



Animal Health Centre

358 Gloucester Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 8TP

0117 - 924 7832



NEWS

SPRING 2016

WELCOME TO the latest issue of our Newsletter designed to keep you up to date with what's happening in the practice.

Practice facilities

- Appointment system
- Free Nurse's clinics
- 24 hour emergency service
- Modern surgical facilities
- In-house laboratory
- Full dental facilities
- Annual health checks
- Weight-watchers clinics
- Full range of diets
- Advice on buying a new pet

Opening times

Monday – Friday:
8.30 am – 6.30 pm

Saturday: 9 - 12

Consulting times

Monday – Friday:
9 -10 am, 2 - 3 pm
5 - 6.30 pm

Saturday: 9.30 – 11.30

24 Hour
Emergency Service
☎ 0117 9059000

Topics in this issue:

- *Start Patient – Wild Winston*
- *Cats: Toxic alert!*
- *Spring time itches – is your pet affected?*
- *Fact File: chronic kidney disease*

Practice News



We are very pleased to report that we have passed our Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons inspection so that we are now once again accredited and meet their stringent standards for a Small Animal General Practice. My huge thanks to the whole team for impressing the inspector so much.

By now you may well have met **Sophie McGill** our new vet who joined us at the end of 2015. Sophie has settled in very fast and is proving to be a big hit with our patients, as well as a very popular member of the team. Having Sophie has enabled us to offer extended surgery times particularly with longer afternoon surgeries and late morning appointments so I hope that we are now more 'user-friendly' when you are trying to book an appointment with a wider range of times available. And don't forget to mention to the receptionist if you particularly want to book with either Nicky or Sophie so we ensure that we have continuity of care for your pet.



In the battle for Google rankings when vets are searched online, it makes a huge difference if we have a Google review sent in by satisfied customers. So if you have had a happy experience at Animal Health Centre and want to share it please do write us a review. It's as easy as searching 'Animal Health Centre' in Google then clicking on the 'write a review' box. Thank you in anticipation.

And finally a picture of us all glammed up to show it is not all work and no play here, we enjoyed a very happy Christmas party and took the opportunity to get out our glad rags!

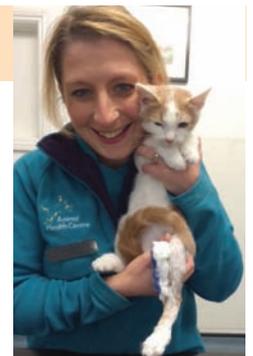
Start Patient – Wild Winston

The first time we saw Winston as a tiny kitten for his first vaccination we remarked on what a lively kitten he was and with his vaccine we signed him up to a free 4 week Pet Plan insurance policy. Just as well, only two weeks later aged only 12 weeks, the adventurous kitten had fractured his tibia by falling off his owner's bed.

We x-rayed Winston at Animal Health Centre and referred him to an orthopaedic surgeon for specialist treatment and a mend using an external fixator. Winston was terribly brave about it all and on 3 legs was still a very energetic chap requiring cage rest to try to keep him quiet! He is doing extremely well and will need further surgery to remove his pins but we expect a full return to function and luckily the break did not involve the growing points of the bone so the leg will continue to grow normally.

Winston does illustrate just how easy it is to have a very expensive vet bill even before your pet ventures outside. Winston's little mishap has cost just under £2,000! As a practice we enthusiastically encourage insurance cover and all new puppies and kittens are signed up to a free 4 week Pet Plan cover note.

Thankfully for Winston and his owner, Pet Plan paid out and his owner will certainly be continuing his cover ready for when he goes outside and the various perils that await him there!



Winston with his external fixator in place



Xray showing fracture

Spring time itches – is your pet affected?

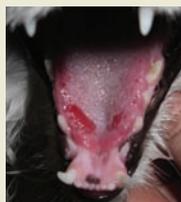


Cats: Toxic alert!

Cats are uniquely vulnerable to poisons due to their curious nature, outdoor access, tendency to groom contaminants from their coats and feet, and their unique physiology which means they struggle to rid themselves of some poisons.

The most common causes of poisoning include **lilies**, **permethrin** (a chemical in dog flea products, which should never be applied to cats), **ethylene glycol** (antifreeze, found in car radiators, screen washes and de-icers), **benzalkonium chloride** (found in disinfectants and patio cleaners), **paracetamol** (highly toxic to cats) and **white spirit** or turpentine.

For lilies (*Lilium* species and *Hermercallis*) the pollen, leaves and petals are all toxic – even drinking from the vase can make cats very unwell. Other toxins cause less serious but still unpleasant signs, for example benzalkonium chloride found in many disinfectants, can cause severe ulceration of the mouth and tongue as shown in the picture (right).



Signs of poisoning can often be vague so owners should be vigilant when it comes to their cat's health. So contact us at once if you notice any signs of unusual behaviour or illness. Some of the most common causes of poisoning: lilies and antifreeze, cause severe kidney damage in very small quantities, so vigilance is needed.

Last year **International Cat Care** (www.icatcare.org) launched their 'Keeping Cats Safe' campaign to promote awareness of substances that are poisonous to cats. For more information and advice on keeping your cat safe visit:

<http://icatcare.org/about-us/our-campaigns/keeping-cats-safe>.

Spring has arrived! However, although most of us look forward to the warmer weather, the budding trees and the colour returning to our gardens, it can herald the start of 'itchy season' and misery for sensitive pets, especially dogs.

Many animals will start to lick or scratch themselves at this time of year. It is their version of hay fever but while we react to the pollens going up our noses and into our eyes, they are affected by them simply contacting with the skin. This is why the most commonly affected areas of the body are those close to the ground or often in contact with foliage, such as the feet, tummy and ears.

Once the skin flares and the dog starts to bother at it, the situation quickly escalates (this is known as the itch/scratch cycle) and inflamed, red, sore and infected areas will appear. There is often a change in the coat colour, most often on the feet, to a reddish-brown colour. This is staining from the saliva because of the excessive licking. It is most obvious on lighter coloured dogs and is another thing to look out for.

Diagnosis of allergies can be tricky, but blood tests and skin testing can help us to identify substances in the environment that individual animals are allergic to. Common culprits include various pollens, fleas and housedust mites.

When treating this condition we need medication to reduce the itching, combat any infections introduced by scratching or licking, and also to reduce the exposure to allergens if possible. It is also essential to keep up your anti-parasitic treatments to ensure that parasites are not playing a role in causing the itching! Longer term treatments may include attempting to identify the underlying cause of the allergy (see above) and then creating a 'vaccine' to gradually desensitise the pet to the allergy and this can prove helpful in many dogs.

So – if your pet is plagued by itchy skin, please come and see us. Although allergies are usually managed rather than totally cured, modern medications can make our pets' lives a lot happier.



Paw chewing in a dog: Discoloured hair is a sign of excessive grooming.

Fact File: chronic kidney disease



Kidney disease is one of the most common conditions our pets, especially cats, face. It is irreversible and progressive. However, if caught early enough, treatment can be very successful at slowing the destruction of the kidney cells; increasing both the length and quality of life.

The early signs of kidney disease are subtle. They include weight loss, a reduced appetite and an increased thirst. As the condition worsens, the pet may start to vomit, develop bad breath and other even more severe symptoms.

The condition is triggered by a slow death of the cells in the kidneys, called nephrons. However, the body has an excess of these, so no symptoms or abnormal test results become apparent until at least 70% of them have been destroyed. This is why chronic kidney disease is such a challenging problem; by the time it is discovered the process is already well underway.

However, once we have passed that point, the diagnosis is easily made using standard blood and urine tests and checking your pet's blood pressure may also be recommended.

The body cannot replace dead nephrons, so treatment is aimed at supporting those that remain and slowing any further destruction. The mainstay is a dietary change to a prescription food. This provides targeted nutrition for the kidney and reduces toxins in the bloodstream, which are very damaging. In addition we can prescribe medications to control blood pressure and excessive stomach acid, food additives to bind toxins and replace vital, lost vitamins and, for some animals, regular fluid administration under the skin helps combat the chronic dehydration.

If you are concerned that your dog or cat may be showing any signs of kidney disease (such as increased thirst or weight loss), please contact us for a check-up.