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COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2025

COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

Cognitive Dysfunction is very similar to dementia in humans. It is thought to be when the nerve cells in the brain degenerate, mainly due to old age and a reduced blood flow. The main thing affected is memory, making it difficult to remember anything new and leading to subtle behavioural and personality changes that worsen over time. Your pet will often appear forgetful and confused like a human with dementia or even Alzheimer's disease.

Unfortunately, Cognitive Dysfunction is not a condition which can be prevented or cured. Dogs and cats over seven years of age can start to show subtle early signs. Early detection can help in slowing down the progression of the condition.

Behavioural changes to look out for:

- Disorientation and confusion – animals becoming less responsive to you and having a reduced recognition of people and places, forgetting commands and staring into space
- Interaction changes – decreased enthusiasm when greeting people, development of fear, anxiety or aggression
- Changes in sleep patterns – increased sleep during the daytime but reduced at night and becoming restless and vocal at night
- House soiling – asking to go out less and toileting indoors at random times, specifically a change from what is normal
- Activity – increased wandering and pacing aimlessly with an increased restlessness.

There are measures you can take at home to help maintain quality of life and cognitive function:

- Keep your dog fit and don't allow them to gain extra weight
- Stimulate their brain
- Use interactive feeders
- Play games with them and use a reward-based system
- Practice simple commands they already know and reinforce good responses
- Maintain exercise but try and do shorter more frequent walks to prevent long periods of inactivity
- Maintain a routine – feeds and walks at the same time daily
- Avoid change – try not to change positions of furniture etc. in the house to prevent confusion, also keep cleaning products the same so as not to change scents in different areas of the house
- Give them a den to hide away in – if animals get overwhelmed by lots of stimulus, having a safe space they can go to where nothing negative happens to them can be beneficial.

There are various supplements on the market to help slow down the progression of the condition and help manage some of the behaviours seen with dementia signs:

- Aktivait – contains a specific blend of anti-oxidants and nutrients to boost brain function and helps communication between nerve cells in the brain
- Calmex – a supplement that can be used to help calm down any anxious behaviours and help animals cope with stressful situations
- Adaptil or Feliway – this is a pheromone that comes in various different forms (collar, plug-in, spray) that is a calming pheromone to help with anxiety
- Pet Remedy – this comes as either a plug in or spray that is calming.

If you are concerned about your pet and think they may be showing signs of ageing and cognitive decline, please get in touch and we can work together to reach the best therapies for your pet.



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PET INSURANCE

Should I insure my pet?- Whether or not to insure your pet is a decision individual to every pet owner. In veterinary practice we are not allowed to recommend or advise on policies or insurance companies. However, we are often asked about insurance, and having the correct insurance in place for your pet is something we would advocate.

If my pet is ill, injured or develops a long term health condition would I be able to afford their health care?

As an independent vet practice we work hard to keep our fees fair and in line with our profession's benchmark. Despite this there is no NHS for pets, it is the responsibility of the owner, and their health care can be expensive. In veterinary practice, just as in human medicine, the profession continues to evolve and for some conditions advanced treatments may be an option. The cost of medication has risen in recent times and with the challenges of supply options can be more limited when looking to find a cost-effective and reliable source of stock. Sometimes options for treatment may be prohibitively expensive for owners who are not insured. At an emotional and worrying time when a pet is ill, we will of course always work together with you as a team to do what is best for the animal and always offer all the options for treatment, but having insurance in place can help owners to be able to focus purely on the treatment options without the worry of their cost.

So where to start?

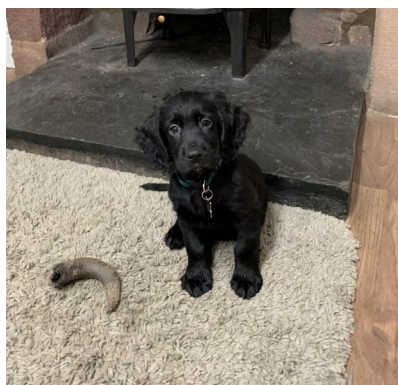
Although as already stated above we cannot advise you on the specifics of pet insurance here is a general overview of considerations to research or discuss further with an insurance provider when considering pet insurance. Although policies come branded in many different ways and can have many different terms and conditions (read the small print!), they do tend to fall into one of the following categories:

- **Lifetime Cover** – Lifetime cover is the most comprehensive pet insurance on the market and pays out for ongoing issues your pet may have throughout its lifetime. There are two main types of lifetime cover: Per condition, per year cover, and annual lifetime cover.
- **Maximum Benefit** - Maximum-benefit pet insurance gives you a pre-set amount to spend on each injury or illness with no time limit.
- **Annual** – Annual Cover has a time limit of one year. Policies can vary with some classing the start of the annual period from the first date the problem was noticed by the owner, and others from first date of treatment for the problem.
- **Accident Only Cover** – Does not cover illness, only accidents.

Is there a deferment period at the inception of the policy? Most cover is not immediate. Beware claims can also be time critical, with terms stating that any claim must be submitted within a set number of days from the start of the illness or injury. Excess fees can also be very different from company to company. Fixed excess amounts can differ and will apply per policy year and usually per condition. In addition to a fixed excess many policies have an additional co-payment/percentage excess. If this percentage is high and the treatment is of high cost or long duration then the amount of co-payment to be paid by the policy holder is going to also be high. This can also change with the age of the pet.

Another important consideration is the medical history of your pet. Pre-existing conditions will not be covered by any insurance company, regardless of whether they have ever been previously claimed for or not. It is important to be transparent with your pet's health history when taking out the insurance. Should you claim, the insurance company will always request a full clinical history (usually for the life of the pet where available), before assessing the claim. Also remember, if you have had a break in lifetime policy cover then any conditions prior to the break will now be classed as pre-existing and be excluded.

Pet insurance can provide owners with financial peace of mind and can take away the financial considerations when presented with treatment options for a pet at what can be a very emotional and difficult time. The insurance that is right for one pet is not necessarily right for another, so it is very important to do the homework, fully understand the contract you are entering into and to take out what is right for you and your pet.



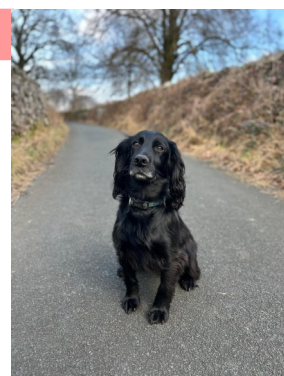
THEN AND NOW

How quickly our babies grow up! Just look at young Ralph here, what a cutie and still such a handsome boy!

With Easter approaching, we would like to get you all involved in a photo competition with the chance to win an Easter Bundle of treats!

We would love you to share your 'then' and 'now' photos of your animals. A baby picture and a photo of them now.

Please post your entries in the comments section of the Facebook post (do not email or message directly). Good Luck! (Entries close 14th April).



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