



AlphaPet News

Autumn / Winter 2015



Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet

Dog Microchipping - Legal Requirement From April 2016



In April 2016, it will become a legal requirement that all dogs are microchipped. Currently, 36% of dogs registered at AlphaPet remain without a microchip. It really doesn't cost a lot to become compliant with the forthcoming legislation - just £15 (or £10.50 if you are a member of the AlphaPet Pet Health Club).

There are really good reasons why all pets (not just dogs) should be microchipped. It can mean the difference between being lost and found. We recently had a stray dog brought in to us that had been stolen in Kent 4 years ago, but the microchip allowed us to reunite her with her very happy owner!

The procedure is very simple. One of our vets will inject a tiny computer chip (about the size of a grain of rice) just under the skin between the shoulder blades.

The chip number, which can be read by a microchip scanner, is then entered onto an international database.

The new law also requires every dog owner to ensure that their contact details are up to date so that if your pet is found, they can be reunited with you. You can very easily check that your pet's details are up to date at the Petlog website: www.petlog.org.uk

Overweight Pets - Getting The Balance Right



42% of adult dogs and cats vaccinated at AlphaPet in the last year were overweight! We measure 'body condition score' (BCS) in dogs and cats when we see them for routine health checks; this is similar to the body mass index (BMI) measure in people. It enables us to record a simple number from 1 to 5, with 3 being optimum and 5 being obese. Obesity in dogs and cats is a serious medical problem, and not so much a cosmetic issue as it is in people. A dog doesn't care if they look fat; but they do care that they can't keep up with their friends running around at the park, or that their legs hurt after a long walk, or they can't breathe properly in hot weather. Being overweight is not only a risk factor for many diseases, but it can also worsen the effects that certain illnesses have on your pet. It has been shown that being overweight shortens a dog's lifespan and adversely affects their quality of life.

None of us are here to tell you off about your animals weight (not even Richard!); we simply want to help you to get them to a healthy size, so that they can live a happier and longer life. If you would like any further help or advice on this, or just to check what your pet's body condition score is, please make an appointment for a free weight check.

Feeding Dogs - Simply Common Sense



Many dog owners are surprised when they discover that their dog is overweight. How can this be when they have simply followed what it said to feed on the back of the packet or can? Well how many of us feed ourselves by looking on a chart for our age, sex and height and then follow that religiously? Common sense tells us that when we look in the mirror we can tell at a glance if we are eating a bit too much! Effectively, we are body condition scoring ourselves and this is exactly what we need to do for our pets. We need to feed them according to how they look, not what the packet says you should feed! And just because your pet likes something and asks for it, should you be giving it, especially if they are a bit overweight? If a child asks for sweets and ice cream all the time, would you just continue to give them whatever they wanted no matter how heavy they are? Feeding dogs is all about common sense and using the same principles as we use to feed ourselves. Feed your dog to how they look! Our nurses are always happy to help you work out what you should be feeding your pet.

Staff News



It's been a very mixed few months staff wise.

We are really happy to welcome back vet Nicky Bulbeck and receptionist Sian Cullen from maternity leave and also nurse Aimee Uren who briefly tried another practice but quickly realised how good AlphaPet was in comparison! We also extended a big warm welcome to new nurse Katie Fanning RVN who joins us from a practice in London.

Natalie Pink RVN has taken over the Head Nurse position and is already shaking things up a bit! Wendy Fox RVN and Emma Nolan RVN have been appointed as joint Lead Nurses at AlphaPet Kingley.

Hayley Goddard and Emma Luxford have both passed their final RVN exams and earned their "greens". Huge congratulations to them both.

Very sadly, we lost a friend and colleague when Daphne Lambert suddenly lost her battle with cancer. And then tragically, three days later her husband, Nigel, also passed away. Both Daphne and Nigel have been a part of AlphaPet for longer than most of us can remember and we all desperately miss their warmth and friendship.

Tortoises



At AlphaPet, we are seeing increasing numbers of tortoises as patients.

So much has changed in our knowledge of these fascinating pets who all have their own individual characters - they really do!

Once again, we have had a number of stray tortoises, most of which we have managed to reunite with their owners, but a couple we haven't. Tortoises are great wanderers and will actively try to escape from gardens, so if you have a tortoise that is allowed outdoors, then we strongly recommend having them microchipped so that if they do stray and turn up somewhere, they can be easily and speedily reunited with you. We now have mini-microchips especially for smaller patients, so any tortoise over 10cm in length can be microchipped.

Charlie Sampson RVN and Sue Eaton RVN both have tortoises of their own and run our pre- and post-hibernation checks at West Meads and Birdham. These checks only cost £10 but you will get a wealth of advice and information to help keep your tortoise fit and healthy. May is Tortoise Awareness month at AlphaPet and the cost of tortoise health checks with Charlie or Sue will be even better value at just £7.50!

Fireworks



Fireworks used to be a seasonal problem in the Autumn, but increasingly these days they are becoming a year round problem for sensitive pets.

Many dogs are simply petrified but helping them to cope with fireworks is not simply a matter of dishing out sedative drugs. These days, there are much better ways of helping pets overcome their fears, but they take time and effort and when the fireworks are already a problem is not the best time of year to start the desensitisation process.

If you have a dog that is fearful of fireworks, we recommend that you start thinking about this several months beforehand. In 2016, we will be starting our Scary Firework Treatment Programme in May, so make a note in your diary to book in for a consultation to give your dog a much happier time of things next firework season.

Of course, we can still help your pet in the short term right now, but as with most things, preventative measures are always better than short term cures.

Sight For Sore Eyes



"Dry Eye" is a condition that we see commonly and occurs when there is a lack of sufficient tears to keep the eyes and surrounding tissues moist. The eyes then become dry and tacky, leading to infection and painful inflammation, with the production of sticky, green mucus. The reduced 'flushing' effect of low tear production also prevents foreign material (dust, grass seeds, pollen etc) from being washed out of the eyes, and can predispose to potentially disastrous ulceration of the cornea. Corneal pigmentation is also common, leading to blindness.

The most common cause is autoimmune disease, where the body's own defence system does not recognise its own tissues as "self", and fights against it by producing harmful antibodies that damage the tear-producing glands.

"Dry Eye" should be suspected in any dog or cat that gets recurring eye infections, or if the eyes appear dry, dull and sticky. A simple test can be done rapidly in the clinic, which confirms the level of tear production. If insufficient, then medications can be used to help stimulate production. As with most medical conditions, early intervention results in a much better long-term outlook. If you suspect your pet has "Dry Eye", make an appointment at AlphaPet for an assessment and tear test.

Arthritis Awareness



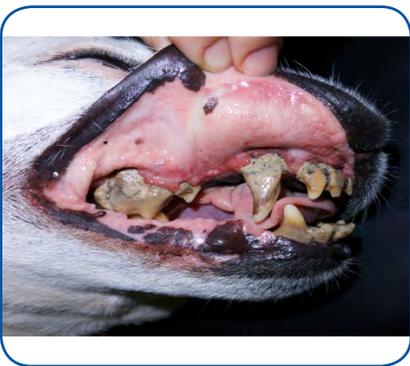
Another winter is upon us and this year's El Nino is predicted to bring us some of the coldest weather for some time. Our dogs are not that different from us in feeling the cold in their bones and the winter months are a common time for arthritis to be diagnosed for the first time or flare ups to happen in those already on treatment.

A common thing we hear at AlphaPet is that stiffness and occasional lameness are just a part of getting older and that there is no discomfort associated with these problems. In fact these signs are often the hallmark of arthritis and a sure sign that an animal is not just uncomfortable but in pain.

Arthritis is becoming more common as our pet population ages and obesity becomes more prevalent. These factors mean that the joints have to put up with a lot more stress and strain and this takes its toll, resulting in degeneration of the normally smooth cartilage, new irregular bone formation and the joint becoming inflamed and painful.

As the days become colder spare a thought for your aging companion and if they do look a little stiff or lame, know there are ways to help alleviate their pain.

Dental Awareness Month - February 2016



Dental disease is one of the most common diseases that we see in dogs and cats. Not only does it cause pain and discomfort, but it can also cause heart and kidney disease as well as septicaemia.

Prevention is always better than cure, but frequently we are presented with pets that have dental disease which has advanced beyond the point where home dental treatments (brushing, dental foods or treats) are effective.

Dental surgery can restore your pets' teeth to a state where preventative care can then help to stop further disease returning.

So, to try and get 2016 off to a good start, why not take advantage of our complimentary nurse dental health checks in February and claim 10% off any necessary dental work.

Without treatment, dental disease will only ever get worse, so please make an appointment with one of our nurses to assess your pet's dental health.

Pet Insurance - A Trusted Policy Gives Peace Of Mind



Each year 1 in 3 pets is injured or becomes ill and needs urgent veterinary treatment. Insurance can help you cover the cost of these unexpected bills. We promote Vetsure Pet Insurance® because it offers the best value for money premiums and access to the highest standards of treatment through their network of trusted practices. Pick and choose from a range of benefits, levels of cover and excesses to suit your budget. Claims are settled directly with us.

We are able to offer AlphaPet clients the first 5 weeks Vetsure cover free of charge. Simply visit alphaPet.co.uk and click on the 'Insurance' option on the main menu. Alternatively, call us to benefit from this offer, quoting 'AlphaPet 5 weeks' free.'

In addition, if your pet is a member of the AlphaPet Pet Health Club, Vetsure will reward you with a 5% first year discount when you take out a new policy (promotional code: HHR351)

Hedgehog Friendly Gardens



The hedgehog population has dropped from some 36million in 1950 to just one million today meaning the species is facing the same rapid decline as the tiger.

If you have hedgehogs in your garden, you are one of the lucky people who can still enjoy the presence of these endangered wild animals.

Those of us who have gardens can each do our bit to help encourage hedgehogs to make a comeback and Brent Lodge is always looking for people willing to provide suitable gardens to release hedgehogs back into.

Hedgehogs love to eat slugs and snails, so they are a great benefit to your garden.

Make sure there are hedgehog-sized holes in walls and fences so that they can get in and out of your garden. Most hedgehogs have a territory of around 10-12 back gardens, so chat with your neighbours and work out a hedgehog friendly plan together.

Grow combinations of evergreen shrubs and flowers and bushes that attract insects and provide cover and shelter. Leaving year-round wood piles both attracts insects and gives hedgehogs a place to build a nest. If you have a pond, make sure there is a gradually sloping side to allow escape. Avoiding the use of insecticides and slug pellets and offering Hedgehog food will also encourage these wonderful creatures to visit your garden.

And finally, when you use lawnmowers and strimmers to keep your garden neat and tidy, please check you aren't strimming or mowing down your resident hedgehog.

Baghera & Baloo's Story



Baghera (Baggy for short) and Baloo are two 6 week old kittens that were dumped by being thrown from a car close to our West Meads surgery. A member of the public saw it happen and managed to catch Baloo and bring him in to the West Meads reception. We organised a search for Baggy and luckily found him hiding up a tree. Head Nurse Natalie managed to bring him down but we then discovered that he had broken his leg.

After a few weeks of recovery, Baggy was a lot better but still had problems with his leg. Because of their traumatic experience, we wanted to rehome them together but with the possibility that Baggy might have to undergo major surgery on his leg later on, we felt we had little option but to rehome him to a member of the practice. Coincidentally, vet Richard Edwards' menagerie had dwindled to a mere 5 cats (down from a heyday of 18!) and so there was room at his house and they've settled in wonderfully! Currently, Baggy's leg is looking a lot better but we'll xray it when he comes in to be neutered in January and he'll get whatever treatment might be necessary. He may have had a broken leg, but it looks like both Baggy and Baloo have landed on their feet after a very traumatic start!

Practice Standards Scheme



The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Practice Standards Scheme is a voluntary scheme for vets to give pet owners extra confidence that the practice they are entrusting the care of their pet to operates to the very highest clinical and ethical standards.

As pet owners, how would you know what goes on behind the doors of your chosen practice? Sadly, not all vets do practice to the highest standards, but practices such as AlphaPet, which have subscribed to the Practice Standards Scheme are inspected by the RCVS and have demonstrated that they do practice to the very highest standards and therefore provide your pet with the very best quality of care. Always look for the RCVS Practice Standards logo.

AlphaPet Fun Day & Dog Show



The 2015 AlphaPet Fun Day and Dog Show was again a great success, raising £2790 for our two nominated charities, Many Tears Animal Rescue and Canine Partners.

Plans for the 2016 Fun Day and Dog Show are well under way, so please keep an eye on our website and Facebook pages for further details as soon as we have them.

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

Sunday 27th December: Normal Sunday surgeries at West Meads surgery

Monday 28th December: Surgeries at West Meads only; 9am to 5pm

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

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

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



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

Find us on
Facebook

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

