



Dalehead
Veterinary Group Ltd

Tel: (01729) 823538

www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk



Companion Animal Newsletter - OCTOBER 2019

ARTHRITIS AWARENESS MONTH

As our pets grow older we begin to expect a change in their pace of life, but when a dog slows down, takes a while to stand up, or get moving in the morning, and when a cat becomes less active and has difficulty grooming, it may actually be a sign of underlying arthritis.

Arthritis, as in people, is a progressive and painful joint condition that results in degeneration of the cartilage, and a change in the bones, of the affected joints.

Once arthritis has developed it cannot be cured, but there are lots of ways to successfully control the pain and inflammation associated with the disease.

There are three main areas to consider regarding the control and management of arthritis:

- **Pain relief:** Arthritis is painful. Lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising, changes in grooming activity and changes in behaviour all occur as a result of joint pain. Using daily anti-inflammatory medication to control the pain within the joints and the pain messages sensed by the brain, is key to effectively managing arthritis.
- **Weight control:** Overweight or obese dogs and cats are more likely to develop arthritis, and at a younger age! Keeping your pets at a healthy, lean bodyweight will improve levels of comfort in arthritic animals and help to reduce ongoing damage.
- **Exercise control:** Ensuring that arthritic animals are kept active through regular exercise is important. The type of exercise is important; controlled lead walking is generally good, whereas stop-start exercise (such as ball chasing) can be more damaging to joints.

There are other treatment options that can be used alongside the control measures above including:

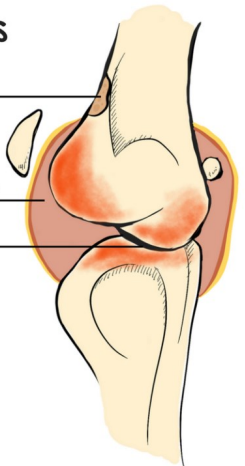
- Maintaining and promoting muscle strength and condition through hydrotherapy and physiotherapy can be very helpful in the management of arthritic animals.
- Joint supplements are available, but they should always be used in conjunction with the appropriate treatment and on veterinary advice.
- Regular veterinary assessment of arthritic dogs is important so that your vet can work with you to choose the right treatment for your dog at that time.

Arthritis

Bone erosion

Swollen inflamed
synovial membrane

Cartilage wears
away



Steven Maney working with a patient at Canine Health and Hydrotherapy, Rimington



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!*

PAWS REPORT: PAWS FOR THOUGHT!

As an animal-loving nation we always want to do the best for our pets. Each year since 2011 the PDSA has carried out a report on the general wellbeing of the UK pet population. Sampled through YouGov, it is aimed to be representative of the pet population as a whole, over the entire country.

Of particular concern this year is the drop in preventative vaccinations. The table below shows the figures, as a percentage of the population, receiving primary vaccinations when young and those receiving regular vaccinations as adults.

	RECEIVING PRIMARY VACCINATIONS 2013	RECEIVING PRIMARY VACCINATIONS 2019	RECEIVING REGULAR BOOSTER VACCINATIONS 2013	RECEIVING REGULAR BOOSTER VACCINATIONS 2019
DOGS	83%	72%	81%	78%
CATS	75%	61%	61%	61%
RABBITS	58%	49%	41%	51%

Vaccination assists us in the control of preventative diseases which used to be endemic, with vaccines giving good protection against them, so why would you **not** vaccinate your animal?! Well, with much misinformation regarding human vaccines, and widely accessible social media platforms, people are exposed to **negative and misleading information** regarding vaccines which can influence their decision over whether to vaccinate or not. We would **always** advise discussing your concerns with a veterinary professional, just as you would a doctor over your own health, in order to help you make an informed choice to suit the risk level and lifestyle of your pet.

In order to eradicate diseases entirely, a certain percentage of a population must be vaccinated, this is what we refer to as 'herd immunity'. As not every individual will respond to vaccinations (non-responders) and some animals cannot be vaccinated due to medical reasons, the animals which **are** vaccinated help protect those that cannot be vaccinated or don't respond. To summarise, **vaccination is an extremely important part of disease 'treatment'**.

Animals are injected with modified/killed parts of the disease that can stimulate their immune system without actually causing the disease. This allows them to mount a response against those diseases if they are then infected. As the vaccine stimulates the immune system, occasionally the animal may have a transitory rise in body temperature and may be 'off colour' for 24 hours, just like babies when they receive their MMR jabs. It is only **very rarely** that an animal may develop a severe allergic response that means it cannot be vaccinated, but as stated above, the 'herd immunity' from other vaccinated animals helps to protect that individual.



ANIMAL WELFARE ACT—DID YOU KNOW...?

In 2006 the Animal Welfare Act was introduced (applying to England and Wales <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>). The aim of the act is to prevent harm towards animals and promote animal welfare. Below we have summarised some of the points of the act which can be related to pet care and as such, may be of interest to you.

Under the act an animal keeper has a duty of care towards their animal. There are provisions for an animal's welfare which come under five basic needs:

- 1—a need for a suitable environment
- 2—a need for a suitable diet
- 3— a need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- 4— the need to be housed with or apart from other animals
- 5— a need to be protected from injury, suffering and disease



When questioned, 66% of owners had never heard of these 5 welfare needs, but that didn't mean they felt uninformed about the different aspects of this.

Out of these five welfare needs, companionship seemed to be the area where people felt least informed, but 78% of people thought they were informed enough about companionship for pets. 82% of owners reported that their pet made them feel less lonely, but that did not necessarily mean that they recognised the need for species-species interaction. It seems to be a misunderstood area, especially with regard to cats and rabbits. Whereas cats often prefer to live alone, rabbits prefer to be

housed with one or more companion of the same species. If you have any questions regarding husbandry of your pet then please let us feel free to ask us, we are here to help!

On a positive note, a slightly higher percentage of people said that they had carried out some research before purchasing a pet, with 7% approaching their veterinary practice for advice. Although this is only a small percentage, it is still up on previous years and is a reminder that your local veterinary practice can provide very useful help and guidance on pet suitability. Getting information in advance about how to care for your pet in a suitable manner and what to expect is crucial before making the commitment to purchase or adopt and can help prevent the need for re-homing.



There have also been some welcome updates to the Animal Welfare Law with regard to breeding and selling puppies largely thanks to the 'Lucy's Law' campaign, named after a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who died in 2016 after being subjected to terrible conditions on a puppy farm. Anyone breeding 3 or more litters or selling at least 1 puppy in a 12 month period must now be licensed and from April 2020 Lucy's Law will come into effect, banning the sale of puppies and kittens through a third party such as a pet shop or commercial dealer. Instead, anyone looking to buy a puppy or kitten must deal directly with the breeder or rehoming centre. Already raising awareness, this has reduced the risk of people buying from puppy farms with results showing that 67% of owners of dogs under a year of age saw their puppy with its mum when bought, this is an improvement on last year.

Another concern is obesity in pets - it is estimated that, just as with humans, it is on the rise in the pet population:

DOGS—Vets estimate that 46% of dogs seen are overweight yet 81% of owners think their dog is an ideal weight and 31% didn't actually know their dog's current weight.

CATS—Only 56% of owners knew their cat's current weight or body condition score, yet 76% of cat owners thought their cat was an ideal weight. Vets estimate 34% of the cat population is overweight.

RABBITS—For rabbits obesity is less of a problem but worryingly 26% of owners did not feed hay and of those who did, 30% were not feeding enough hay. There were still 21% of rabbit owners feeding a muesli diet, which is completely unsuitable.

We will always weigh and body condition score your pet when it comes in to the surgery, so if you would like to discuss this please ask. We are here to assist you in keeping your pet at a healthy weight and can help you if there are any problems.

There is much more in the report that cannot be summarised here. If you would like to read the complete report please see https://www.pdsa.org.uk/media/7420/2019-paw-report_downloadable.pdf.

HEALTHY PETS? THAT'S WHAT WE LIKE TO HEAR!

MSD Animal Health have launched the campaign 'Keeping Britain's Pets Healthy'. The campaign focuses on the importance of preventative health care for your pets including vaccinations and external parasite control. The drug company have set up a website which allows access to anyone who wants to educate themselves about caring for their pets.

Now, for the more cynical amongst us you may think that MSD are a drug company and as such are 'pushing their own products' with this campaign but there really are genuine health benefits for both your pet and your family by keeping your pets parasite free. Drug companies such as MSD Animal Health are also bound by strict legislation and testing regimes with huge amounts of scientific research done on each product, often over many years to ensure safety and efficacy. From this perspective you can rest assured that the information on their website is both informative and reliable, the choice of whether to follow the advice or to purchase their products is entirely up to you but the information is well worth having!

The vaccination section explains the importance of vaccinating our pets, the diseases we are protecting against, how our pet's immune system works, the safety behind vaccines, and how often our pets should receive the vaccine. The website also displays the diseases which are present in our area.

MSD manufactures a product which provides dogs and cats with a 3 monthly continuous protection against flea and tick infestations when administered. The company have done a lot of research into the different species of fleas and ticks (the 'Big Tick Project') we are seeing in the UK along with the diseases they are transmitting. The website displays a map detailing the different areas of the UK where ticks are present and what species have been found. The website is also a good 'go to' for information regarding dealing with flea problems in your home. It provides useful instructions of how to eliminate fleas and prevent new infestations.

To discover a world of information, please visit the website at:
msd-animal-health-hub.co.uk



HELPING HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs have been in decline in recent years. At this time of year we often receive a number of calls about hedgehogs going into hibernation. Here is some guidance and information on what to do if you find a hedgehog.



Hedgehogs are one of the few mammals that truly hibernate. Hedgehogs gain most of their energy from foods such as slugs, snails, beetles and caterpillars. These become scarce as the weather gets cold, so they have found a way to survive periods when their food sources dwindle. Hibernation involves hedgehogs finding a safe place e.g. a wood pile, underneath buildings, under hedges or in old rabbit burrows. You can even buy commercially made hedgehog houses if you really want to help them in your garden, although they may prefer to bury under your burn pile so please check it before setting it alight.

Hibernation occurs usually in November, but is very weather dependent. A hedgehog may start building its nest at the end of autumn, but if the weather stays warmer then hibernation may be delayed until December or even January. Hedgehogs need not hibernate if the weather is not too cold – the descendants of the European Hedgehog in New Zealand may only hibernate for very short periods in the winter, in the more favourable climate. Hedgehogs do wake up during hibernation but rarely leave their nests. This can be caused by disturbance or unseasonal warm weather. Also if the weather becomes too cold, then hedgehogs will usually build another nest rather than add extra insulation. Usually hibernation lasts until March or April, but again, this may be earlier with exceptional weather conditions. On occasion some hedgehogs may not hibernate at all. When hibernation occurs, the heart rate can drop from about 190 to around 20 beats per minute. The core body temperature drops from 35°C to 10°C – truly amazing. There is an internal readiness to make these physiological changes once the weather changes.

In the autumn there may be young hoglets about, that are still quite small and will have some growing to do. It is advised by the Hedgehog Preservation Society that hedgehogs should not be allowed to enter hibernation weighing less than 500-700g. However this is dependent on body condition also, it is the overall body fat which is important. St Tiggywinkles recommends that hedgehogs should weigh around 600g before December and should be weighing 500g at the start of November, but a professional assessment should be carried out if you are worried about a particular animal to prevent perfectly healthy animals being retained in captivity. For underweight hedgehogs it may be appropriate to keep them in a slightly warmer environment until they are ready to overwinter. They can be fed on cat food, although this may give an excess of vitamin A – that seems slightly less problematic in hedgehogs than some other strict insectivorous species – but is still a consideration. Commercial 'hedgehog food' is available from some retailers. In the longer term a natural diet is better, so only confine seriously underweight or sick hedgehogs. Once these hedgehogs have gained a suitable weight, then they are best put in to a frost-free shed or outhouse with some suitable material, so they can be allowed to hibernate if they are able.

If you want to help hedgehogs in your garden you could consider putting out some meaty flavoured cat or dog food, but they will happily rid you of your slugs and snails as well. It may also be helpful to leave a low level, but shallow, bowl for them to drink out of, and remember to keep it clean.

<https://www.sttiggywinkles.org.uk/top-navigation/wildlife-advice/hedgehog-fact-sheet.html>

SHOW COMPETITION WINNER

We have had another successful show season this year, attending our first show at the end of August in Malham. After a run of dreadful weather it was a relief when the sun shone on the day and brought everyone out to come and see us and get involved with our **'Draw a Friend for our Bunny Competition'**. We continued with our stand at Bentham Show on 7th September at Bentham Auction Mart and then again at Hodder Valley Show on the 14th September. We hope everyone enjoyed the shows as much as we did and we look forward to doing it all again next year!

The winner of **'Draw a Friend for our Bunny Competition'** is...

MILLIE!

Thank you Millie for entering the competition, we hope you enjoy your prize!



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!

