



Testing times...

Although we can tell a lot about a pet's state of health from a thorough examination, there are lots of things that we can't diagnose without further investigation. Laboratory tests are one useful way of investigating problems.

Tests can be done on blood samples, smears (e.g. from ears and skin) and biopsy samples from skin or other parts of the body. Routine blood tests look at red and white blood cells, and various chemicals in the blood. They can be used in order to monitor health (e.g. before an anaesthetic), to diagnose disease, or to monitor the response to treatment. Basic blood screening can identify diseases ranging from anaemia to liver and kidney disease, and from infections to problems with the immune system and diabetes. More complex tests can be performed to investigate other disorders including a range of hormonal conditions. Biopsies can also be taken from skin masses, internal tumours and any of the main organs, to allow investigation of the cells that are present.

If you have any concerns regarding the healthiness of your pet, give us a call – there are lots of things we can do to diagnose and treat disease and help pets to lead happier and healthier lives.

Check out our new website!

This contains a wealth of information – dog, cat and horse healthcare, virtual tours of the practices, case histories, newsletter and much more! www.southmoorvets.co.uk



Feline Leukaemia Virus – is your cat vaccinated?



ONE OF the commonest causes of premature death in cats is infection with the Feline Leukaemia virus (FeLV). The virus is found in the saliva of infected cats and is mainly transmitted by *direct contact* of one cat with another – especially by licking or biting.

Whilst the virus does on occasions cause true leukaemia, in many cases the effects are more related to suppression of the cat's immune system, very sadly leaving it fatally exposed to infections that a healthy cat would normally recover from. FeLV infections may be an underlying cause of anaemia and various forms of cancer in cats. The disease is however quite unrelated to any human condition and quite specific to cats. The good news is that there are now very effective vaccines against the virus. Vaccination can be started at any age and your cat can be vaccinated at the same time as the annual health check and other vaccinations. Please contact us for an appointment!

Kidney disease – is my pet affected?



KIDNEY conditions are really common in older cats, and often seen in other older animals as well. However, they don't only affect our geriatric friends – they can affect younger pets too. Dogs and cats have two kidneys and each kidney has several hundred thousand tiny units called **nephrons**. These filter the blood, removing toxic waste products, salts and water which are then concentrated to form urine.

Over time a proportion of the nephrons will disappear with age and not be replaced. Other factors such as toxins, infections

or cancer may also destroy nephrons.

However, the kidneys have *excess* filtering capacity with the result that *visible* symptoms of kidney disease are not usually seen until roughly two thirds of the nephrons have been lost. If this stage is reached the filtering capacity falls and toxic wastes begin to accumulate in the blood. Common symptoms include **weight loss, muscle wastage, lack of appetite and increased drinking**. **Increased urination**, which may also be associated with urinary incontinence, is also a common problem.

As you can see the symptoms of kidney disease are unfortunately very often *bidden* until the disease is in the very *advanced* stages. However, with regular veterinary check-ups, the symptoms of

kidney disease can often be detected at a very much earlier stage – *before* they become outwardly noticeable; as with many conditions, the sooner we can start treatment, the better! Whilst kidney disease cannot be cured, a combination of specially formulated diets (that can help to reduce the workload of the kidneys) together with new forms of medication, can often significantly improve the quality of life of pets with this condition.

So – if your pet has started to drink like a fish, or to show any other signs of kidney disease, it is time for a prompt check-over – please give us a call!

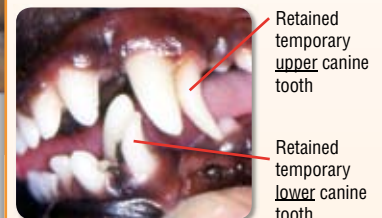


Too many teeth can be a problem!



WE GO to great efforts to ensure that your pets have a healthy mouth, but did you know that there are times when a pet can have *too many* teeth!

Puppies and kittens start to lose their temporary (or “milk”) teeth at about 12 weeks of age and this process is usually completed by about 6 months of age. As the temporaries are lost, so this leaves room for the adult teeth to emerge. However, it is not uncommon, particularly in the smaller breeds of dog, for one or more of the temporary teeth (frequently the canine teeth) to be *retained* – see photo below.

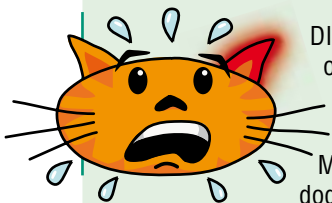


Food may be trapped between temporary and permanent teeth – leading to gingivitis, and additionally, the retained temporary tooth may cause its adult counterpart to erupt in the *wrong direction*.

However, with **regular health examinations**, it is problems like this that can be picked up at an *early stage* and – in this case remedied, by extracting the retained temporary teeth. Please contact us if you would like any further information.

Pet photos: Jane Burton. Cartoon: Jenny Hole

An eerie tale! Ear disease – what to look out for!

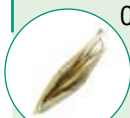


DID YOU know that ear disease is a common problem affecting pets of all ages? The ear is a complex structure, protected externally by a pinna (or flap). A narrow external ear canal carries sound down to the ear drum, where it passes onto the middle and inner ear.

Most of the problems seen in cats and dogs involve disease of the *external* ear canal – a condition called otitis externa (or canker). Symptoms often include ear rubbing, head shaking, and reddened, irritated skin lining the external ear canal. Additionally there is often a discharge which may be foul smelling.

Causes of otitis externa commonly including **ear mites**, trapped **foreign bodies** (such as grass awns) and **localised inflammation** of the skin lining the ear canals – often as part of a more generalised skin condition. The condition is frequently complicated by opportunistic bacterial and fungal infections.

If your pet is showing *any* of the symptoms described above, please arrange a check-up with us. Early diagnosis and treatment gives us the best chance of a successful outcome.



Grass awns are a common foreign body



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*) with a characteristic crusty brown discharge in the external ear canal.



Otodectes cynotis as seen down the microscope (x30)