STRATHBOGIE VETERINARY CENTRE

VETERINARY SURGEONS

NEWS

WINTER 2017

Pets on Tour!

Are you planning on taking your dogs on holiday with you in the near future? It's great that they can now join us abroad but it does mean you have to plan ahead so you don't run into problems!

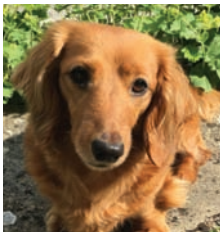
First of all, they need a passport (thankfully you don't have to get them to pose for a picture!). We can issue this for you and your dog is identified by their microchip. They will then need to be vaccinated against Rabies and are not allowed to leave the UK until three weeks have elapsed, so make sure you get this done well in advance of departure! The vaccine lasts three years and as long as it is repeated before this time, there are no further restrictions on travel, but, go over by even a day and you will have to repeat the three week wait.

You also have to ensure you protect your dog against parasites. It is a legal requirement for a vet to treat your dog for tapeworm just before you return home. This is easy to achieve as most practices in holiday areas or near the ports are well versed in travelling dogs. In addition, it is highly advisable to protect against the other nasties they have on the continent, especially as some transmit disease. Exactly which bugs your dog could pick up will vary depending on where you go and we are very happy to advise!

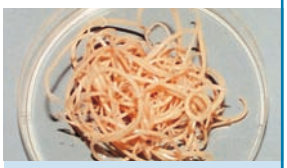
TEL 01466 792627

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

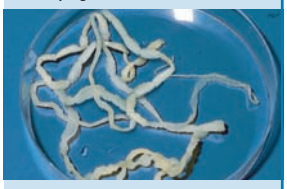
Worming worries - is your pet affected?



Unlike infectious diseases that we can vaccinate against, your pets are in all likelihood continually coming into contact with worms. Before we look at prevention however, it's useful to know your *"enemy"*. So what are the major types of worms affecting our pets? There are three important groups to be aware of...



Roundworms are long, white and spaghetti like.



Tapeworms are long segmented worms which shed segments.

Electron-micrograph of an adult **lungworm** (courtesy Bayer).

Roundworms are long, white worms seen in dogs and cats. The worms live inside the intestinal tract and can cause a 'pot-belly' appearance in young animals, tummy upsets and a failure to thrive. Roundworms produce thousands of eggs every day which are excreted (via the faeces) into the environment. Animals become infected by eating contaminated material such as fox faeces, eating infected hosts (rodents and some birds) and even from drinking their mother's milk, which makes early exposure common. The eggs can survive for many years in the environment and can also pose a risk to humans, being unwittingly ingested from soil, food or from pet's coats.

Tapeworms are long segmented worms which live inside the small intestines. They can cause diarrhoea and an itchy bottom in infected pets. You may sometimes see small white segments in your pet's faeces which could indicate tapeworms are present. These segments pass out in the faeces and release their eggs into the environment. These eggs are often eaten by fleas and small rodents which act as 'intermediate hosts' and are a common source of infection for dogs and cats (cats eat rodents and all pets swallow fleas when grooming).

Lungworms (also known as *Angiostrongylus Vasorum*) causes life threatening disease in dogs. Slugs and snails act as 'intermediate hosts'and are commonly infected with immature lungworm larvae. If infected slugs and snails are eaten by a dog, the larvae migrate to their lungs. Here they develop into adult worms up to 2cm in size! The adults live and lay eggs inside the vessels of the lungs and the right side of the heart, causing symptoms such as coughing and exercise intolerance. Larvae migrate into lung tissue, causing blood clots, bleeding problems and even sudden death. The larvae are coughed up and pass out in the faeces where they are eaten by slugs and snails, so continuing the lifecycle. Lungworm is also very prevalent in the fox population.

There are a variety of treatments to prevent worm infections which are easy to apply and suitable for dogs and cats. Please contact us to find out how we can help you best protect your pets.

Fattening up for the winter?

The shorter days and colder weather mean pets often exercise less and have more time to beg for treats! However, it is really important to ensure they don't put on weight because those extra pounds are really bad for their health; joints are put under unnecessary strain, so is the heart and other organs and it leaves them vulnerable to developing illnesses such as diabetes.

To tell if your pet is a healthy shape, simply put your hands on them! You should be able to easily feel their ribs and spine without them being too prominent. They should also have an obvious narrowing of their body behind the ribs and a 'tuck' in their stomach from the side. To help porky pets slim down consider things like changing their food to a 'light' version, cutting back on treats and stopping table scraps. We are here to help – so if you are worried, bring them in for a check-up.

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Winter Wonderland?

The cold winter months bring particular challenges for our pets, and as their owners, we need to be alert to the problems they can suffer at this time of year.

Arthritis is very commonly first diagnosed in older patients during the winter months. This isn't because the disease first strikes during this period but because the lower temperatures seize up the limbs and make the symptoms of pain and stiffness more obvious. Most pets will really benefit from anti-inflammatory medications but you can also help by giving them joint supplements, lovely soft beds, and many will enjoy resting by the radiator or on a pet-safe hot water bottle!

Out and about: Although the weather can be miserable, it is still important to ensure dogs get their walks! Make the most of the shorter days by playing games while you are out to give your pet mental as well as physical stimulation and short coated breeds like greyhounds and whippets often benefit from wearing coats. Take care though in snowy or icy conditions, as both can ball up in hairy paws and be painful. Also bad for feet is grit, which can really irritate the skin.

Festive alert: The festive season can also pose a huge range of very tempting hazards for our pets! Chocolate is a festive favourite, but as little as 50g of plain chocolate can be fatal in small dogs. Turkey bones can cause choking, constipation, as well as seriously damaging internal organs. Make sure fairy lights and electric wires are 'chew-proof' from inquisitive puppies, kittens and even rabbits too. Brightly coloured baubles and tinsel are new and exciting objects for pets, who may try to eat them and cause themselves all sorts of internal problems. Seasonal plants such as holly, poinsettia, ivy and lilies are all extremely toxic.

Finally, have fun with your pets and stay safe over the festive season!

Healthy eyes are open and comfortable and free from discharge. Light is seen to reflect from the moist, healthy cornea

How healthy are your dog's eyes?

The eyes are very complex organs and thankfully function normally most of the time. Externally the eyes are protected by the eyelids and also the third eyelid (in the corner of the eye).

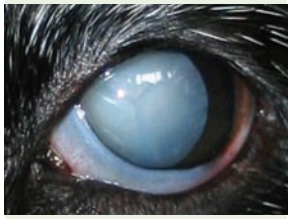
Healthy eyes: Your dog's eyes should be open, sparkly-clear and free of discharge or excessive tearing. Inside, you can see the coloured part of the eye (the iris) and a pupil which responds to light. You can also gently draw back the upper eyelids to see the 'white' of the eye, which should be just that – white or only marginally pink.

However problems can occur and here are some common ones:

Dry eye with a dull lustreless eye and mucoid discharge

Dry eye occurs when there is inadequate production of tears by the tear glands and is normally an immune-mediated condition in dogs. Most commonly this is seen in middle to older-aged dogs as well as specific breeds. Typical signs include increased levels of thick, yellowish discharge from the eyes, pinkness of inner eyelids and white of the eyes. Discomfort may be noticeable, with increased blinking or rubbing at the eyes.

Happily, diagnosis of this condition can be made using a simple test to measure tear production. Once a diagnosis is made, treatment is necessary with an ointment containing ciclosporin which is usually applied twice daily to the affected eyes and life-long. Keeping this treatment consistent is important for the medication to work and for the eyes to stay comfortable. Many dogs also need lubricants applied regularly throughout the day.



Cataracts in diabetic dogs are a very common issue

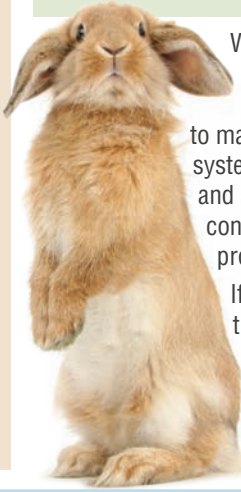
Cataracts: A cataract occurs when the transparent lens inside the eye becomes opaque. Cataracts affecting the whole of the lens will cause blindness. Hereditary cataracts can present at various ages and in a large number of breeds. Cataracts are also commonly seen in diabetic dogs and these develop very quickly, causing blindness in just days or weeks. Advanced cataracts also cause inflammation inside the eye, which can lead to other problems including glaucoma (a high pressure inside the eye). Any eye with a cataract should therefore be monitored regularly. Cataract surgery to restore vision is possible in many cases and will require a referral to a specialist ophthalmologist.

Glaucoma (high pressure) in this eye has caused redness of the white of the eye and a blueish clouding of the cornea

Glaucoma: This is a high pressure inside the eye, which causes blindness if not treated appropriately and quickly. Changes you may notice include redness of the white of the eye, a clouding/ blueish colour to the cornea (front window) or lethargy due to pain. As such any dog presenting with this sort of "red eye" should be treated as an **ocular emergency**.

Early diagnosis is the 'golden rule' with eyes, so don't delay! If your pet is showing *any* symptoms of eye problems, make an appointment for your pet today!

Bunny Upsets!



We always recommend keeping a close watch on how much your rabbits are eating. A reduction in appetite or faecal production may indicate that there is an underlying health problem. Rabbits need a high fibre diet to maintain healthy teeth and encourage food to move through the digestive system at a normal pace. If a rabbit is unwell the intestinal motility can slow and appetite may reduce. They may seem withdrawn and hide away from contact. In severe cases bacteria in the intestines produce excess gas, which progresses to a swollen abdomen or bloat, which can be life threatening.

If your rabbit seems to be eating less, it is well worth making an appointment for a check-up. We will look for underlying causes and can prescribe medications to make your rabbit feel better and start eating again.

If you would like your rabbit to have a general health check, please give us a call today! And remember, any bunny that is not eating should be seen as soon as possible. Don't delay – call us today!

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