



# HILLSIDE VETERINARY CENTRE

AUTUMN 2008 Newsletter

# NEWS

## Practice News

As we move in to autumn it is important to ensure your pet stays fit and healthy so we have included articles on:

- Life stage diets
- Planning a trip abroad in 2009 – your pet can come too!
- Arthritis in animals
- The importance of pet insurance
- Autumn alert – being prepared

We welcome two new members to our nursing team; Helen Murphy RVN who joins us as head nurse and Gemma Burden RVN - visit our website to find out where their interests lie. We wish both of them much success in their new roles within the Hillside team.

Useful tip: **Bonfire night** can be a scary time for our pets and it is important to prepare for this stressful time. Ensure pets are indoors (or covered if they live outside) with windows and doors closed. You may want to play music or leave the television on to mask the sound of fireworks. Give plenty of reassurance and reward your pet's calm behaviour. If you have major concerns speak to one of our team who will give you advice.

## Surgery times

**Don't forget LATE NIGHT OPENING Wednesdays**

Mon – Fri: 8.30am-6.30pm  
 Wednesdays: 8.30am-8pm  
 Saturdays: 8.30am-5pm

T: 698899

E: [mail@hillsidevets.co.uk](mailto:mail@hillsidevets.co.uk)

**Repeat prescriptions can be ordered on-line at – [www.hillsidevets.co.uk](http://www.hillsidevets.co.uk) and click on –**



## Keeping your pet healthy for life



OUR PETS are members of the family and, just like ourselves, feeding them a balanced diet is one of the key things we can do to keep them fit and healthy. Better still – with Life Stage Diets it is now possible to feed them a correctly balanced diet for every stage of their lives.

**Puppies and kittens** will benefit from junior/growth diets. These tend to be higher in energy and protein to aid controlled growth (avoiding obesity) whilst having the correct mineral balance to help bones and joints develop correctly. This is particularly important for large and giant breeds of dog, and they therefore require their own specially formulated puppy food.

**Adult** dogs and cats (between around 12-18 months and 7-8 years) require an adult/maintenance diet – helping to keep pets healthy and active during their middle years. Dietary changes may be needed at times of increased activity or during pregnancy.

**In older animals**, senior foods are ideal. These usually have a lower energy content to avoid weight gain as pets grow more sedentary. Fibre levels are maintained to avoid constipation, and protein and mineral levels are altered to reduce the workload of ageing kidneys, liver and heart. Essential fatty acids and other products may also be added to help to keep the skin and joints healthy.

Pets with particular disease problems may also benefit from specific 'prescription' diets, specially formulated for a variety of conditions including diseases of the kidneys, liver, heart, joints, skin

## Feeding Rabbits



Good quality hay and grass should form the basis of your rabbit's diet; this is very high in fibre and promotes optimum dental health.

To supplement the hay, a selection of fresh food and small quantity of commercial rabbit food (preferably pelleted to avoid selective feeding) may be fed. More information can be found on our Rabbit Factsheet – download it at [www.hillsidevets.co.uk](http://www.hillsidevets.co.uk)

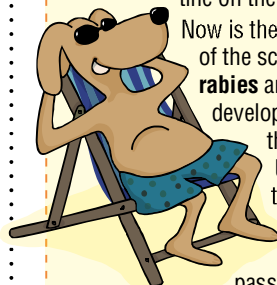
and teeth. For pets with obesity, specially formulated low calorie diets are also available.

Life stage diets, together with a growing range of prescription diets, help your pets to live lives that are as long and healthy as possible. Ask at reception for more information.



## Start now if you are planning a trip for 2009!

DID YOU know many owners are now taking advantage of the Pet Travel Scheme and taking their dogs and cats on holiday and to live in other countries with no need for a stay in quarantine on the way back?



Now is the time to start planning as it takes 7-8 months to fulfil the requirements of the scheme. Your pet will need to be **microchipped, vaccinated against rabies** and subsequently **blood tested** to prove that sufficient immunity has developed. You additionally need to allow six calendar months to elapse (from the date of the successful blood sample) before your pet can re-enter the UK under the scheme, and then only after certain **tick and tapeworm** treatments have been carried out and certified before arrival in the UK.

Don't forget, even if your pet already has a passport, we offer FREE pre-travel checks ensuring all the above are in place and your pet's passport details are correct.

Pet photos: Jane Burton Cartoon: Jenny Hole

# Arthritis: is your pet affected?



**NORMAL** joint function is something that most of us take for granted in our pets. However arthritis (or degenerative joint disease) is a relatively common problem, particularly in older pets.

In the majority of cases arthritis occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints. Arthritis may also occur following joint trauma or due to malformation of the joint, for example hip dysplasia – see above right for x-rays.

The joints that are most susceptible to arthritis are those associated with limb movement; these joints are called synovial joints. The ends of the bones which meet at these joints are covered by very smooth articular cartilage. The joints are also lubricated with synovial fluid – allowing friction free movement.

Arthritic joints typically show progressive breakdown and thinning of the cartilage lin-



Normal hip joint



Arthritic hip joint in a dog with hip dysplasia. Secondary new bone (arrowed) can be seen around the joint

ing the ends of the bones and formation of secondary new bone around the joint. Affected joints usually appear stiff, swollen and painful. Typical signs include: difficulty in getting to their feet after rest, and (for dogs) problems getting in and out of cars and often a reluctance to go on walks.

## So what can be done?

Even those pets that are only mildly affected can benefit from treatment, and the most effective approach involves several factors. Weight loss alone can be effective for animals that are overweight; this along with a combination of regular gentle exercise and massage is also helpful. Special diets can help to slow the progression of the disease and food supplements containing glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate may help to reduce pain and inflammation.

Finally, many pets benefit from pain relief given by medication, and with a number of medicines available, we can choose the right one for your pet.

So, if you suspect that your pet may be suffering from arthritis, come and discuss this further – we can help you to help him!



Feeding a balanced healthy diet with regular exercise and active weight management can make a huge difference to your pets mobility



## Autumn Alert!

ONCE again, the shorter days and cooler weather signify the beginning of the Autumn months. However this time of year holds many potential hazards for our pets.

Despite the cooling weather, **fleas** unfortunately do not take holidays and are still a major problem at this time of year! So now is definitely NOT the time to lower your guard against these irritating tiny pests!

**Harvest mites** are another cause of irritation in later summer / early autumn. They are active in long grass and will swarm onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the eyelids, ears, feet and abdomen. They are easily identified as bright orange “dots” adhering to the skin, and are often the cause of great irritation.



Harvest mite (x 50)

As the weather cools down, **bees and wasps** become dozy and are easily caught by dogs and cats. Unfortunately they can still give nasty stings to your pets.

**Antifreeze** is also a potential hazard for many pets at this time of year. When getting the car ready for the winter, any spilled antifreeze should be cleared up promptly – it's very tasty but extremely toxic.

Remember also to keep pets indoors in the evenings to avoid **firework** injuries. Dogs with noise phobias may benefit from medication to help relieve anxiety associated with fireworks. Habituation to loud noises over a long period of time can also be helpful.



Finally, turning to **rabbits**, if you haven't had your rabbit **vaccinated** against **Myxomatosis** and **VHD** yet, act now! These usually fatal illnesses can easily strike in the Autumn.



Ginger cat: Jane Burin

## Pet Insurance: are you covered?

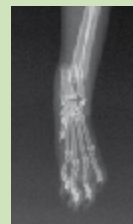


YOU look after your pets and make sure they have regular health checks, vaccinations, appropriate diets, worming and flea control. But what about **pet insurance**?

It's a worrying fact that in an average year, one pet in three will require veterinary treatment for some form of illness or accident and with the cost of diagnosis and treatment

for a variety of conditions running into three and even four figures, pet insurance has never been more relevant. With appropriate pet insurance we can hopefully ensure that decisions regarding the best course of treatment for your pet can be made on the basis of **need** rather than **cost**. **Don't take any chances – get your pet insured today!**

Although we tend to think of traumatic **surgical** events (such as a fractured leg), as the main reason for pet insurance, many **medical**



conditions (such as skin infections, ear disease, kidney or heart disease – to name just a few!), can also be very costly to treat.