



Companion Animal Newsletter - NOVEMBER 2019

CHASE AWAY THE CHUBBINESS



Many people do not realise just how much exercise rabbits require! During the winter months a rabbit's exercise level can be neglected but 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 or plants. 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 but make sure it is at least partially protected from the elements, wind and rain.

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 that 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 through mental as well as physical 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

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.

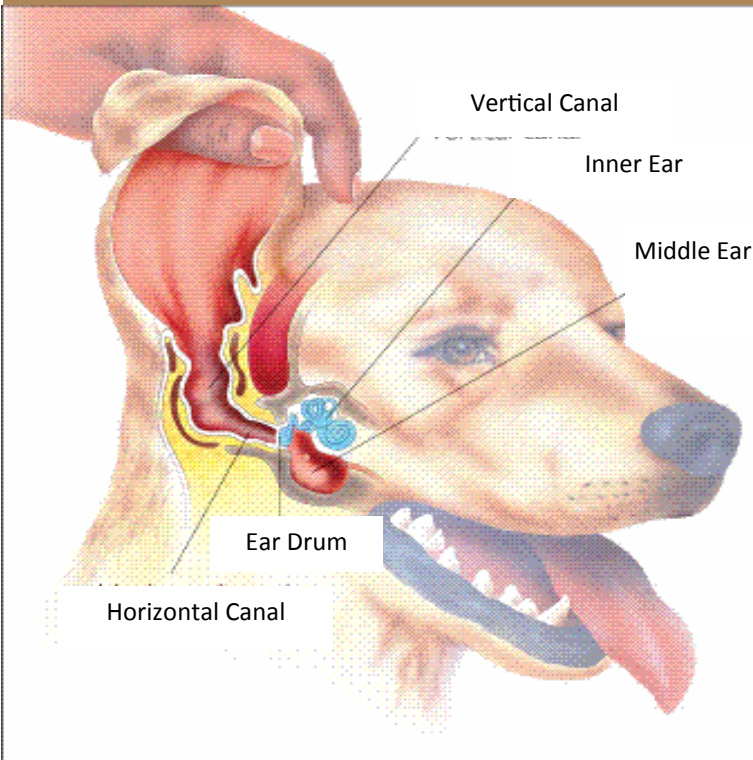
INSULATION: A thick blanket over the hutch followed by a waterproof sheet insulates your rabbit hutch allowing them to keep warm during the coldest weather. Ensure the front of the hutch is exposed to allow ventilation.

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 rabbit's accommodation is checked daily to ensure it is standing up to the elements. Water should also be checked twice daily as it may freeze.



EAR PROBLEMS IN DOGS



Otitis externa, or inflammation of the ear canal, can be a frustrating condition to treat from both the perspective of the vet and the owner. The reason for this is that the disease can recur and is not always as straightforward to manage as simply taking repeat medication home to continue treatment!

If a dog has recurring ear problems, then, over time, this can lead to scarring and calcification of the ear canal. This can make treatment less effective and more prolonged. In worst case scenarios we may have to perform a total ear canal ablation, which is the amputation of the ear canal. This procedure does leave the inner ear intact, so your dog is still able to hear although much less effectively.

In terms of treatment we are aiming to revert to total ear canal ablation only as a last resort because it is a complicated and potentially damaging surgery. With developments in recent years there is now so much more diverse treatment and diagnostic options available to us that we now reach this surgical option much less often than we might have done in the past.

It is still however crucially important to treat any bout of otitis

externa quickly and effectively whilst maintaining patience as the owner, because some ear infections can take several weeks to clear up. During this time we will need to recheck your animal regularly to ensure that the condition is being treated effectively, and that inflammation and any damage to the ear is settling down and getting back to normal. Speedy and effective treatment helps reduce scarring and calcification, hopefully reducing the need for any surgery in the future.

When we see your dog we will visually examine the outer skin of the ear, looking for thickening. We may then have a look down the ear to see how inflamed the ear canal looks. This may not be attempted if the dog is experiencing a high level of pain or the ear canal is very narrowed. We may then take a sample, on a cotton bud, from within the ear. This allows us to look for various organisms such as different bacteria and yeasts. This can help guide the selection of which medicated drops are used, so we are more likely to get the treatment right first time. Common organisms are *Malassezia* (a type of yeast), *staphylococcus* (a type of bacteria) and *pseudomonas* (another type of bacteria). These respond to different sorts of antibiotics and anti-fungal treatments and may also affect the type of ear cleaner we use. We can also look for ear mites on a different slide preparation, because whilst these are more common in puppies, we do occasionally find them in adults.

If we find *pseudomonas* this can require quite an extended and specific course of treatment. This bacteria is good at developing resistance to treatment, so it is important to try and rule out this organism when diagnosing an ear infection.

We may sometimes take a sample using a swab from your dog's ear which is sent off to an external laboratory for a 'culture and sensitivity' test. The laboratory will grow (culture) the sample and then test what antibiotics it is susceptible to (sensitivity). This can be especially helpful where the treatment is not working as expected.

We will often have to take repeat samples, to look under the microscope or to send away to culture, so we can check the effectiveness of our treatment and ensure the organisms we are trying to treat have gone.

Ear disease in dogs is often associated with pendulous ears and hairy ears, but we know that ear disease cause can be complex. It is made up of what we call primary, predisposing and perpetuating factors:

- We have primary factors which trigger the ear disease itself



e.g. allergies, parasites, endocrine diseases (e.g. hypothyroidism and Cushing's disease), foreign bodies, ear medications (including ear cleaners), among many other causes. If we can treat these then the ear disease will not come back.

- We have predisposing factors that, themselves, will not cause ear inflammation, but mean infections are more likely to take hold e.g. narrow ear canals (as seen in Shar Peis), hairy ear canals, pendulous ears, excessive moisture (e.g. in dogs that swim a lot), too much ear cleaning, tumours and many other things
- Perpetuating factors - these are the infections that can occur if the initial ear inflammation is able to get hold - this is what we are treating to try and settle down the soreness and irritation that you, as the owner, have brought the dog in for.



The commonest primary cause of ear disease is allergy - mainly environmental but occasionally can be cutaneous food reactions. We often tackle the perpetuating factor (the infection) and things appear to settle but it is likely the problems will recur at some point; not because we haven't treated the initial bout properly, but because there is an underlying cause. No two cases are the same and all need a slightly different approach.

With frequent relapses, identifying the primary cause is key to preventing recurrence. We are not able to keep giving repeat treatment antibiotic drops as this can lead to resistance. However, we have many otitis management regimes at our disposal.



Treatment and control can range from targeted local ear care regimes, to testing and treatment of hormone disorders, to use of prescription diet, to the various effective long term allergy medications now available.

Hopefully this has given you a better understanding of what we are trying to achieve for your pet experiencing ear problems, and that it isn't just as straightforward as 'giving you some ears drops' - there are many other factors involved for the good of your pet's health!

FUN FACTS ABOUT DOGS

- Dogs can understand more than 150 words.
- A dog's nose print is unique. Much like a person's fingerprint.
- Dogs have wet noses because it helps to absorb scent chemicals. Dogs secrete a thin layer of mucous, which they then lick and present to their olfactory glands on the roof of their mouths to understand the smell.
- Dogs can see in colour. It is a common myth that dogs can only see in black and white but they can actually see colours - just not as vividly as humans.
- Dogs can smell disease. If your canine chum is acting strange there might be nothing wrong with them - the problem could be with you!
- Puppies grow to half their body weight in the first four to five months of life.
- The fastest breed, the Greyhound, can run up to 44 miles per hour.
- A dog's sense of smell is 10,000 times stronger than that of a human.
- Dogs can get jealous when their owner displays affection towards someone or something else.
- Dogs' eyes contain a special membrane, called the tapetum lucidum, which allows them to see in the dark.
- Dogs curl up in a ball when they sleep due to their age-old instinct to keep themselves warm and protect their abdomen and vital organs from predators.

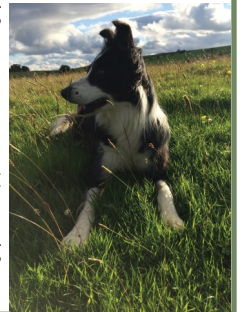


CONSIDERATE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Many of us are aware about keeping our dogs on the lead around sheep and newborn lambs in the spring when ewes are heavily pregnant and there is the risk of mis-mothering if sheep and lambs are disturbed. But did you know that, at this time of year, when the tups have just been put to the sheep, it is also incredibly important not to disturb the ewes or they may abort?

It is always prudent to keep your dog on it's lead around any farm stock or wildlife to prevent stressing the animals and avoiding potential disaster. Unknowingly walking amongst cows in calf, or with calves 'at foot' can lead to high levels of stress in the animals whose behaviour then becomes defensive, even appearing aggressive. Also, birds which nest on the ground are easily disturbed by our inquisitive four legged friends, abandoning their nests and leaving eggs or chicks to die.

Another point to note is the importance of picking up after your dog, not only on the public highways, footpaths and bridleways, but also on farmland and the open moors. Dog faeces, ingested by sheep and cows whilst grazing, can cause abortion in cattle, and disease in sheep which is not only upsetting but has a financial impact for the farmer. Ensuring your dog is regularly treated with a wormer can help reduce these problems and also protect humans from zoonotic endoparasites. We recommend worming your dog on a three monthly basis, or monthly if he/she is known to scavenge.

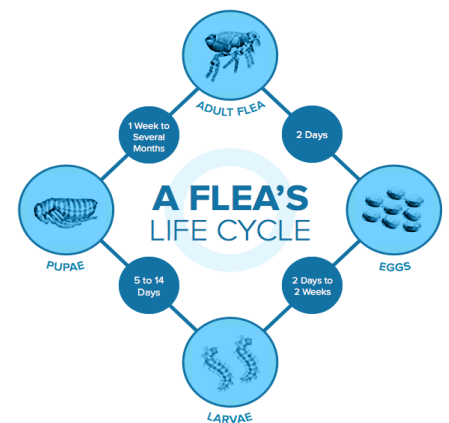


FLEAS...? BUT ITS FREEZING!!

Its true—at this time of year we often see a **rise** in the number of flea cases! As the temperatures dip outside, we all turn the central heating on inside encouraging any flea pupae laying dormant in our carpets and soft furnishings to hatch out whilst adult fleas to continue to breed. This is why it is important to continue with flea protection all year round as just one or two fleas can quickly turn into an infestation.

Common symptoms include bites which can lead to itchiness, red rashes, hair loss, and severe irritation, particularly in pets with an allergy to flea saliva. Some affected pets can develop secondary skin infections which may require further medical treatment.

If you suspect you have a flea problem or if you wish to discuss the best flea protection for your pet please contact the surgery.



FUN FACTS ABOUT CATS

- Cats conserve energy by sleeping for an average of 13 to 14 hours a day.
- Cats have powerful night vision, allowing them to see at light levels six times lower than those needed by a human in order to see.
- On average cats live for around 12 to 15 years.
- Cats have over 20 muscles that control their ears.
- Cats are often lactose intolerant.
- A cat cannot see directly under it's nose.
- A cat only has the ability to move their jaw up and down, not side to side like a human can.
- Most female cats are right-pawed, and most male cats favour their left paws.
- Cats are territorial and will defend their 'patch' aggressively against other cats if required. They use a range of methods to mark their territory including scratching, spraying urine and depositing faeces.
- Cats are 'obligate carnivores' which means that eating meat is biologically essential for their survival. Meat provides some vitamins and fatty acids in their preformed state which cats have lost the ability to make in the way that herbivores and omnivores can.



MACMILLAN

COFFEE MORNING

Thank you to everyone who came to see us at our Macmillan Coffee morning we hosted in support of the charity.

WE RAISED A

FANTASTIC

£175.00

We hope you all enjoyed the cakes as much as we did!



/daleheadvetgroup

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!

