

## COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER— November 2021

### PUPPY SOCIALISATION & BEHAVIOUR

Many people have chosen a puppy to join their family in recent times, particularly during lockdown. Understanding your puppy's behaviour and development is crucial as this influences the dog they will develop into as an adult. Between the ages of 4 to 14 weeks old is the most influential period of a puppy's life. The more experiences and new encounters they have at this point, the more they will grow into a confident dog who is accepting of new people, environments and situations. Our Puppy Packs given out to new puppy owners, include a tick chart which lists different encounters, types of people and environments we feel puppies from 8 to 14 weeks of age should be experiencing. By introducing your puppy to these stimuli, fear related behaviours are less likely in adult hood. These encounters should be a positive and enjoyable experience and introduced slowly over weeks so that puppies learn to adjust to new environments. Remember to keep reinforcing these experiences so they just become part of everyday life.

#### EXAMPLES OF SOCIALISATION TICK CHART



**Delivery people** – Many people report dogs “hating the postman”, because they come to your property and leave without interaction and the dog is ‘defending’ the property. Early exposure and a fun interaction could stop this behaviour.

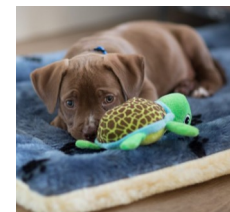
**Confident people** – Dogs can be fearful of loud people and noises, if experienced in the early stages of a dog's life, these become less of an issue as the dog is de-sensitised to them.

**Livestock** – Many farmers report dogs for chasing sheep and can legally shoot a dog which is chasing or worrying their flock. Early training and exposure to other animals, could stop this from being a problem. Remember keep your dog on a lead around Livestock!



**Washing machines & vacuum cleaners** - Are examples of sounds found in the home. When exposed to them at an early stage dogs are less likely to have a problem with these items (eg biting or barking at the vacuum cleaners).

**Dog Crates** -Many dogs are trained by using a crate. This should not to be viewed as a cage but as a safe environment that is the dog's own, where they can retreat back to their den.



**Veterinary Surgery** -Many people associate the vets as a stressful experience for their dogs and often don't bring them to the surgery other than when they need to. Fun and treats in the surgery for a puppy helps them adapt to future visits, bring them in to say hello, get weighed and have a fuss—it's nice for us too!

**Being Alone** – Many people think puppies should always have someone with them. Teaching puppies to cope with solitude is an important part of socialisation and will help reduce incidences of separation anxiety if your dog ever needs to be left alone.

If your puppy is slightly older than the optimal socialisation period then it's not too late. An introduction to new stimuli after this period is still beneficial. Dog training classes are ideal to help build your dog's confidence and strengthen the bond between you and your dog.

If only they could talk....It would certainly help us treat your pet, as would being able to see what is going on inside them! Happily, modern imaging techniques assist us in this area and most veterinary practices offer excellent digital radiography and ultrasonography diagnostic services. We use digital x-ray to examine solid structures (bones/ foreign bodies) and to take images of large areas such as chest and abdomen. This can be complimented by ultrasound scans of the localised structures of internal organs and other soft tissues.

We see cases everyday benefiting from diagnostic ultrasound, ranging from pregnancy diagnosis or bladder problems to acute abdominal crisis and internal tumors. With the latter a scan can mean detecting a growth at an earlier stage leading to improved prognosis for treatment.

The scanner probe works by generating pulses of ultrasound which are reflected back from the body, the strength and pattern of the reflections according to the depth and densities of the scanned structures are converted into an image on the screen. The colour Doppler facility uses the scanner's ability to detect changes in the frequency of ultrasound reflections.

This indicates movement (usually blood flow) towards or away from the probe, with speed and direction demonstrated by converting these signals into colours on the screen.

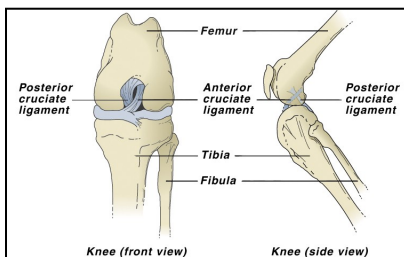


## CRUCIATE LIGAMENT REPAIR

**Cruciate rupture-** The knee joint or stifle is basically a hinge joint that moves only in one plane, backwards and forwards. Although there are many ligaments making up the joint, the range of movement is largely controlled by two bands of fibrous tissue that cross over inside each knee joint. These are the cruciate ligaments. One is in front of the other, hence they are known as anterior (cranial) or posterior (caudal) cruciate ligaments. They join the two major bones of the leg, the femur above and the tibia below.

**How does the cruciate injury occur?** Traumatic cruciate damage is caused by a twisting injury to this hinge joint. It is most often seen in dogs when moving at speed and suddenly changing direction so that the majority of the weight of the body is taken on the joint. The injury usually affects only the anterior (cranial) cruciate ligament. Once stretched or torn, the joint is then unstable and weight bearing difficult, if not impossible. The injury can also occur in obese dogs just by stumbling over small objects such as a pebble while walking. A chronic form of cruciate damage occurs due to weakening of the ligament, either as a result of age or disease. The ligament may become stretched or partially torn and lameness may be only slight and intermittent. With continued use of the joint the condition gradually worsens.

**How is it diagnosed?** Clinical signs play a large part in diagnosis. The history with traumatic cruciate rupture is that the dog was running in circles and suddenly pulled up and then was unable to weight bear on the affected leg. Even if this is not noticed subsequently the dog will be seen to be standing in a very characteristic way with the affected limb just touching the ground but unable to bear any weight on the limb. During the examination the vet will try to demonstrate a particular movement, called a **"drawer sign"** which demonstrates laxity in the joint. This test can usually be carried out in the conscious patient. If demonstration of the drawer sign is painful to the dog, or there is any doubt, the test may be carried out under sedation or general anaesthesia. X-rays both of the affected and the normal limb are often carried out at the same time. Sometimes the hips are also radiographed to check if any hip dysplasia is present. The examination may also involve other tests.



**How is this repaired?** Surgery is today by far the best option. The aim is to restabilise the joint. Various techniques are available, aiming to mimic the action of the cruciate ligaments. In rare cases repair is attempted but usually replacement of the damaged ligaments using a variety of materials including nylon and carbon fibre are used. Today this operation is carried out at many practices, and is surgery we are able to offer here at Dalehead Vets. Alternatively we may refer a case to a veterinary orthopaedist specialist particularly if there are complications such as arthritis.

**Is post operative nursing difficult?** It is vital that exercise is strictly controlled according to instructions for the first 6-8 weeks following surgery. Provided you are able to carry out our instructions good function should return to the limb within three months. However irrespective of the technique used to stabilise the joint, arthritis does develop over time. Thus as your dog gets older stiffness is often noticed. However provided you control weight, this problem can be managed as with arthritis which is often encountered in the knee joints of any active aging dog.



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!

