



HILLSIDE VETERINARY CENTRE

NEWS

SPRING 2008 Newsletter

Practice News

Spring is in the air and we all look forward to warmer, drier weather when we can get out and about more. Check out our spring health checklist below for a few reminders and don't forget to let us know if there are any areas you would like to see us improving on.

Articles this time include:

- New year... new pet
- Protecting against Kennel cough
- Rabbit healthcare
- Staying worm free
- Pet household hazards!

Our spring health checklist...

as well as ensuring your pet's vaccinations are all up-to-date you should:

- Take preventative action against fleas and ticks.
- Worm free – see our article on ensuring your pet stays worm free.
- Ensure your pet's passport details are all correct in advance of your summer holiday – don't forget we offer a FREE pre-travel check with one of our vets. Rabies and the pet travel scheme (PETS) – ensure all vaccinations and requirements for travelling abroad are in place.
- Rabbits – make sure vaccines, especially Myxomatosis, are up-to-date.
- Micro-chipping – the permanent way to ensure your pet is returned to you should they stray away from home.

If you would like advice on any aspect of pet health care contact us today – don't forget to check out our website at www.hillsidevets.co.uk where you can also download specific fact sheets. We welcome Jackie Stirrat to our valued team of Receptionists and hope you will meet her soon.

Finally a reminder of surgery times ...

Mon – Fri 8.30am-6pm
Wednesdays 8.30am-8pm
Saturdays 8.30am-5pm

... you can telephone or email for an appointment - T: 698899

E: mail@hillsidevets.co.uk

New Year... new pet?

INTRODUCING a pet into the family, although a big responsibility, is an exciting and happy time. In order to keep your pet fit and healthy, we've put together a shortlist of things to do!

Provided their mother was regularly vaccinated, puppies and kittens should be protected in the first few weeks of life by antibodies from their mother's milk. However this immunity falls with time, leaving them susceptible to infectious disease.

Vaccinations (to stimulate this immunity) will help protect dogs and cats from a number of potentially fatal infectious diseases. Two or more vaccinations are usually given as a primary course, giving your pet immunity for the first year of life. However the immunity provided by the primary vaccination is not indefinite and will gradually fall. Regular boosters will be required throughout your pet's

life to maintain this immunity.

The vaccination visit is also an excellent time to give your pet a general check over and we are happy to advise you on a variety of topics including:

Parasites (such as worms – see back page, fleas and ticks) are a perennial source of problems for our pets. Let us advise you on the best way of controlling these pests.

Diets – there are at first sight a bewildering number of diets available for pets! However, don't despair – we are happy to recommend the most suitable diet for your new arrival!

Microchipping is a very effective method of *permanently* identifying your pet – please ask us for further details!

Other topics include the benefits of neutering, dental care, pet insurance and early socialisation of puppies (we hold regular puppy parties so book your place with reception). For further



Vaccination against infectious diseases

We recommend you regularly vaccinate your pets against the following – potentially fatal, infectious diseases:

Dogs:

- Distemper
- Infectious canine hepatitis
- Parvo virus
- Leptospirosis
- Para influenza virus

Cats:

- Cat flu virus
- Feline panleucopenia virus
- Feline leukaemia virus
- Feline Chlamydia

Puppy photo: Jane Burton

information on any of these areas, or general advice and guidance on ensuring both your new pet and your family get off to the best possible healthy start, book an appointment with one of the vets at your earliest opportunity.

Is your dog protected against kennel cough?



WITH THE onset of warmer spring weather, it's time for pets to get out and about more – however wherever dogs meet they run the risk of picking up Kennel Cough. This is a highly infectious cough that affects dogs, rapidly causing symptoms of severe coughing and breathlessness as well as high temperatures, sore throats and loss of appetite. In the worst cases (such as in young or elderly dogs) it can cause severe and prolonged disease and may even be associated with death. Even in young healthy dogs it can cause weeks of coughing and malaise.

This distressing condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Luckily a vaccine is available, though unlike your dog's normal routine vaccines (see panel above) the kennel cough vaccine is given by intra-nasal drops. We recommend that dogs are vaccinated against kennel cough before going into kennels (where dogs are kept close by one another and can rapidly transmit this infection) or at any time when the disease is rife. Please contact us if you would like any further information.



Caring for your rabbit

Rabbits are becoming more and more popular family pets and just like dogs and cats they need regular health checks and vaccinations. Here are some top tips to keep your rabbit fit and well.

Vaccination

Did you know that unless they are regularly vaccinated, rabbits are at risk from two potentially fatal infectious diseases?

Myxomatosis is a very distressing viral disease spread by blood sucking insects such as mosquitos or rabbit fleas. The disease causes puffy swellings around the eyes usually leading to blindness. Affected animals become very ill, often suffering from pneumonia, and even with medication and nursing care most will die as a result of the disease.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is a very contagious viral disease, spreading easily between rabbits or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. It can also be inadvertently transported by

people or birds. Affected rabbits may show a range of symptoms including loss of appetite, lethargy and nose bleeds. Sadly most will die.

We vaccinate against both of these diseases.

Fly strike is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. This is a very painful and serious condition, which frequently can be fatal. Throughout the summer months, rabbit rear ends should be inspected **daily** for fly eggs and maggots. Soiled bedding should also be removed on a daily basis to minimise flies being attracted to the hutch. Fly repellents are also very helpful.

Neutering is strongly recommended for a longer and healthier life, as well as protecting against common diseases of uterine and ovarian tumours in females and testicular tumours in males.

Feeding and dental care

Probably one of the most important pieces of advice we can give is on the correct feeding of your rabbit. They should be given unlimited access to good quality hay, together with a selection of fresh food and regulated commercial food. Rabbits should always have access to fresh water. Poor diet and selective eating can cause the teeth to overgrow, so it is vitally important to your rabbit's overall health that their feeding regime is correct.



We offer FREE healthy hopper advice within our nurses' clinics – just ask for an appointment. Download our 'Rabbit Ownership' handout on our website – www.hillsidevets.co.uk for more rabbit information.

Household hazards



Many everyday foods and items around the house can be lethal to our pets. Here are a few of the more common ones.

Chocolate is probably the number one hazard for **dogs**, particularly at Easter and Christmas when there may be more lying around the home. The toxic component is called theobromine, which is present in variable concentrations – the higher the cocoa content, the more dangerous the chocolate.

There are now several reports confirming that **dogs** eating even fairly small quantities of **grapes**, **raisins** or **sultanas** can develop renal failure. Additionally items such as fruitcake (which contains sultanas and raisins) will also pose a risk.

Turning to vegetables, **onions** are also a hazard to dogs, with all parts of the plant being considered toxic, whether cooked or raw. Other members of the onion family – such as **garlic**, **leeks** and **chives**, may also pose some risk.

Turning to **cats** – most varieties of **lily** pose a significant risk. All parts of the plant including the flowers and the pollen are poisonous.

Remember also to keep toxic and cleaning fluids like bleach etc, out of reach of your pet. You should always store away human medicines properly to ensure they cannot be swallowed by your pet.



Make sure your pet stays worm free!



NO MATTER how careful you are, unless you worm your pet regularly it is often difficult to avoid them playing host to worms. There are two major types of worms affecting our pets:

Tapeworms live in the small intestines and shed segments containing eggs, which pass out in the faeces. The eggs may then be eaten by an *intermediate* host, including *small rodents* and *fleas*. Cats catch and eat small rodents and both cats and dogs swallow fleas as they groom, reinfesting themselves with tapeworms.

Roundworms are spaghetti like in appearance and also live in the small intestines. They shed thousands of tiny eggs, which pass out in the faeces and pollute the environment. Dogs and cats are re-infected by unwittingly eating eggs in the environment. These eggs also pose some risk to humans if inadvertently swallowed.

To help keep your pet and the environment worm free, just follow these three simple steps: **worm your pet regularly**, use **regular flea control** and **clear up faeces**. Please let us advise you on the most suitable worming and flea control regime for your pet.



Remember – just because you don't see any worms doesn't mean your pet is worm free! Ask us about worm and flea control!!

This Newsletter is provided as an education service to our clients. All news and other items in this newsletter are for information only and should not be treated as a substitute for specialist veterinary advice. For all images, the copyright is the proprietor.

Rabbit photos: Jane Burton. Cartoon: Gareth Davies.