloody discharge
- Anorexia – check how much has been eaten, not just how much food was given
- Weight loss – regularly check your guinea pig's weight
- Poor coat – look for dry, matted, clumped, scurfy or greasy coat.

Treatment for bacterial pneumonia is generally achieved with long courses of antibiotic.

3. Scurvy – Vitamin C deficiency

Unlike other rodents, guinea pigs (just like humans) can't manufacture their own Vitamin C and require a continuous natural source from their food.

Most of us are aware of the need for the guinea pig's diet to be supplemented, but are you aware that the level of Vitamin C quoted on the food label can be affected by the conditions in which the food is stored? Levels can be significantly reduced by dampness, light, heat and prolonged storage, with as much as 50% of Vitamin C levels being lost in less than 6 months.

Some top tips are:

- Store commercial guinea pig food in dry, cool conditions
- Never feed rabbit food to guinea pigs as the Vitamin C levels are too low
- Fresh hay, herbs, kale, parsley and spinach can be offered to supply additional Vitamin C.

Vitamin C added to water will rapidly lose potency - as much as 50% in 24 hrs.



Clinical signs of scurvy

Most guinea pigs will show signs of Vitamin C deficiency within just a few weeks.

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| Lethargy – most become weak and unwilling to move about | Diarrhoea |
| Discharge from eyes and nostrils | Poor coat – brittle hair and alopecia |
| Joint pain – look for abnormal movement such as hopping instead of walking | Bleeding gums/ skin bruising |
| Weight loss due to poor appetite. | Dental damage |
| Bloat or constipation | Blood in urine |

The best way to avoid scurvy is to feed guinea pig specific diet together with plenty of fresh greens. Typical safe foods might include grass, dandelions, herbs and good quality hay.

Ref:2021Burgess Group PLC



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!

