

## COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2025

### SUMMER CARE FOR YOUR RABBIT

Rabbit Awareness Week is 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June, so we thought we would take this opportunity to highlight some of the risks the hot weather poses to our furry companions. As rabbits cannot sweat, they can really struggle to regulate their heat in hot weather which makes them seek out heat at every opportunity, so having a few tricks up our sleeves to cool them down can really help.

Ways to keep rabbits cool include:

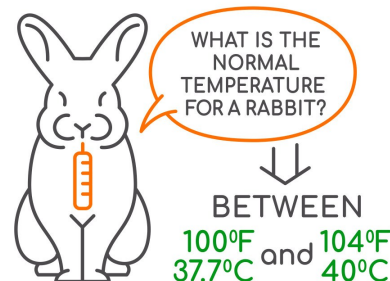
- Ensuring their housing is kept between 10-20 degrees; any hotter than this and they run the risk of overheating
- Keeping their hutches out of direct sunlight and providing lots of shady places for them to hide in, fans can be useful for indoor bunnies, giving them a gentle breeze to utilise.
- There are lots of cooling items on the market, such as cooling mats. Alternatively, these can be made with ice packs and towels. You can also make cold packs for them to lie next to – rabbits like to either lie on top of or next to something cold; try freezing some water in an old pop bottle. An alternative cooling method is to place a cool damp towel over the top of them – the evaporation of the water in the towel helps to cool down the rabbit underneath.
- Making sure there is always fresh water available as rabbits can quickly become dehydrated.
- If you have an indoor rabbit, make sure curtains are kept closed so they cannot bask in the sunlight as it also helps to keep the temperature down. Keeping them in a downstairs room (upstairs rooms are always hotter in the summer) and have plenty of cooling methods around for them.

#### Heat Stroke

This can happen quite quickly in hot weather; heat stroke can very quickly become serious and, in the worst cases, fatal.

The signs to look out for are:

- Weakness and lethargy
- Panting
- Hot, red ears
- Salivating
- Confusion
- Convulsions in the more severe cases.



If you suspect your rabbit may be suffering from heat stroke please call the surgery immediately and speak to one of the clinical team. Place a cold wet towel on top of them, dampen their ears and create a breeze. Do not submerge them in cold water; the shock of this can be fatal.

#### Fly Strike

Fly strike occurs when flies lay eggs in their fur. After hatching, the maggots feed on the rabbit causing open wounds and can be fatal if not addressed quickly. Flies are attracted to dirty bedding that omits more of a smell in the warm weather. Rabbits can also get soiled fur around their bottoms in the summer if they are not eating their soft poos as much; this can also attract flies. Rabbit dental hygiene is important; oral health has a big impact on being able to clean themselves, and if unable to do this properly can lead to a build up of soiled fur. If you would like to get your Rabbit's mouth checked, we offer a dental assessment with one of our veterinary nurses, please contact the surgery to book in for this.

Obesity can also contribute towards fly strike, and urine scald, and dental health issues. The rabbit cannot move around well enough to clean themselves, causing the fur to soil. Overweight bunnies move around less and sit in their urine more, the smell of which can attract flies. On top of this, the urine can burn the skin causing nasty sores which can be difficult to heal.

The signs to look out for are:

- Loss of energy and appetite
- Open wounds or sores
- Fur loss
- A bad smell
- Visible maggots

We recommend checking your rabbits at least twice a day to ensure they don't have a dirty bottom! **12 hours is enough time for them to get fly strike.** Rabbits are naturally very clean animals and will not toilet near where they sleep, so having a designated area for toileting can also help reduce fly strike risk. Again, make sure their toilet area is regularly cleaned and inspected to ensure there is no risk to attracting flies.

## Mountain Rescue Search Dog - Kez



As you may have seen from our social media pages, we are sponsoring mountain rescue search dog Kez this year. Her owner Andy has taken the time to write about their recent adventures and activities and we would like to share this with you.

"I've been a member of the local Mountain Rescue Team for nearly fifty years and fortunate to be active on call with my Mountain Rescue Search Dog Kez. Kez is a tri-coloured Border Collie and is trained specifically to find missing people in mountainous terrain, but is often called to search parkland areas, river banks and lowland areas.

I'm fortunate to have such a clever four legged search resource and very fortunate to have the skills and expertise from Dalehead Veterinary Practice in Settle that ensures she receives the care she needs to carry out her Search and Rescue duties.

The voluntary work that Kez and I undertake can take us to wild and remote places anywhere in the country to locate people that go missing in the hills, the countryside and sadly those that intend to self-harm. As part of Mountain Rescue Kez and I are called to search in some places that are unfamiliar and distant from Stainforth where we live and sometimes we have to travel several hours before arriving at the search area.

Not all searches have a happy ending and as distressing as these occasions are, Kez is able to help the Emergency Services in finding those that need to be repatriated to family and loved ones. Kez has on some occasions located missing persons who are alive and well and grateful for being found on a misty moorland in bad weather. It's always good news when someone is located alive by a Search Dog and it brings much happiness to the faces of many especially to the rescuers involved with the search.

We were called out by The Keswick Mountain Rescue Team to help search for a missing person in The Whinlatter Forest, Kez and I were allocated a vast search area of hillside and forest to search on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April. The weather at the time was very warm with a light wind and very dry. Searching the upper slopes of the dense forest Kez using her very keen sense of smell suddenly took off downhill out of view from myself returning a minute later with a loud bark to let me know that she had located someone. She led me downhill for several minutes into the thickest part of the forest where she stopped by a fallen tree. Behind the uprooted tree lay the missing person having become ill and unable to move very far. Using my two way radio, assistance from the Rescue Team was summoned and within an hour the missing person was taken to hospital. The value of a Mountain Rescue Search Dog is immense since the area the missing person was found in had already been searched by a small group of searchers.

I am lucky to have a Search Dog as clever as Kez and lucky to have a local Veterinary Practice willing to support her health in every way."

Written by Andy Colau

## New Director Peter O'Hagan



We are very pleased to announce that Peter O'Hagan has become a Director at Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd with specific interest in the Companion Animal side of the practice.

We are sure that many of you will now regard Pete as a familiar, friendly face since he joined us in March 2024. Prior to working at Dalehead, Pete gained a Certificate in Small Animal Surgery in 2012 and a Masters Degree in Business Management in 2023. He has worked in small animal practice experiencing both the independent and corporate veterinary sectors, with an additional role on the Clinical Board of a large veterinary group. He has a strong interest in both Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine and Orthopaedics.

Pete is an exciting addition to our team of directors and will be invaluable in the continued growth and progression of the companion animal department. We are all very pleased to welcome him into this new and exciting phase in his career with the practice.



 Find us on  
**Facebook**  
[/daleheadvetgroup](https://www.facebook.com/daleheadvetgroup)

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!

