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Companion Animal Newsletter - November 2018

A HELPING HAND DURING STRESSFUL TIMES

With the festive season nearly upon us it can be easy to let our pets stray from the forefront of our minds. With presents to buy and wrap, festive feasts to prepare, and family and friends coming round to visit or stay, pets can get overlooked which may lead to a stressful time for them, and in turn for you as well!

Stress in pets can be a very common condition and there are many reasons why your dog or cat might become more anxious than normal. Stress not only impacts on your pet's health, but it can also impact on you too. Pets may become more anxious with the loud noises associated with the festive periods, unfamiliar faces visiting, changes to their environment (such as a Christmas tree and decorations appearing overnight) or a change in their general routine.

To help understand and reduce your pet's stress, there are common signs of anxiety in dogs and cats to look out for:

INCREASED VOCALISATION: When anxious your dog may bark constantly and cats become more vocal. This can be evident when there are loud noises such as fireworks, party poppers or loud chatter maybe during a party.

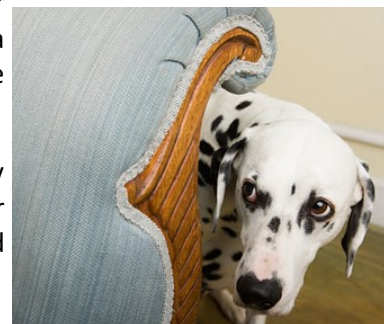
ISOLATION: Most pets like to be with us 24/7 following us round the house like little shadows, so if your dog or cat is isolating themselves from you or other pets, it might be a sign that they are not happy. They may hide in an unusual place such as under the bed or in a corner and may tremble or shake.

DECREASED APPETITE: Most pets would eat more if they had the chance, especially during the festive period! If your pet suddenly loses interest in their food or doesn't eat at all, something could be wrong and should be checked out by the vet.

INCREASED SLEEPING: If your dog seems overly lethargic, or is sleeping more than usual it could be a sign that they are not themselves. Lethargy is often the first symptom that a pet is sick. If you notice a change in your pet's sleeping pattern, it may be best to contact us if you are concerned.

AGGRESSION: If your pet is unusually aggressive towards a known family member or another pet this could also be a sign of stress. Aggressive signs could be accompanied by a fearful body posture or facial expression. Yawning, nose and lip licking or ears out to the side are common signs of a stressed pet.

If you are worried about changes in your pets behaviour or a situation that your pet may get stressed about please contact the surgery. We can help and advise the best solution for your pet's needs. We also stock various products which can naturally help reduce stress and anxiety for your dogs and cats without the need for medication.



Healthy Pet Club

Have you heard about our Healthy Pet Club?

*A simple way to save money and spread the cost of your pets preventative health care.
Pop in to Settle or Bentham surgeries or see our website for details!*

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH

- Diabetes is a disease which is caused when the body stops making insulin.
- Symptoms include increased thirst, urination and weight loss.
- It is an incurable condition in dogs and cats but can be managed.
- If left untreated, diabetes can cause a number of health issues.



What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a hormone related illness. When an animal suffers from diabetes, their pancreas doesn't produce any (or not enough) insulin, or their body has an inadequate response to the hormone. Insulin is needed to absorb glucose (sugar) into the bloodstream after eating and transport it to cells around the body to enable them to thrive and grow. Therefore, a diabetic cannot control the levels of sugar in their blood and, when elevated, becomes hyperglycaemic and when lacking, becomes hypoglycaemic. Many animals can cope with this but only for a short period of time. After this time pets often become seriously unwell if they acquire another illness, such as a urine infection. Additional health problems can also arise from high blood sugar levels.

Are there different forms of diabetes?

The most common form of diabetes is type 1. This means the animal is unable to produce enough insulin so requires long term insulin treatment. Type II diabetes means the animal's pancreas produces some insulin but doesn't respond to it properly. This type is more common in cats.

What are the main symptoms of diabetes?

- Increased urination - caused by the glucose drawing water with it into the urine.
- Excessive thirst - caused by the body trying to keep up with the excess fluid loss
- Increased hunger – because the body thinks it's starving
- Weight loss – because the sugars in the diet can't be used by the body if there is no insulin, and so they are lost in the urine. This means the patient effectively isn't getting enough calories and so the body starts to break down the fat reserves as well.

How is diabetes diagnosed ?

The first method of diagnosis will start with a urine test. If the urine test shows a positive for glucose, a blood test will then be carried out. If a blood test shows elevated levels of glucose, as well as the symptoms described above, it's usually a fairly clear sign that a dog has diabetes. But increased glucose can sometimes happen due to stress, so if there's any doubt a test for fructosamine levels may be carried out to test the average blood glucose level over a number of weeks to detect if it's a persistent, or one-off problem.



What medication will my pet need to control diabetes?

Following diagnosis, an insulin type and dose will be prescribed but it may take time to establish the correct dose. Most pets require injections twice a day, about 12 hours apart, after a meal. You may also need to test your pet's blood glucose levels at home by taking a small swab of blood with a tiny pin prick. It is important that a routine is established and injections are administered at the same time each day as well as feeding your pet the correct type and amount of food at each meal as directed by the vet. We will show you how to administer insulin injections and carry out

glucose tests. It's very important to follow instructions precisely to ensure your pet's insulin levels are regulated.

What are the signs that my pet's insulin medication isn't working?

Regular check up appointments will be arranged to ensure your pet's blood sugar levels are in the desired range. This may also involve your pet being admitted to the surgery to allow us to produce a glucose curve. Here we can analyse how your pet's glucose levels alter throughout the day, therefore resulting in correct medication and feeding times. If your pet suddenly becomes unwell you must contact the surgery as soon as possible as it may be related to the diabetes.

Are there any long term impacts of diabetes?

With the correct medication and management, most diabetic pets go on to lead happy and active lives. Health problems which often develop due to high sugar levels affect the eyes and immune system leading to cataracts and urinary tract infections.

For further information please contact the surgery or visit www.petdiabetesmonth.co.uk.

AUTUMN DANGERS

The autumn season is a wonderful time of year, sunny chilly afternoon strolls with the dog, dark evenings curled up in front of the fire but with this time of year comes several hazards to our pets...

Anti-freeze Poisoning (Ethylene glycol)



We have had several cases of suspect anti - freeze poisoning over the past few weeks. Most motor vehicle antifreeze contains ethylene glycol, and this is also found in some screen-washes and de-icers. At this time of the year many people either top up or refresh the anti-freeze in their cars.

Ethylene glycol poisoning is very serious in cats; unless treatment is started within a few hours the prognosis is considered very grave. Indeed, even a very small amount (around a teaspoon of concentrated antifreeze) can cause kidney failure and death. Many cats present too late for effective treatment and either die or are put to sleep. Cats which have been presented to us are showing symptoms including depression, lethargy,

weakness, vomiting, muscle tremors and increased thirst. Please be vigilant when using anti-freeze not to spill any or leave any products lying around. If you have any concerns your pet may have ingested or they are showing any of the above symptoms, please contact the surgery immediately.

Conkers

Adventures through the woods allows exploring but ensuring nothing is ingested is vital. Conker poisoning is rare but ingestion can cause gastro-intestinal signs such as drooling, retching, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. If eaten whole conkers may also cause internal blockages. Dog usually vomit any ingested conkers quickly so treatment to control vomiting may be required.



Oaks and Acorns

Exposure to acorns in dogs is common in the autumn and winter. The toxic ingredient is thought to be tannic acid, which causes damage to the liver and kidneys. Signs include vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and lethargy. Ingested acorns may also cause internal blockages. If you know or suspect your pet has ingested acorns please get in touch as soon as possible.

Mushrooms and Toadstools

Another hazard at this time of the year are mushrooms and toadstools. Some are highly toxic to dogs and even fungi experts (mycologists) find it difficult to distinguish them. Ensure you keep your dog away from them.

Rat Poison

At this time of year, we often see an increase in rodents as they try to find a warmer environment for the winter. Most, but not all, rodenticides in the UK contain anti-coagulant compounds that interfere with an animal's ability to clot its own blood. One-off exposure to products bought in garden centres often does not cause problems. However, repeated exposure to products or exposure to professional rodent baits can cause disruption to a dog's blood clotting ability and result in massive haemorrhage (bleeding). The effects may be delayed for several days therefore blood clotting (coagulation) tests are often needed to determine if a dog is at risk of developing problems. Treatment involves giving an antidote and in severe cases transfusions of plasma or whole blood. For more information please contact the surgery or visit our website at:



www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk

IMPORTANT - Polite Notice for YOUR ANIMAL'S Safety

When visiting the surgery your pet may become stressed or scared due to a combination of factors. They may be ill or injured, they are in unfamiliar surroundings, with strange scents and the presence of other unknown animals. This can lead to animals behaving outside their normal tolerance range. We try to minimise the stress whilst visiting the surgery by using natural calming plug-ins, having a separate dog and cat waiting area and also a small garden with bench for waiting outside (in clement weather!) if your pet is susceptible to stress.

To ensure that ALL animals are kept safe during their visit to the practice we politely remind you that we insist upon ALL dogs being on a lead and ALL cats being in a suitable cat carrier prior to entering the surgery and whilst on the practice grounds (car park/garden area). Animals can behave unexpectedly in stressful situations and we want to ensure that every visitor to the practice is kept as safe as possible.



CHASE AWAY THE CHUBBINESS

Many people do not realise just how much exercise rabbits require. During the winter months a rabbits exercise level can be neglected and may lead to days stuck in their hutch. A lack of exercise can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, poor bone and muscle density as well as urinary infections. Mental health can also be an issue as they need regular mental stimulation to keep them happy. The amount of exercise that experts recommend varies, but many people find rabbits need at least 3 or 4 hours of free run a day. Exercising your bunny is easy, there are many different ways to provide them with the exercise they need. Here are a few to get you started.



Garden Exercise

Before your rabbit can enjoy garden exercise you need to make sure your garden is rabbit proof. They should not be able to escape anywhere or be near potentially dangerous objects. Once you are confident your bunny will be safe give them time to run about in the garden on a daily basis. They will enjoy running around and exploring in the fresh air. If you are unsure about the security of your garden, a rabbit harness and lead may be the safest option. Alternatively an exercise pen can be erected to allow safe grazing and playing.

Build an Obstacle Course

If you want to have some fun with your rabbit and provide them with a good way of exercising you can always build them an obstacle course. You can do this by making things they can interact with or buying some obstacles for them to try. This can be done either inside or outside.

Toys

Toys are a great way to occupy your rabbit for a few hours every day. Whether this is something to chew on, an exercise ball or other toy. Your rabbit will enjoy playing with toys preventing boredom and allowing mental stimulation.



Interact with your Bunny

Simply interacting with your rabbit will keep them stimulated, it will allow them a chance to stretch their muscles and get out of their hutch. Sitting at their level allows them to get close and interact with you. Spend some time playing with toys together or simply relax while they roam around.

Preparing for Winter

We have definitely been spoilt this year regarding the weather, but winter is just around the corner. It is important to ensure rabbit and guinea pig housing is prepared for the winter months allowing maximum protection from the elements. Below are several points to help get you winter ready!



Repairs: Ensure the hutch has a sound roof and sides which does not allow any water or draughts to enter. Simply attaching a plastic covering can resolve this problem.

Adding Legs: Raising hutches from the ground prevents rising damp and rotting. If your hutch does not have legs, use bricks. This aids in air circulation and reduces the chance of rot.

Insulation: A thick blanket over the hutch followed by a waterproof sheet insulates your rabbit hutch allowing them to keep warm during the coldest weather. Ensure the front of the hutch is exposed to allow ventilation.

Hay and Straw: Providing additional amounts of straw and hay allow your rabbit or guinea pig to make a warm cosy bed. This will help to keep them

warm and snug during the cold months.

Daily Checks: It is vital your rabbits accommodation is checked daily to ensure it is standing up to the elements. Water should also be checked twice daily as this may become frozen.

If you would like further information please contact the surgery.



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!

