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## Accident alert!

WHEN you and your pets are out and about, keeping them safe is a priority, so here are a few tips:

- Remember to use a lead when walking your dog near roads, rivers, ponds, on farmland and on dangerous beaches. When you do let your dog off the lead, make sure he can see and hear you and is well trained enough to come back when you call him!
- Bear in mind other potential hazards on walks – these include sticks (stick injuries can result when sticks are thrown), and stones (we have to remove stones surgically from dogs that eat them!).
- Avoid aggressive animals, and dead animals and birds (a number of infections can be caught from infected animals or their carcasses).
- Other hazards include fencing (especially barbed wire), broken glass, and old bits of rusty metal – its always a good idea to keep dogs out of areas of thick scrub where you can't see what they have access to.
- When walking in the evening, use reflective jackets/collars to aid visibility.
- Cats are more difficult to protect, but it is advisable to make sure that all collars will break if caught up – we still see cats with injuries exacerbated by their collars. Use reflective collars to minimise the chance of an injury on the road, and try to keep cats close to home, preferably in at night, and in a routine that prevents them wandering too far. And finally don't forget that permanently identifying your pet with a microchip, gives us the best chance of reuniting you with your pet should he or she go missing.



DID you know that what you feed your pet can have a direct influence on his or her overall health? As our pets develop from kittens and puppies, into adulthood and eventually old age, so their dietary needs change. A huge amount of research has resulted in the concept of *life-stage diets* – with distinct diets for pets of different ages (or life-stages).

**Puppies and kittens**, because of their rapid rate of growth, need higher levels of energy, protein, fatty acids and other nutrients. Puppies of large and giant breeds also have different dietary requirements, and they require their own specially formulated diets.

## You are what you eat!

**Adult pets**, with their major growth phase now complete, require a balanced diet to keep them fit and healthy, but with *lower* levels of many of the nutrients mentioned above.

**Senior pets** benefit from reduced calorie levels to help prevent weight gain in older age, higher fibre levels to help reduce constipation and changes in protein and mineral levels to reduce the workload of internal organs such as the kidneys, liver and heart.

Pets with particular disease problems may also benefit from specific

'*prescription diets*.' These are specially formulated diets that help greatly in the treatment of a variety of conditions including diseases of the liver, kidneys, heart, joints, skin and teeth – to name just a few!



Whether healthy, or poorly, your pet will benefit most from a high quality diet that suits his or her specific needs. A tailored healthy diet can help to *prevent* or *treat* disease, whilst an inappropriate one can be responsible for *causing* health problems.

If you have any queries on this subject or would like to discuss the matter further, please get in touch.



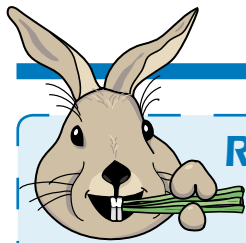
## Does my pet have worms?

DOGS and cats commonly play host to two major types of worms – roundworms and tapeworms. **Roundworms** are spaghetti like in appearance and live in the small intestines. They shed thousands of tiny eggs which pass out in the faeces and infect the environment. As well as reinfecting our pets, the eggs – if swallowed – can also pose a serious risk to children.



**Tapeworms** are long and flat and have a segmented body. Segments (containing eggs) are shed in the faeces and break down releasing the eggs into the environment. The eggs are then ingested by an *intermediate* host – these include fleas and mice. Both cats and dogs swallow fleas when grooming, and in doing so, reinfect themselves with the tapeworms.

To keep your pet worm free – **worm your pet regularly, use regular flea control and clear up faeces.** Please let us advise you on the best worm and flea control for your pet!



## Rabbit teeth – time for a check-up?

YOU MAY be surprised to learn that the most common health problem in rabbits is dental disease. Rabbits have *continuously growing* teeth, with both the cheek teeth and the incisor (front) teeth growing by as much as 1-2 mm per week!

The **incisor teeth** should meet, thereby ensuring that as your rabbit chews, they will wear down. If they become misaligned they will continue to grow, and will overgrow past each other. This invariably leads to eating problems.

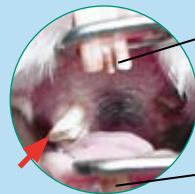
Turning to the **cheek teeth**, these are grinding teeth. However if they become overgrown, they frequently develop sharp spikes (see photo – lower right) which can lacerate the tongue and cheeks, making eating very painful. Signs commonly include “slobbers” with saliva wetting around the mouth, a decreased appetite and often marked weight loss.

If you are worried about your rabbit's teeth, we would be pleased to check them for you and also advise you on diet regimes aimed at promoting optimum dental health.



Lower incisors

Misaligned and overgrown lower incisor teeth.



Upper incisors

Lower incisors

Overgrown cheek teeth (arrowed) are sharp and lacerate the gums.

## Winter worries!



WITH THE cold weather upon us, now is a time when we all start to feel our aches and pains, and dogs and cats are no exception! Look out for limps, and difficulty rising after a rest – these are signs that your pet has a bit of joint stiffness and pain which can be exacerbated by cold or damp wintry weather.

With all the seasonal cheer, it's all too easy for pets (and sadly their owners as well) to start expanding the waistline! Don't hesitate to get in touch if your pet is gaining a few extra pounds and we can give you some nutritional advice; carrying too much weight has a multitude of adverse effects on the body.

Inside the home, remember that items such as ribbons and tinsel are very attractive to kittens and may be swallowed, leading to an intestinal blockage.



Don't forget to keep pets away from anti-freeze, a very palatable poison, and to prevent access to fallen fruits, conkers, acorns, chocolates off the Christmas tree, and leftover Christmas dinners – all of which can cause illness!



Finally, don't forget about fleas – even in winter they can breed in your home, so it is advisable to keep anti-flea treatments up to date, even at this time of year!



## Ticker trouble – is your pet affected?



THE MOST vital muscle in the body, the heart is the muscular pump responsible for supplying the tissues of your pet's body with oxygen and nutrients, allowing him to lead a normal active life.

The heart receives de-oxygenated blood from the tissues of the body and pumps it to the lungs where it is re-oxygenated. The oxygen rich blood then returns to the heart where it is then pumped back to the tissues of the body.

As the heart muscle squeezes and pumps, valves within the heart prevent back flow of blood. Heart problems can occur due to weakening of the **heart muscle**,

or – more commonly, to disease of the **heart valves** that prevents them from working properly.

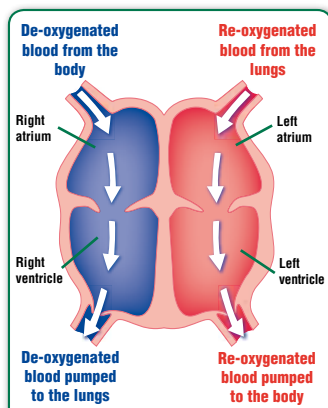
Any kind of heart problem can prevent the blood from being pumped effectively around the body. This causes poor circulation and

abdomen (tummy).

Heart disease is generally more common in older dogs, however in certain breeds it is more prevalent at an early age. In cats, heart disease is quite commonly associated with thyroid gland disease.

If you are concerned that your pet is showing any of the previously described signs, please come and see us for a check-up.

The good news is that these days we have a range of medicines that can help pets with heart disease. So, if you suspect that your pet may have heart disease, give us a call and we can arrange to see him – treatment gives the best results if it is started promptly.



**Schematic diagram of the heart**  
De-oxygenated blood is pumped to the lungs where it is re-oxygenated. Re-oxygenated blood is then pumped to the tissues of the body.

reduced oxygen flow to the tissues, leading to **weakness** and **tiredness**. Fluid can also build up in the lungs and other organs causing **coughing**, **breathlessness**, and sometimes a **swollen**

