



AlphaPet
VETERINARY CLINICS
20 years
1993 - 2013



AlphaPet News

Autumn / Winter 2013



Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet

Happy Christmas & New Year



As we come towards the end of our 20th Anniversary year, we'd like to wish all our clients and their pets, a very Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year. AlphaPet was established at the end of the last recession. Since then, we have grown from a 1 vet practice to a 10 vet practice employing over 40 people. We have seen some huge advances in veterinary medicine and the veterinary profession has moved further and further away from the likes of James Herriott's practice - perhaps not always a good thing?

Now, as we are beginning to see the start of a recovery from this most recent recession, and with ongoing rapid technological advancement, we wonder what things will look like in another 20 years? Out of hours video consultations? 3D printing of orthopaedic implants? GPS microchip pet tracking?

Avoid Seasonal Emergencies



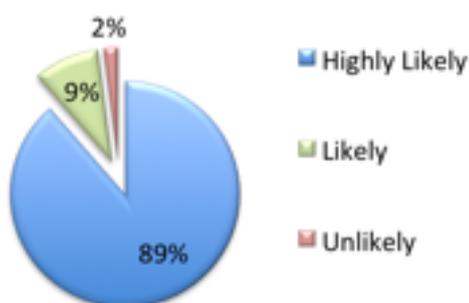
As Christmas fast approaches, we urge clients to be careful with pets around. With their much keener sense of smell, dogs don't need to open presents and packages to know there is something tasty inside. If those tasty bits include chocolates, macadamia nuts or raisins, then they could end up being very sick or even dying.

The bits we throw away (turkey carcass, lamb and ham bones, leftover Christmas pud and cake, broken toys, tinsel, packaging and so on) can cause serious harm including poisoning or intestinal blockage. Even access to compost bins has caused problems with dogs being poisoned by the mould growth on waste food items.

Every year, we are tasked to deal with the after effects of dogs (and occasionally cats) eating things they shouldn't really have been able to get hold of, so please make sure that all such items are placed securely out of reach, otherwise you may find yourself having to take advantage of our 24/7 Out of Hours Emergency Service which, while potentially life-saving, would be a very unwelcome drain on the Christmas budget!

What You Told Us About AlphaPet

Would you recommend AlphaPet?



A warm thank you to everyone who took a few moments to complete our electronic feedback survey questions that did the rounds of our three surgeries over the past 6 months. There were 845 replies received. We really do appreciate your opinions, and will make good use of the results to improve our services to you. We were delighted to learn that 89% of respondents would highly recommend* AlphaPet to friends and family, and that by far the most important reason for doing so is the friendliness of our staff, who received a 90% endorsement*. Ease of making an appointment was the second most important reason for rating AlphaPet well. 90% of you also highly rated* the neatness and cleanliness of the surgery premises. Check-in and waiting times scored 74% approval. We always strive to keep our appointments running to time as we appreciate that animal owners lead busy lives. We do, however, occasionally run late due, for example, to emergency cases, complicated medical issues taking up more time than anticipated, and consultations of a very emotional nature. We do our best to inform clients if appointments are running late and, if possible, the reason why. We always welcome your feedback, complimentary or critical, so that we can improve our services to you and your pets.

(* Score 9 or 10 out of 10 for this question.)

Staff News



Many congratulations to Amie Van Der Hut who has just qualified as a Registered Veterinary Nurse. Very well deserved! This great news, together with a couple of staff due to leave us for a while on maternity leave (including Becky Pullen for the second time!) has allowed Kayleigh Galdes-Giappone to move from kennel hand to Student Veterinary Nurse, Karen Palmer to join us, having swapped child-minding for a more animal oriented career in veterinary reception, and Hannah Penfold (who wants to be a vet eventually) to join the West Meads kennel nurse team while Emily Hampshire joins the Birdham kennel nurse team - she also wants to follow a career in veterinary nursing eventually.

Nurse Amy Harrington has completed her Clinical Coach training and is raring to get started with our student nurses after having survived a "holiday of a lifetime" walking the Inca trail in Peru and climbing Machu Picchu!

Vet Claire Sawyer also returned to us after competing in Korea in the world horseback archery championships.

The things AlphaPet staff get up to!

Lepto 4 Vaccine



Like most things, diseases that our pets are exposed to are changing all the time.

Vaccinations have been responsible for the huge reduction in the incidence of several potentially fatal pet diseases. One such disease is Leptospirosis which can also cause Weil's Disease in humans and is mostly spread through rat and dog urine.

Over the years, the types of Leptospirosis bacteria that are responsible for current disease in dogs has changed and, to reflect this, the core dog vaccine used to prevent this disease has also had to change. AlphaPet now uses a killed vaccine called Lepto4. To achieve proper immunity levels with killed vaccines, all dogs have to be started off with a course of two vaccines administered between 4 and 6 weeks apart.

So when you next bring your dog in for his/her next booster, please be aware that this year, they will need to have 2 injections rather than one. The good news is that the second one is FREE, but it is really important that we make sure that all dogs are as fully protected as possible against this not uncommon but very serious and often fatal disease.

Case Histories



Towards the end of the summer, we were presented with a very sad case. An unregistered client called on a Sunday afternoon to say that his 2 year old miniature poodle had been mismated with a Jack Russell Terrier and was now in dire trouble trying to whelp. The owner hadn't registered with a vet and had already called a number of other vets in the area. The owner was verbally aggressive to our vet, but we agreed to see Nelly anyway.

It was immediately obvious that an emergency caesarian was the only way to save Nelly and her pups. The owner said that he didn't have insurance and couldn't afford to pay for a caesarian. We tried to be as flexible as possible, even offering instalment payments but he still complained that "it's just about the money with you vets". Instead he asked us to put Nelly and her unborn pups to sleep! Our vet refused to do this and instead persuaded the increasingly verbally abusive owner to sign Nelly over to us which, thankfully, he eventually agreed to do.

An emergency caesarian was immediately performed. Unfortunately, one puppy had already died, but we managed to save mum and her other pup who is now called Teddy.

Both Nelly and Teddy have now found terrific forever homes. They even get to see each other occasionally! A very happy ending from a terrible start.

After 20 years of AlphaPet, we thought we'd seen most things, but this case truly horrified all of us. Thankfully, it isn't all about the money. It never was and it never will be as long as we are AlphaPet.

Pet Health Club – Are You A Member?



In our client survey that we ran during the summer, 15% of respondents who were not already members of our Pet Health Club indicated that they would be interested in joining. Perhaps you were one of them? Several hundred clients are already enjoying the savings and convenience that come with PHC membership. It includes all your pet's routine annual vaccinations, flea control and worm control as well as FREE additional nurse appointments, FREE regular weight assessments and unlimited FREE claw clipping. There's also a range of discounts that come as standard as a PHC member, including 10% off all diets, counter sales, in-house laboratory work, neutering, dentistry, PETS Passports, additional parasite control and vaccinations and 30% off microchipping!

For more information, please ask at reception.

Wild Birds and Animals



At the time of writing, we seem to be enjoying a relatively mild autumn, but it surely won't last. Whilst we wrap up warm ourselves, heat our houses and visit supermarkets to allow us never to go hungry, outside it is a different story. Many wild birds and mammals will be struggling to survive, so please spare them a thought and maybe put out some food for them and make sure they have unfrozen water to drink when the temperatures really drop. Please also remember to be careful what food you put out. Some waste food or food that has been poorly stored and may have mould growing on it may actually be toxic to wild birds and mammals. So far from helping them, you may be risking poisoning them! And please make sure that you regularly clean bird tables, water baths and other feeders. If you don't, then if there is one sick bird or mammal visiting, there is a chance that they will spread their disease to many other birds and mammals.

Cost of Dentals



We are often asked why dental surgery for pets appear so expensive. As UK citizens, we are fortunate to be shielded from the majority of the true costs of healthcare by the NHS. Sadly, there is no NHS for pets, so it can often come as a bit of a shock to have to pay the true cost of healthcare procedures.

Even then, pet healthcare is significantly cheaper than the equivalent human cost. For instance, a human hysterectomy will actually cost the NHS in excess of £3000. The same procedure in a Great Dane (similar size) will cost under £400! Molar teeth extractions in humans will cost over £1000 whereas molar tooth extraction in a dog will cost under £500. Even so, that is quite a sum of money for "just a tooth" to come out? True, but we have to consider what it involves.

Dogs are not going to tolerate a vet working in their mouths to facilitate a major tooth extraction, even with a numbing nerve block. You can ask a

human patient to sit still, but just try it with a dog or a cat! Unfortunately, almost all dental work on pets has to be carried out under general anaesthetic. There is a cost to this, not just for the considerable equipment needed for safe general anaesthesia (anaesthetic machines, anaesthetic gas scavenging, electronic patient monitors, patient warmers etc), but also qualified nursing staff to safely monitor and record anaesthetics (heart rates, respiration rates, tissue oxygenation, core body temperatures etc). Then there is the cost of the equipment used for the actual dental procedure which cost the practice several thousand pounds, plus the veterinary surgeon needed to carry out the procedure.

Dentistry work is very variable in how long it can take. Some pets are presented with very poor teeth and extractions can be very straightforward and quick. Others, such as for broken but otherwise healthy teeth need involved surgical extraction procedures which can take over an hour for each tooth - bear in mind that several dog and cat teeth have 3 separate roots! Dental X-rays are often taken to help us visualise the tooth roots prior to extraction - another cost in both equipment and time.

And after the extractions, all the other teeth are manually checked and each tooth is descaled and polished which can take another half an hour. Dogs have 42 teeth to assess and treat, compared with only 32 in humans.

And then there's the pain relief, anti-inflammatory and possibly antibiotic medication that has to be administered or dispensed.

And don't forget the anaesthetic recovery which has to be monitored closely by nursing staff until the patients are fully round.

How much would you expect to pay for 2 hours of a solicitor's, a car mechanic's or a plumber's time?

Dentals do cost a lot of money, but hopefully we can all appreciate that there is a lot going on behind the scenes in these "simple dental" procedures to make sure your pet is treated and cared for safely and properly. It is also a reason why, like human dentists, we try to promote sensible measures to prevent your pet's teeth becoming like the picture above. Dental health is critical to the overall health and welfare of the animal.

We are all very fortunate to have an NHS for humans but it does sometimes mean that we forget the true cost of providing that level of treatment and care.

20th Anniversary Dog Show - The Results



This year's 20th Anniversary Fun Day and Dog Show was undoubtedly our most successful yet. An estimated 3000 people attended during the course of the afternoon!

Once again, the weather was kind to us, although there was something of a deluge during the hour before the midday start. After that though, it was wall to wall sunshine allowing both dogs and owners to have a great time.

This year, we raised a grand total of £2478 which was divided between our two nominated charities: Mount Noddy Animal Centre and Medical Detection Dogs. A great result!

Best in show was "Pebbles" Geall, pictured opposite.

And plans are already afoot for next year's show, so please make a note in your diaries for Sunday, August 17th from midday at the Queens Field, West Meads. A great fun day out for all animal lovers and all in aid of good cause charities.

OOH Emergency Service

Unlike most businesses over Christmas and New Year, for the AlphaPet 24/7 Out Of Hours Emergency Service, it's business as usual. We will be continuously available throughout the holiday period ready to give advice and see genuine emergency cases at any hour of the day or night. We pride ourselves on this service that we provide to our own clients - clients of many other local practices will have to be referred to unfamiliar emergency clinics in Worthing or Portsmouth without the very important benefit of having the patients clinical notes immediately to hand.

We don't use intermediate call centres either. You simply call the normal surgery number where you will be given the mobile number for the AlphaPet duty vet at that time. You will speak directly to the AlphaPet duty vet who will be able to deal with your pet's problem.

Nobody likes being "on-call" late at night or on Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Year's Day, but our vets and nurses are dedicated to making sure that pets receive the treatment and advice they need whenever they need it, as well as looking after hospitalised patients who would also probably prefer to be at home with their families! So please spare the on-call vets and nurses a thought, especially if your problem is not an urgent one and perhaps could wait until the surgery is open again during normal working hours.

Remember, remember



How often do we all forget to apply parasite control to our pets?...frequently in many cases! With ever busier lives and constant distractions, it can be difficult to remember those regular monthly preventative treatments that are needed to keep our pets free from harmful parasites, especially fleas and worms. But help is on its way. We are currently introducing an automatic SMS (text) and email service that will send you a reminder whenever treatment is due. This will be monthly for Advocate and Advantage, and every 3 months for Droncit and Profender. Whenever you purchase one of these items, you will automatically be enrolled on the reminder list, but you can opt out at any time if you wish.

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

Friday 27th December to Monday 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

Thursday 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

