

Companion Animal Newsletter - MAY 2019

DIETARY DELIGHTS

With such a huge array of pet foods on the market, deciding what to feed your four-legged friend can be a minefield of conflicting advice. As a general rule, and in a fit healthy animal, most vets will advise a good quality dry food, fed twice daily. We recommend Hill's Vet Essentials food as Hills are, in our opinion, one of the highest quality pet food manufacturers. Most good quality pet food manufacturers will produce a range of food to support different breeds at their different life stages.

Puppy: These are usually high in energy, fatty acids, calcium and are very palatable to encourage weaning. Large Breed Puppy foods are especially important and should be fed to any dogs expected to weigh over 25kg when they are fully grown. These foods have slightly restricted calcium, to prevent bones growing too quickly and causing developmental problems.

Adult: Adult foods should allow for an ideal nutritional balance for good health but prevent against excessive intake and pets becoming overweight, with controlled levels of calcium, phosphorous, sodium, energy and protein. They are usually highly digestible and high in essential fatty acids, which helps support the skin and joints.

Mature: Senior diets are usually designed to balance nutrition whilst maintaining mobility and healthy vital organs. They are also lower calorie to prevent obesity in less active older animals and often contain joint supplements that help to maintain healthy joints and assist in joint mobility as the likelihood of arthritis increases.

Food as medicine:

There are many cases in veterinary medicine where we can actually use your pet's diet to treat specific disease. In these cases it is really important they eat the diet prescribed and nothing else. A few examples of this are:

- Cats with bladder problems: A prescription diet contains supplements to help restore the lining of the bladder and prevent bladder inflammation in the future
- Dogs and cats with urinary stones: Prescription diets can actually dissolve some of the stones and reduce the chance of your pet needing surgery to remove them
- Cats with an over active thyroid: Some cat's over active thyroid can be controlled by prescription diet alone
- Arthritis: Prescription diets can promote weight loss and also contain joint supplements, at clinically proven levels, to help in the early stages of arthritis
- Cats and Dogs with kidney disease: Specific prescription diets are full of the things struggling kidneys try to keep in the body and low in things they try to get rid of. Feeding a specific kidney diet can significantly reduce the progression of the disease
- Obesity: Often we don't think of obesity as a disease however, being overweight is one of the most common health problems facing our pets. Specific obesity diets do exist and can be very effective if fed exclusively. They tend to be high in bulk and very low in calories, promoting the feeling of being full. They often have added ingredients that are also believed to help speed up your pet's metabolism.

If you have any queries about feeding your pet please do come and see us for some friendly free advice from our nursing team!



CARING FOR YOUR KITTEN

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING A KITTEN:

When choosing a kitten, it is important to ensure he or she is bright, confident and healthy. Coats should be glossy with no dry spots or scurf. Eyes, ears and nose should be clean with no discharge or crusting. The kittens should have been regularly handled by their breeder allowing them to be confident and healthy and socialised with people. Don't be shy to ask as many questions about their life so far as you need to. Questions like; 'What have the kittens been fed and how many times a day?' 'At what times are they fed?' 'When was the last routine parasite treatment given?', etc.

WHAT WILL I NEED WHEN I BRING MY KITTEN HOME?

Your new addition should be ready to leave its mother and join you in your home from 8 weeks of age. Equipment you will need includes:

- **Litter tray and cat litter:** Using the same, or similar litter to that used by the breeder will help the kitten adjust to toilet training in its new home. Using more than one litter tray is advisable to avoid unwanted puddles!
- **Food and water bowl**
- **Food created especially for kittens**
- **A pet bed for your kitten**
- **Toys**
- **A calming diffuser:** Natural plug in diffusers or sprays can help your kitten to feel calm and relaxed as they transition and settle into their new home.



FOOD AND WATER

Kittens need to be fed little and often as they have small stomachs which cannot absorb the nutrients they need, if fed large infrequent meals. Kittens from 2 to 3 months of age should be fed 4 times a day, this can be reduced to 3 times a day between 3 and 6 months of age, and twice a day over 6 months old. Kittens should remain on a 'kitten specific' diet until 12 months of age to ensure they have received all the additional nutrients and calcium required to develop correctly.

They can then be switched to adult cat food at around 12 months of age. Ensure you follow recommended feeding rates and guidelines to ensure your kitten is receiving the correct amount. Kittens should only be given **water** to drink once weaned as most cats are in fact lactose intolerant!

WHEN CAN MY KITTEN GO OUT?

Kittens should not go out until 2 weeks after their last vaccination. However it is advised not to let your kitten out until they have been neutered (at approximately 4 months of age) to prevent unwanted pregnancies, straying and fighting. It is worth noting that female kittens can get pregnant from 12 weeks of age!

VETERINARY ADVICE

Before viewing and purchasing your kitten we recommend contacting the surgery for any veterinary or veterinary nurse advice and to help us to answer any questions you may have about your proposed new addition. When you have chosen your kitten, you can then register it at the practice and arrange an appointment for a health check with the vet for when you bring your kitten home.

At this free 'Meet and Greet' appointment one of our dedicated small animal vets will examine your new pet from top to tail checking for any health issues. Your kitten's temperature will be taken and their weight will be recorded. The vet will discuss routine parasite control, feeding and nutrition, and discuss vaccination regimes tailored to your kitten's individual environment and lifestyle.



VACCINATIONS

Cats are routinely vaccinated against several preventable diseases which may be harmful or even deadly to your pet. The diseases vaccinated against are; Feline Panleucopenia, Feline Herpes Virus and Calicivirus, Feline Chlamydia and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV). Your kitten's first vaccination can be given from 8 weeks of age. The course involves 2 injections, 3 weeks apart. After the 2nd vaccination it will take 2 weeks for immunity to develop so your kitten should be kept inside. Your cat will need a booster vaccination every 12 months to maintain immunity.

PARASITE TREATMENT

Kittens and adult cats should be regularly treated for fleas, ticks and worms, as these little creatures aren't just annoying, they can cause serious health problems for you and your pet! Fleas and ticks both carry zoonotic diseases which can be transferred to humans such as Lyme disease and Bartonella. Fleas also carry the larvae of the *Dipylidium caninum* tapeworm.

Intestinal worms are parasites which live in the small intestines. These worms cause damage to the gut which can have long term health effects and also absorb valuable nutrients from the diet which are intended for our pet. Kittens can become infected via their mother's milk as well as from the environment.

Prevention is better than cure in all aspects of flea and tick control. Ensure your pet is treated with a product of prescription strength which guarantees continuous protection, follow the manufacturer's instructions and treat at the correct time.

Relax... Knowing everything is taken care of.



KITTEN HEALTH PLANS

We have introduced a health plan to take care of your kitten's parasite control and vaccination protocol as well as providing many other benefits. Ask at our Settle or Bentham Surgery for details!

MICROCHIPPING

A microchip can help you be reunited quickly with your kitten if they go missing. The chip itself is roughly the size of a grain of rice and is inserted under the skin of your kitten in between the shoulder blades by one of our veterinary nurses in a relatively painless procedure. Each microchip has a unique identity number which is then registered to a large 24 hour database with your details once it has been allocated to your kitten. This means that if your kitten is lost, stolen or injured, the microchip will identify you as the owner and you can be contacted immediately. It is essential to keep your pet's microchip details up to date.

SHOULD I NEUTER MY KITTEN?

YES - Neutering your cat is the responsible course of action for any owner! There is a large population of unwanted cats and kittens searching for homes every day. Kittens can fall pregnant from 12 weeks of age and can have several litters a year. Fighting in un-neutered males can cause injuries which require medical intervention. Tom cats show other unwanted behaviour such as scent marking by spraying urine in and around the home. Other health benefits for your pet are preventing mammary tumours and pyometra in females, and prostate cancer in males.

Neutering for both males and females, is typically done from 4 months of age. Both operations are routine surgical procedures which involve removing the testes of a male and the uterus and ovaries of a female. Your kitten will be admitted in the morning between 8.30– 9am by a veterinary nurse who will give a preliminary health check, go through some routine questions with you and ask you, as the owner, to sign a consent form for the procedure to be done. The vet carrying out the procedure will examine your kitten thoroughly prior to them being prepared for theatre. We use preliminary sedation to make sure that your cat is nice and relaxed prior to the general anaesthetic and all patients are given post operative pain relief medication. During the operation your kitten's anaesthetic is closely monitored by one of our qualified veterinary nurses.

Once the procedure is complete your kitten will be nursed in an individual kennel by one of our qualified veterinary nurses and allowed to go home later the same day. When your kitten gets home they may be a bit sleepy from the anaesthetic and should be kept as quiet as possible for a recovery period which will be discussed with you at collection. We like to see all patients for a post operative appointment at 3 and 10 days after the procedure to check the surgical site and ensure all is healing nicely.

INSURANCE

Insurance is to be strongly advised upon getting any pet in case they become ill, are involved in an accident or need long term treatment for an ongoing condition. Insurance can provide security for both you and your pet, allowing the best quality care available without the financial worry. Not all insurance policies are the same and it is important to read the small print to make sure that you are getting the level of cover that you need.



TICK AWARENESS

As the weather gets warmer and the nights stay lighter for longer many of us along with our pets are putting on our walking boots and taking to the paths, but we are not the only ones...

There are over twenty different species of tick found in the UK, some are highly specialised and only live in specific habitats or feed on specific animals. The most likely species to bite dogs and humans is the Sheep tick (*Ixodes Ricinus*), but bites from the hedgehog tick (*Ixodes hexagonus*) are also reported.

Depending on when it hatches and its success in finding a suitable host, the tick's life cycle can last between 1.5 and 4.5 years. Once hatched, the larva seeks a small mammal or bird host and feeds for 3 to 5 days, before dropping off to moult. Usually later in the year or the following year the newly moulted nymph seeks a host (often a small or medium mammal) to feed on and engorges for 4 to 6 days, and will moult into a male or female. The male feeds intermittently on a newly acquired host, whilst mating with females found on the same host. The adult female feeds for 7 to 11 days, engorging and then dropping off the host to find a suitable habitat to lay her eggs - up to 2000!

All feeding stages can be seen with the naked eye – larvae have six legs, are slightly smaller than a poppy seed and glisten slightly in the light. Nymphs are slightly bigger, about the size of a pin head, dark in colour and have 8 legs. Sex cannot be determined at the nymphal stage. Adult females and males resemble small spiders but appear flatter and have a distinctive tick crawling movement. Males are slightly smaller than females and dark in colour. Females are the largest and have a distinctive two tone reddish brown/black appearance, swelling to silver/grey.

Lyme disease in dogs is one of the most common tick-transmitted diseases in the world, but only 10% of affected dogs will show symptoms. Many dogs who contract Lyme disease may experience recurrent lameness due to inflammation of the joints. Some dogs may also develop kidney problems resulting in kidney failure.

Other symptoms associated with Lyme disease in dogs include:

- Stiff walk with an arched back
- Sensitivity to touch
- Difficulty breathing
- Fever, lack of appetite, and depression
- Superficial lymph nodes close to the site of the infecting tick bite may be swollen
- Heart abnormalities are reported, but rare
- Nervous system complications (rare)



Prevention

If possible do not allow your dog to walk in areas known for ticks. If you are walking in tick known areas ensure you check both yourself and your dog upon returning home. It is crucial ticks are removed with an appropriate 'tick remover', this ensures the mouth parts are not left behind which can cause an infection or abscess.

Prescription only tick prevention medication (our regular flea and tick prevention product) very effectively controls ticks if used regularly according to the manufacturer's recommendation. Ticks will still attach to your pet but will be killed quickly and prior to the transmission of any disease. A vaccination against Lyme disease is available.

If you would like any further information or assistance in removing a tick from your dog, please do not hesitate to contact us, we are happy to help.



Welcome on Board!

We are very pleased to announce the arrival of our new Companion Animal Veterinary Surgeon Sharon Leak, BVM&S, MRCVS. Some of you may recognise Sharon, who spent time with us at Dalehead whilst completing her extra mural study as part of her veterinary training. Since that time, and qualifying six years ago, she has longed to return to work with us here in the Dales and now, with the timing right on both sides, here she is!

Sharon is familiar with the area, her parents living locally, and she and husband Richard are looking forward to settling down and becoming part of the scenery too. Sharon's passion lies in Emergency and Critical Care and pain management. She's looking forward to meeting you all soon—we're sure you will love her just as much as we do!



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!

