

## COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER—MARCH 2021

### GUINEA PIG AWARENESS WEEK



Burgess Pet Care and partners have announced the launch of the first **Guinea Pig Awareness Week (GPAW)** for March 2021. Building on the success of 15 years of Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW), GPAW will throw the spotlight on the UK's guinea pigs with a week-long online festival.

The inaugural GPAW (22 to 28 March) will consist of events and online content sharing designed to highlight the welfare needs of guinea pigs, and will give vets an opportunity to share their expert knowledge and insight with owners across the UK.

GPAW has been created by Burgess Pet Care alongside other GPAW partners the RSPCA, Wood Green The Animals Charity, Blue Cross and PDSA.

As vets the most common health issues we see in guinea pigs are dental disease, abscesses, lumps, gut stasis, and bladder and urinary issues. Guinea pigs are a popular choice of pet and with GPAW we can help bring a better understanding around their particular needs. It's a great opportunity for us all to get involved.

Follow our Facebook page for more links and guinea pig fun!

### Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (RWF)

In the past year with lockdowns and social restrictions, many households with more time at home have expanded their families by taking on a pet. As well as the obvious boom in puppies and kittens, smaller 'furries' have also seen a huge increase in demand, rabbits being one of these. However, rabbits as a species are often misunderstood and new owners can be caught out by the extent of their management needs. As well as cats and dogs, rescue centres take on substantial numbers of rabbits. Rabbits are often initially taken by owners in good faith, but through no fault of the rabbit they are then given up as their owners find them more of a undertaking than they expected.

Rabbits are a joyous and rewarding addition to any family, but they are a complex pet with unique needs and it is very important they receive a solid foundation and the correct care for both their mental and physical health.

As vets we are always here to help and advise. However, another great resource for the best of advice for all things bunny is the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (RWF). Check out their website: [www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk](http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk), where advice can be found on all aspects of rabbit care: Diet, health, accommodation, companionship and enrichment. They also run an annual focus, Rabbit Awareness Week in June each year. RAW is something we have always supported at Dalehead, through our Facebook page, newsletters and our nurse team offering Rabbit MOT's here at the surgery. Even last year when the pandemic was still so new to us all, the guys at RWF still held Rabbit Awareness Week as a virtual festival instead, no mean feat! Rabbits are not a 'simple' pet, knowledge is power and just like any animal the more homework you do and the more you put into them, then the greater the rewards making happy lively fun pets. This years RWF campaign is "a hutch is not enough". Rabbits can live miserable lives simply because their owners don't know any better. Sadly often rabbits are seen as cheap and easy pets and as a result suffer conditions that don't come close to meeting the need of the species. The only way to break this myth is through awareness and education.

As vets we fully support this campaign. We are of course here to support all the health needs of your rabbits, whether that is preventative care with health checks advice and vaccinations, or at times of illness. Rabbits can have complex health issues, prevention is always better than cure but sometimes just like us or any pet, accidents happen or they are taken ill.

As rabbits are prey animals they tend to hide illness and pain very well. The more you know your bunny the sooner you will pick up on any subtle changes which may be an indication of a problem, and the sooner they can see the vet for help.

So if you have recently welcomed rabbits into your life, do your homework and check out the RWF website [www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk](http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk) for great advice on all their needs, and enjoy the new additions to your family.



# CRACKING THE CODE WHICH IS 'CAT'!



Even to the most avid cat lover the feline persona can be somewhat of an enigma! Affection tends to be on their terms and to have a purring cat curled up happy on our laps is not only a joy but an honour indeed!

Cats Protection recently published an interesting editorial to help de-mystify our feline friends. We thought we would share some of their thoughts with you to help build the best possible relationship and bond with your cats.

## Body Language

Yes Please	No Thank You
Arching their back into the hand (when stroking their back)	Sharp turn of head to look at hand
Soft, rhythmic purring	Licking the nose
Hand 'bunting' (basically a head butt)	Dilated pupils
Kneading with paws or claws (ouch!)	Gulping or swallowing (not to do with eating)
Tail up	Turning the head away
Dribbling	Avoiding eye contact
Slow blinking / half closed eyes	Turning ears to side or back
Ears forward in a relaxed position	Raising a paw/swiping
Hop up (like a little skip with the front legs)	Twitching fur or skin rippling
Social roll onto side	Moving away and not returning
Return for more interaction	Tail twitching (fast as opposed to slow and rhythmic) or tail 'slapping' which involves the whole tail thrashing or slapping the ground. Definitely a sign to stay away!

All cats are individuals and there are no hard and fast rules, but the above general principles are a great start to cracking the code. Go gently and learn your cat's own signals through play and the gradual build up of touch and petting. If we know what interaction they are usually happy to engage in, then should this change maybe there is a problem? Maybe our cat is in pain or feeling under the weather and we need to contact the vet to investigate further?

## Sudden Changes in Mood

Cats are very good at letting us know when they have had enough! Many of us will have had a happy cat on our lap, who appears to be revelling in all the fuss and affection, and then suddenly apparently out of nowhere the cat can turn and bite at our hand. This is very common and quite normal behaviour known as "petting and biting". Quite often it was the cat who initiated the interaction and it can be hard not to take offence at this sudden change of heart! Cats are pre-programmed to react quickly so if their mood changes, or they drift into a snooze and then suddenly awake or maybe have been fussed a little too long and they react quickly then we can be on the receiving end of this sharp response.

## Shhhh I am sleeping!

### Cats are always on alert

Even when they're sleeping cats are always ready to leap into action at a moment's notice. This is because in the wild they are prey and have to be on alert when danger approaches.



### It's likely that cats dream

Like humans, cats have rapid eye movement (REM) sleep which is typically when dreaming takes place. So if you see a moggy twitching as they snooze, they could be dreaming, although we can't be sure of what.

### Cats can spend 75% of their lives asleep

Cats love a snooze and can spend between 12 to 18 hours a day sleeping. In the wild this helps them preserve energy for hunting, but pet cats will need to use up that energy to play

### They like a choice of snoozing spots

In the wild cats regularly change their sleeping spot to avoid the build-up of parasites such as fleas. Pet cats do the same, so they like lots of warm and cosy options for a nap.

### They're more active at dawn & dusk

Cats are crepuscular, which means they sleep during the day and night and are most active in the early morning – something you may be aware of if you've ever had a feline wake-up call!



# The Dalehead Companion Animal Team!

During the Covid pandemic to keep all our team, customers and their pets safe we have had to implement strict social distancing and not allow owners into the premises. This has allowed us to stay open throughout, and to provide a level of service we are very proud of during such difficult times. We miss having all of you and your pets in the waiting room and consult rooms chatting and catching up and providing that face to face help and support.

We do our very best to still provide this via the phone, across the threshold and in the car park and hope you all still feel a warm Dalehead welcome.

Now more than ever it is nice to put a face to a name, whether that is on the phone or at the door. With this in mind here is an update on all the faces that are our companion animal team!



**Guy Bolger**  
BVSc, MRCVS, GP Cert SAP  
**Director**



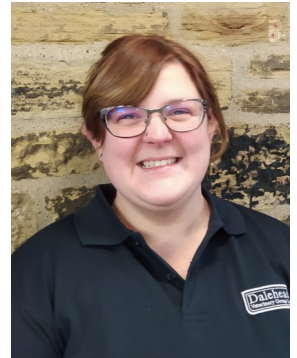
**Karen Swindlehurst**  
BVMS, MRCVS



**Lianne Butler**  
BVSc, MRCVS  
(currently on Maternity leave)



**Rebecca Frost**  
BVSc, MRCVS  
(currently shielding)



**Hollie Southey**  
BVSc, MRCVS



**Katherine McNamee RVN**  
**Head Nurse**



**Tracy Thurstan**  
RVN



**Natalie Pattinson**  
RVN, Cert, VNECC



**Glenys Sedgwick**  
RVN, R-SQP



**Lizzy Elliott**  
Veterinary Nursing Assistant



**Emma Spence**  
Practice Manager



**Ally Younger**  
Companion Animal  
Co-Ordinator



**Elaine Kirkbride**  
C-SQP  
Companion Animal  
Administrator



**Lucy Dean**  
Companion Animal  
Administrator



**Harriet Robinson**  
Companion Animal  
Administrator



**Rick Jackson**  
Companion Animal  
Administrator



## How Are You Settling In Harriet?

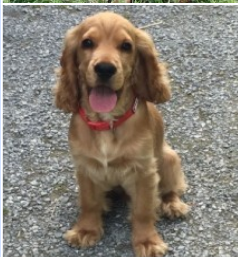


After only being here for 2 months, I can say I have learnt a lot and can't wait to explore more sectors of working with animals. I am still learning and can't wait to be more knowledgeable to you all about your pets, I know this will take time, but this will be the most rewarding part for me to see our customers satisfied and your pets being in good health.

After not having much knowledge of working with companion animals I am enjoying every moment and I certainly can't wait until we can invite all our customers and four legged friends back in to the practice when Covid 19 has

## Grab and brew and a pen!

Identify all the dog breeds in the pictures below—one is missing from the wordsearch can you find which one?



R	B	E	E	O	O	B	S	U	T	R	E	O	U
G	O	R	E	E	Z	O	I	H	D	U	O	R	E
R	R	E	O	B	H	E	E	U	O	R	O	E	B
E	D	E	I	L	L	O	C	R	E	D	R	O	B
A	E	D	D	O	D	G	S	H	I	H	T	Z	U
T	R	O	A	O	B	L	D	U	T	E	C	N	M
D	T	S	G	D	D	E	U	E	I	R	O	N	E
A	E	P	B	H	G	A	D	R	O	I	E	O	R
N	R	L	E	O	U	I	D	D	T	L	E	I	A
E	R	E	I	U	P	T	A	A	D	D	R	D	G
R	I	E	E	N	A	R	M	O	R	A	D	L	B
N	E	H	S	D	B	L	O	O	A	L	A	E	O
U	R	D	D	A	A	P	D	A	L	T	A	O	I
U	D	B	L	D	R	R	A	O	E	R	R	N	N



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!

