

DALEHEAD HEALTHY PET CLUB

As many of you will know, pets require regular vaccinations and parasite control to protect them against life-threatening diseases and keep them fit and healthy. One way in which you can do this easily and affordably, is to enrol your pet in our Dalehead Healthy Pet Club. We are here for the full life of your pet offering not only an adult healthy pet club, but also puppy and kitten clubs for your new arrivals. This allows you to keep your pet's well-being on track and reminds you to give a flea treatment or worm dose. Read on for some more information about the diseases that need regular immunisation.

PROTECTION AGAINST DEADLY DISEASES

Here's a short list of the important ones for our pets:

DOGS	CATS	RABBITS
Parvovirus	Cat-flu	Myxomatosis
Distemper	Enteritis	Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (RVHD)
Hepatitis	Chlamydia	
Leptospirosis	Leukaemia	
Parainfluenza		

These diseases have the potential to make your pet very ill indeed, and in some cases, can be fatal. Regular vaccination is **vital** and is included in our health plan. Vaccines will protect your pet for a variable length of time, depending on the type of vaccine, as well as your pet's own immune response to the injection. Some diseases, like Leptospirosis, require a booster dose every year. The vaccination frequency for

your pet is determined by the disease risks in our area, and having enough animals vaccinated to give a 'herd immunity'. This is where levels of vaccinations are high enough across the region that it keeps down the resurgence of a particular disease. Distemper is one such virus that we see less of these days simply because enough animals are regularly vaccinated against it. We can advise you on the best protection regime for your pet.

WHAT ABOUT CREEPY CRAWLIES?

Our pets are also at risk from picking up creepy crawly parasites – yuk! We humans are lucky, as we don't generally need to have parasite treatment in this country, but if we travel abroad to certain climates then we might need to take malaria preventative medication (for example). This usually means a trip to the doctors to get the right medication and vaccinations, depending on what country we are travelling to. In the UK, our pets are not so lucky. They are at high risk of getting infected with parasites (and the diseases they carry), with the most common culprits being worms, ticks and fleas.

WATCH OUT, WORMS ARE ABOUT!

Most people don't realise that you can't prevent your pet from getting worms; you can only treat your pet to get rid of them. For example, the day after you give your pet their worming treatment, they could pick up a new worm egg (which are too small to see with the naked eye) while out and about on their adventures. This egg can develop inside your pet into an adult worm and continue to reproduce inside your pet, if left untreated a large burden will cause weight loss and diarrhoea. A worming treatment kills any worm burden they happen to be carrying at that time, it doesn't have a lasting effect. This is why we will advise you on the best frequency at which to worm your pet, and these doses are included in our health plan. Let us take care of the hassle of remembering for you!

WHY IS MY PET SO ITCHY?

Fleas are one of those parasites that just reading about them makes you feel itchy! No one likes the idea of their pet having fleas. However, it is far more common than you would like to think. Those pets that are the itchiest will often be allergic to the flea's saliva and may react from just one flea bite! Did you know that 95% of the flea population lives in your home and only adult fleas live on your pet? Flea eggs, larvae and newly emerged fleas may be lurking in your carpets, rugs or between your floorboards undetected, just waiting for the chance to hop on to your pet for dinner. Prevention is better than cure (and less expensive!). Administering a flea treatment protects your pet from fleas which they may be exposed to. The only way to prevent your pet from picking up fleas is by treating them throughout the year (central heating means that fleas can survive all year round). Our health plan contains regular flea treatment and reminders.

WHAT OTHER PARASITES CAN MY PET GET?

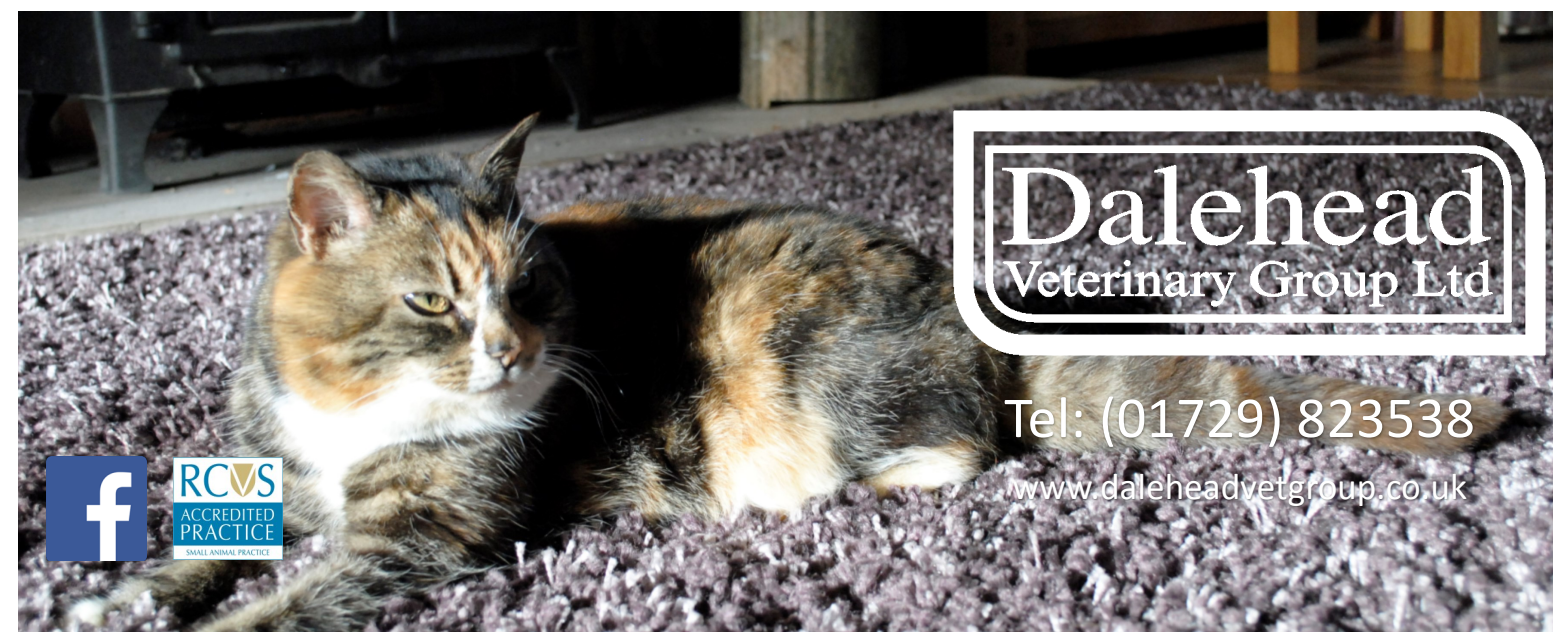
As well as fleas and worms there are other parasites your pets are at risk from such as **ticks, fox mange, lungworm, Cheyletiella** (also known as walking dandruff in rabbits) as well as others.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY PET AGAINST THESE NASTY DISEASES AND CREEPY CRAWLIES?

The good news is that we can help you protect your pet and your home from these parasites and diseases with our health plan. Our plan is designed to allow you to spread the cost of your pet preventative treatments over 12 months, by paying a monthly direct debit. As part of the health plan, you will receive your pet's annual vaccination, check-up and parasite control as well as discounts on other services and food. We'll help you keep your pet in tip-top condition! Just ask us about our plan and what it includes.



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!



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Companion Animal Newsletter - OCTOBER 2020

CARING FOR YOUR ELDERLY CAT

Elderly cats can seem to have the ideal life; snoozing in a cosy bed, eating when they fancy and occasionally demanding attention. They can appear so content, it is easy to assume that they are well in themselves, but their peaceful appearance can be deceiving!

In their twilight years, our feline friends are vulnerable to many illnesses, but are extremely good at hiding the signs. So, we have to be super vigilant to ensure they don't suffer in silence. Regular health-checks are a good way of helping to keep your cat in top shape and picking up medical conditions early, when they are easier to treat. Here is a list of things to keep an eye on:

Sore Joints: One of the most common problems for geriatric cats is painful arthritis. The vast majority will suffer with it to some degree but spotting the problem is a challenge. Cats are natural athletes, so they will still be agile to a certain degree, they will jump, climb and play, but with less freedom and frequency. You may notice they don't sleep in a previously preferred spot, if it is higher up, and they hesitate before jumping both up and down. Perhaps they are sleeping more, don't put a lack of activity down to age, it could be pain or illness. Is your cat a little more grumpy? Less keen to play or interact with the family? Not grooming themselves? Contact us to arrange a check-up.

Eating habits: Dental disease is very common in older cats and can be extremely painful. Older cats with dental disease may become fussy with their food, chew on one side, or refuse dry food. However, in many cases they will show no signs at all, making regular dental-checks vital. If your cat becomes fussy with food, contact us to make an appointment.

Weight loss: Notice your cat looking slimmer? In senior felines, weight loss is often a sign of underlying illness, but in many cases, the gradual nature of the drop makes it difficult to spot. We are very happy to weigh your cat, and this is a great way to monitor their health if you can't weigh them at home. You can also monitor their 'body condition score', so ask us how to do this to keep an eye on their level of fat and muscle. A common cause of weight loss in older cats is thyroid disease. An overactive thyroid will cause your cat to lose weight despite a ravenous appetite. The good news is that thyroid disease can be diagnosed from a simple blood test and there are a range of treatment options to manage this condition.

Drinking more: Drinking more than usual may be an early sign of some medical conditions such as kidney disease and diabetes, both of which are fairly common in older cats. Cats naturally drink very little, so if you see your cat constantly at the water bowl, please get in touch for a check-up. Equally, if the litter tray suddenly seems heavy or your cat is urinating in the house, let us know.

Dementia: We hear about this debilitating condition in humans and it can also affect cats. Affected cats may yowl in the night (this can also be a sign of other problems such as high blood pressure), seem confused, interact less with the family or start to urinate or defaecate in the house. If your cat starts keeping you up, please let us know. A few health tests and some treatment can often get you both back to having restful nights.

If you notice any of the above signs, please get in touch to book an appointment for a health check. The good news is that modern diagnostic tests, combined with an expanding range of treatments, can greatly improve the quality of life of your elderly pet.

SCARY TIMES!!

It's coming round to that time of year again that some of us may dread - November 5th. Unfortunately for some of our family pets this is a stressful time and not just for one night it would appear these days! Although there may not be many public bonfires and firework displays this year due to the Covid pandemic, this may mean many more families decide to let off fireworks at home in their own gardens instead, making it more difficult to avoid and shield our pets if they are fearful.

PREPARATION IS IMPORTANT TO MINIMISE FEAR AND STRESS FOR OUR FURRY FRIENDS OVER THIS EXPLOSIVE PERIOD AND SHOULD BEGIN AT LEAST 2 WEEKS BEFORE.

There are a number of non-prescription calming products available for your pet, both for their environment and to be given orally. Please contact the surgery for further details and a chat about what will be the best solution. Some of these will achieve better results if given for a numbers days before the firework activity starts. In some extreme cases prescription products may be required, your pet may need to be examined by the veterinary surgeon to ensure it is suitable for them.

HIDES: At other times of the year our canine/feline friends are quite happy to sleep in their usual beds but converting these into hides can help them feel more secure. Provide plenty of blankets so they can burrow, using old jumpers of yours can help create your presence whilst they are in the hide and make your pet feel safer. This doesn't need to be expensive, old cardboard boxes, dog crates, cat baskets will do the job. Remember to put in a bowl of water whilst the hide is being used.

In the run up to fire work season take your pet to the hide regularly, play with them and give them some food/treats there so they begin to understand it is a safe happy place to go to, make it accessible at all times so they can go there when they feel the need. If possible, place the hide in a room with no windows or use thick curtains so your pet can't see the flashes from fireworks.

- **DURING FIREWORK ACTIVITY:** keep all windows and doors closed, fear can cause animals to look for escape routes and they may find themselves outside becoming lost and very scared.
- **ENSURE YOUR PET IS MICRO-CHIPPED**, should they become lost this will ensure a more speedy reunion.
- **WHILST OUT WALKING WITH YOUR CANINE COMPANIONS KEEP THEM ON THE LEAD** and try to keep cats indoors providing them with a litter tray if they don't already use one.
- **ADD A DISTRACTION:** Provide your pets with new chews/toys to distract them from what is going on around them.
- **PLAYING MUSIC OR THE TV AT A LOUDER LEVEL** than normal can help to mask the noise from outside, playing with your pet may also help to distract them.
- **TRY NOT TO GET CROSS WITH YOUR PET** as this may make them more scared, try to ignore the behaviour until they begin to relax and then reward the relaxed behaviour.

We mustn't forget our fury friends that live outside, rabbits, ferrets etc. Start bringing them indoors at night to get them use to it before the firework season starts. If you have aviaries consider covering them over or providing extra places for the birds to take cover.



This year the British Veterinary Association (BVA) is concerned there may be an increase in unregulated backyard fireworks as official displays may be limited by COVID-19 restrictions. The association is urging pet owners and livestock keepers who are worried about their animals' welfare to take steps now to avoid possible injury and distress during traditional fireworks dates such as Halloween, Bonfire Night, Diwali and New Year's Eve. Many animals have more acute hearing than humans, so the loud bangs and whistles – which at 150 decibels can be as loud as the noise from a jet engine – can cause significant distress and fear and lead to the development of phobia responses.

In a survey conducted by the BVA in 2018, around one in 14 vets across the country reported seeing animals with firework-related injuries over the previous year, with equine vets significantly more likely to report such cases (19%). By far the most commonly reported cases were self-injuries caused by fireworks-related anxiety, such as fractures in horses that had bolted from their fields or tooth injuries to dogs from chewing furniture.

The negative impact isn't restricted to noise levels – the debris and remnants of fireworks and paper lanterns in fields and surrounding countryside can also pose a serious risk of injury to livestock, wildlife and zoo animals.

BVA senior vice president Daniella Dos Santos said: "The loud noises and bright flashes from fireworks can be extremely traumatic for animals, from dogs, cats and rabbits to livestock, horses, wildlife and zoo animals. While COVID-19 restrictions may lead to the cancellation of official displays, we are worried about a rise in the number of backyard celebrations. "We'd encourage pet owners and livestock keepers to consult with their vet as far in advance as possible to discuss management and treatment options, which may include noise desensitisation techniques, applying pheromone products around the house, and preparing a 'safe place' for animals."

By Simon King (Over the counter)

