



AlphaPet
VETERINARY CLINICS

AlphaPet News

Autumn / Winter 2014



Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet

Happy Christmas & New Year



May we take this opportunity to wish all our clients a very happy Christmas and a healthy & prosperous New Year.

But whilst we may be enjoying all the festivities, it can be a very stressful time of the year for pets. Please spare them a thought, many of whom will not be quite so happy at all the noise and disruption to their routines! It's worth thinking about what you might be able to do to help reduce their stress levels, whether that be just providing them with a quiet room or using nutraceuticals such as Calmex and Zylkene to take the edge off their anxieties.

And there are so many potentially dangerous temptations that really must be kept out of the way of pets: From chocolates and Christmas cake, to turkey bones and antifreeze, it can be a risky time of year for pets if extra care is not taken.

Emergency Service



As registered clients of AlphaPet, you have access to our 24/7 Emergency Service operated from our West Meads surgery.

We hope you won't need us out of hours, but if you do, all you need to do is call the normal surgery number and you will be given the mobile number the duty vet is using that night (please note this number changes each night). Then you can speak directly to an AlphaPet vet who will be able to help you deal with your emergency. Running an emergency service is expensive. Having a supply of vets and nurses on duty every hour of every day all the year round but still being awake enough to work to peak capacity during normal hours is not easy, so we do advise clients also to plan for unexpected eventualities, and this may include pet insurance.

No one really wants to be working in the wee small hours, but at AlphaPet we believe passionately that this is the best form of service we can offer our patients - treating patients in-house with familiar nurses and vets with access to all their clinical notes. But we cannot treat all the pet emergencies in the Bognor and Chichester areas and increasingly, we are having to turn away pet owners registered with other practices whose designated emergency service is in Portsmouth or Worthing

Strays



2014 seems to have been the year for stray animals. So far this year we have had 14 stray cats, 10 stray dogs, 1 stray racing pigeon, 2 stray Bearded Dragons, 1 tortoise and a rabbit!

Generally, as vets, we do not take in healthy stray dogs and cats. Healthy cats are usually owned by someone and healthy dogs are the responsibility of the local authority. Unfortunately, the Dog Wardens do not operate a 24/7 service and so we have a dilemma; do we take in healthy stray dogs, or do we leave them to running free to be knocked over? Clearly, we have little choice, and although this costs the practice money, we get no remuneration from the local authority.

This picture is of Arthur whose story is not uncommon. He arrived with us as a stray, unneutered tom cat. It looks like he probably crossed one too many roads without looking properly and ended up with a badly broken leg and pelvis. By the time we saw him, the leg had semi-fixed in the wrong position, so we had to amputate. He also had infolding eyelids and a broken canine tooth which we have also corrected. No owner has come forward and he seems to prefer living on his own away from other adult cats, so currently he is our practice stray cat!

Staff News



The last few months have seen some significant changes at AlphaPet. Becky Pullen (receptionist) and Emma Hurley (nurse), both gave birth to bouncing baby boys and all are doing well. Sian Cullen (receptionist) has just left us for a while to start her maternity leave. Nicky Bird (vet) is due to start her maternity leave in January and Sam Seary (ANA) will also be starting her maternity leave early in the New Year. Becky is due to rejoin us shortly but sadly Emma has made the big decision to move away from nursing to a quieter and less stressful job which is more suited to her new role of being a mother. We also very sadly lost Joanna Parker (vet) who has had to return to London for personal reasons. With all these comings and goings, it will be no surprise that we have a few new faces appearing on the AlphaPet team. In January, we have two new vets starting. Alex Avery who is returning to the UK with his new family, and Lisa Rockebrand who will be joining us from South Africa. In addition, we have Chloe Bradley joining us on West Meads reception and Josie Metcalfe joining us on the nursing side of things

Trackers for Dogs and Cats



Technology is advancing at a fantastic rate and it is sometimes great to see some of that technology filtering down to our pets. Many of our pets are now fitted with microchips and these can now be used to operate cat flaps, letting only your cats in and not any Tom, Dick or Harry. Many of you will have seen the TV programmes this year where small cameras were fitted to cats' collars to see where they went and what they got up to. Now, we are also seeing the emergence on the commercial market of tiny GPS trackers for dogs and cats. These are designed to be attached to your pet's collar and they record where they go either as a download or in real time using an app on a smart phone. Some of these devices are tiny and weigh in at just 12 grams! The costs of this sort of technology are also coming down rapidly and some are available at under £50. So now, we can all find out where our own cat gets to and losing a dog on a walk could soon become a thing of the past?

One Very Lucky Dog



Meet Keisha. Keisha is a 6 year old unspayed female Staffie who, up until November had led a pretty uneventful life keeping her owner company. Then suddenly she went off her food and had a bit of vomiting, but she was still quite waggy tailed when she came in. Her last season had been a few months ago, so we were initially concerned about a possible womb infection (pyometra). But instead of getting better on treatment she started to look worse. She was admitted and xrays and an untrasound scan indicated that she might have an intestinal obstruction, so we took her to surgery and a found that she had indeed swallowed a 2" segment of a corn on the cob which had become lodged in her small intestine. Worse, it had so badly damaged the gut that it was leaking and causing a severe peritonitis (infection in the tummy). This was one of the worst we have seen in 21 years at AlphaPet.

The only option was to remove a section of Keisha's gut - a very risky procedure. Miraculously, Keisha came through the surgery very well indeed and even more miraculously, 48 hours later, she was bouncing around as though nothing had happened and was home with her mum a few days after that! A great result all round, although unfortunately she wasn't insured. But it was also a reminder that dogs eat silly things and corn on the cob seems to be an increasingly common cause of serious intestinal problems. Please beware!

Spare a Thought for Rabbits & Guinea Pigs



Rabbits are now the third most commonly kept pet, with guinea pigs not far behind. Yet sadly, they can also be a half-forgotten pet - one that is bought for the children, is kept in solitary confinement (they are social animals), gets fed and cleaned out every now and then and then has to survive the winter in an outside hutch. Rabbits were designed to live in burrows where they can maintain their living temperatures even when it is freezing outside. Hutches are not ideal for either species, but that is what most people use, so, since most hutches are made of plywood these days, why not make a jacket of the double-sided foil bubble wrap that is used for insulating lofts. It's cheap and comes in a roll which can be cut and taped to fit the "bedroom area". Put a cardboard box inside the bedroom which reduces the height and makes a very snug and cosy retreat. And don't forget to make a jacket of bubble wrap also to fit over their water bottles to stop them freezing when it gets really cold overnight.

Antibiotic Resistance



You may have read that doctors are becoming increasingly concerned about antibiotic resistance. MRSA bacteria have hit the headlines several times and increasing numbers of people are carrying MRSA bugs.

This is a very real threat, not just to people, but also to our pets. At AlphaPet, we are increasingly seeing bacteria that are resistant to many of our commonly used antibiotics and in some cases, we are struggling to find antibiotics to treat infections.

In common with the rest of the veterinary profession, AlphaPet vets are continually reviewing our use of antibiotics. We will only use antibiotics where they are genuinely useful and likely to be effective.

Where we do give out courses of antibiotics, it is vital that they are administered at the correct dosage and intervals as well as for the whole course. Otherwise selection for resistant strains is markedly increased.

Kittens & Puppies



When you are choosing a puppy or kitten, it is vital to follow some simple guidelines to avoid having a lot of heartache in the future.

Generally speaking, a cross bred animal, as opposed to a pedigree pure-bred, is likely to be more healthy over its lifetime. They are usually cheaper to buy, will probably cost you less in vet bills but still make great additions to your family. Whatever you are buying though, always make sure you see the puppy or kitten at home with its mother. If you are given excuses why you can't (plausible thought they may seem) then walk away. We are sadly still seeing puppy-farm puppies being sold through increasingly devious adverts on the internet and newspapers. Never buy a kitten or puppy from somewhere other than the breeder's home (unless it's a rescue centre).

Avoid making snap decisions and take puppies or kittens home on the first day you see them. Puppies and kittens should be 7-8 weeks old when they are sold - older or younger should raise suspicions. Always get a receipt if you are paying by cash. Never buy the smallest or weakest looking puppy or kitten in a litter no matter how strong the emotions are running! We recommend that all puppies and kittens should be checked by your own vet within 24 hours of purchase, just in case. For more information on this, check out our pre-purchase checklist on our website.

Seasonal Topics



Whilst Christmas is traditionally a time of happiness, having a sick pet can put a real dampener on things. Sadly, many of the illnesses and sicknesses we see at this time of the year are preventable with a little thought and attention to detail.

Chocolate, fruit cake, mince pies, some nuts, mistletoe and onions are all directly toxic to dogs but can also be very attractive to them. With their fine sense of smell, they can detect these foods even when they are wrapped up or in cupboards. Please keep them securely away from dogs.

Anti-freeze is highly toxic to both dogs and cats even in small quantities, but cats seem to find it very tasty so please make sure your car does not have a radiator leak.

Intestinal foreign bodies in both cats and dogs are a perennial problem. Turkey bones can cause choking and intestinal blockages. Batteries are also frequently swallowed. If they are chewed, the chemicals in them can be toxic but they can also cause blockages. Tinsel, string and rubber bands can also cause serious intestinal problems for both dogs and cats as well as dogs swallowing small children's toys.

Being aware of these potential hazards means that we can all try and keep them away from our pets and ensure that 'tis a season of joy rather than pet and owner misery.

AlphaPet Fun Day and Dog Show



The 2014 Fun Day and Dog show was another great success. An estimated 2500 people attended with their pets and once again the weather was overall quite kind to us. Despite a brief downpour trying to put a dampener on the day midway through, everyone seemed to have a great time.

The proceeds of each of our fun days goes to different charities each year. This year, we raised a fantastic grand total of £2520 which was divided between a very worthy local wildlife charity, Brent Lodge, and the national charity, NOWZAD.

Next year, we are holding our Fun Day and Dog Show slightly earlier in August, so please make a note in your diaries for Sunday 2nd August 2015. We have fun things to interest everyone, adults and kids alike. We look forward to seeing you there!

Boris's Very Lucky Escape!



This is Boris - a 1 year old Hermanns tortoise. Unfortunately, he is also an escapologist and he lives in the same house as a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. One day in mid-November, Boris managed to get out of his vivarium and the Staffie thought he'd found a new toy. Boris sustained severe bite wounds to his shell, including a hole in his left side such that we could watch his lungs expanding and contracting with his breathing! Despite these horrific injuries, Boris was still pretty lively - so much so that it was quite an effort to hold him still to bathe and dress his wounds. After several days of dressings, antibiotics and painkillers, we were able to repair his wounds with epoxy and he is currently doing very well, although not quite out of the woods completely yet. Sadly, Boris was not the only tortoise we saw in November after being attacked by a dog. Unfortunately, the other one wasn't so lucky and the owner elected to euthanase because of the severe damage inflicted to one of her front legs. Please, if you have tortoises and dogs, don't let them meet. They won't all be as lucky as Boris.

Saturday & Sunday Surgeries

Despite having run Saturday and Sunday surgeries for the last 21 years, ever since we have been open, we are continually surprised at the number of clients who didn't realise that we have normal surgeries on Saturdays and Sundays. We have always recognised that dogs and cats cannot time their illnesses between 9am and 5pm on Mondays to Fridays, and many conditions cannot afford to wait over the weekend. Increasingly we all live busier lives and many of us need the convenience of weekend opening.

Our West Meads surgery is open every Saturday 8.30am-6pm and Sunday 10am-1pm with an additional emergencies only surgery 5-6pm.

Weekends are operated with fewer routine staff so, for that reason, we do try to encourage people to only book more essential appointments to help leave room for those inevitable genuine emergencies, but please do remember that AlphaPet is there for you every day of the week when you need us.

Christmas & New Year Opening Times

Christmas Eve: All surgeries: 8.30am to 5pm

Christmas Day & Boxing Day: CLOSED: 24/7 Emergency Service at West Meads surgery

Saturday 27th December to Tuesday 30th December: Normal surgery hours at all surgeries.

New Year's Eve: All surgeries: 8.30am to 5pm

New Year's Day: CLOSED: 24/7 Emergency Service at West Meads surgery

Friday 2nd January onwards: Normal surgery hours at all surgeries



Check out our website at
www.alphapet.co.uk



We also have a very lively Facebook page, so why not check it out and follow us?



West Meads Surgery

11-17 The Precinct, West Meads
Bognor Regis PO21 5SB
Telephone **01243 842832**

Opening Hours

Mon-Fri: 8.30 - 7.00pm
Sat 8.30-6.00pm

Sunday: 10am-1pm & 5pm-6.00pm

Kingley Surgery

Oldwick Farm, West Stoke Road
Lavant, Chichester PO18 9AA
Telephone **01243 528899**

Opening Hours

Mon-Fri: 8.30-6.30pm

Birdham Surgery

Northleigh Farm, Main Road
Birdham, Chichester PO20 7BY
Telephone **01243 513514**

Opening Hours

Mon-Fri: 8.30-6.00pm

Don't forget:

We are open on **Saturdays** and **Sundays** for routine appointments
We are also open until at least 7pm at our West Meads surgery every weekday

