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Practice News

WE recently welcomed new vet Tshidi Gardiner to the Modbury branch. After graduating Tshidi worked for a few years in an equine practice, and is currently studying for her certificate in this speciality. She wants to be able to continue doing equine work whilst also expanding into the farm and small animal side. Sounds like she might be busy!

We have invested in two new pieces of diagnostic equipment: one is a very thin rigid endoscope, only 2.7mm wide, which will allow us to obtain clear images of the nose, throat and windpipe of cats and small dogs; the other is a replacement of the flexible endoscope we use to look down the airways of horses. The endoscopes will also be used to further the diagnosis in other body systems. We would like to thank both Charlesworth Cavaliers and Vicky for their contribution towards the small animal endoscope. There will be some more "nibbles and natter" evenings this autumn and winter, the first of which will be on infectious diseases in the dog and cat, and vaccination regimes to prevent them. Look out for notices in the surgeries and in the local paper, or ask us to add you to our mailing list.

Should I have my pet neutered?



DID YOU know that apart from preventing unwanted pregnancies, there are several other benefits to having your pets neutered?

An unneutered female **dog** usually comes into season (heat) roughly twice a year. During this time she will become receptive to the advances of the unneutered male dogs in your locality.

Both sexes are prone to roam in an effort to mate, with the attendant risks of becoming permanently lost, involved in fights, or worse still a road traffic accident.

Cats are incredibly efficient reproducers and during the

breeding season (in the warmer Spring and Summer months), unneutered females may come into heat as often as every 2-3 weeks and will try every trick to escape and mate with a local male (tom) cat.

Unneutered tom cats will mark their territory by "spraying" objects with urine and are frequently involved in fights. Sexual contact and fighting also risks transmission of fatal viruses.

In females, neutering (or spaying) involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus under a general anaesthetic. The most obvious benefit of being spayed is that seasons are eliminated. Spaying also removes the possibility of life threatening uterine infections (pyometras) and reduces the

risk of developing potentially fatal mammary tumours later in life.

Neutering male cats and dogs involves removal of both testes under a general anaesthetic. Neutering makes your male pets less likely to stray and in dogs it can be of help in controlling excessive sexual drive and with certain types of behavioural problems. Neutered male cats are far less likely to fight and urine spray than entire males.

As you can see, there are many benefits to having your pets neutered. Please contact us if you would like any further information!



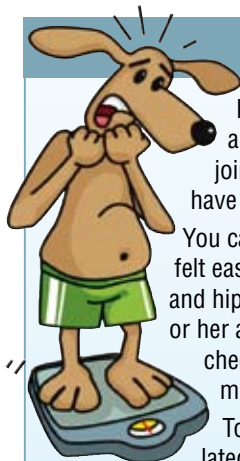
Rabbiting on...

Did you know that we can also neuter rabbits?

Please ask us for further details!



Is your pet getting a bit podgy?



IT SEEMS that pet obesity is on the rise, mirroring the situation in people and carrying with it increased risks of heart, respiratory, liver, skin and joint disease. Affected pets may have reduced life expectancy, and often have a diminished quality of life as well.

You can tell if your pet is overweight by feeling their chest – the ribs should be felt easily – but not seen, and dogs and cats should have a 'waist' between ribs and hips. If you feel your pet is getting a little portly we are happy to weigh him or her and advise you on their ideal weight. We will also examine your pet to check for any medical conditions (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged dogs) that can result in weight gain.

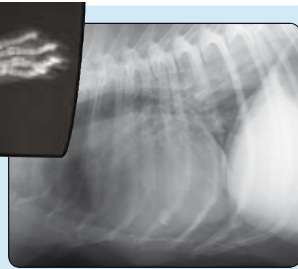
To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around $\frac{2}{3}$ their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. Please contact us for advice about your pet's ideal weight, diet and exercise regime – **we are here to help!**

X-rays: looking inside your pet

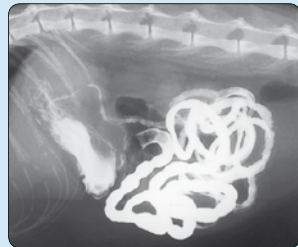


WHEN pets get poorly, there is a lot we can tell about them by examining them, however we often need more information than we can glean during a physical examination. Depending on the symptoms there are a number of techniques that can be used for further investigation, but radiography remains one of the most widely utilized mechanisms for 'looking inside' a pet.

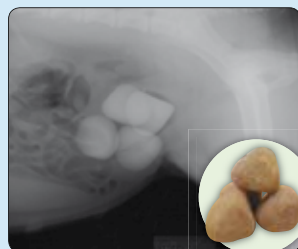
Although X-rays show up bones best of all, and are particularly useful for diagnosing broken limbs, arthritic changes, and other sorts of bone disorders, they are also used for looking at the size, shape, and consistency of a number of organs.



Chest radiograph of a dog with an enlarged (ball shaped) heart, which can be clearly seen.



Abdominal radiograph of a cat. Barium has been used to outline the stomach and intestines.



Abdominal radiograph of a dog with bladder stones – and (inset) the stones following surgery.

They can be used in the diagnosis of heart and lung diseases, liver, kidney and bowel disorders, and a range of bladder conditions. With X-rays we can identify organs that have changed shape or size (e.g. the diseased heart, liver or kidneys) or that have abnormalities within them such as fluid in the lungs, stones in the kidneys or bladder, and some types of tumours. X-rays can also allow identification of foreign bodies within the body ranging from bones and toys to fragments of metal. Alone, or in combination with other forms of further investigation, X-rays are one of our most useful facilities.

So, if your pet shows any signs of illness, please get in touch. We have a number of facilities at our disposal to allow us to diagnose the cause of disease, bringing us a step closer to successful treatment of poorly pets.



AS THE nights draw in, and the weather cools, it becomes harder for many owners to maintain their pet's exercise levels, at just the time when they may be more prone to getting stiff because of the colder damper weather. However regular exercise is a must for any pet's quality of life so it is important to make time to get out for a walk. Beware of the risks of walking in the dark though, and wear pale and reflective clothing and collars to avoid accidents.



Other hazards to look out for at this time of year include dogs eating autumn

fruits and developing digestive problems – do prevent access to fallen apples, conkers and the like. Also, bear in mind that anti-freeze is highly palatable (and poisonous) to pets and don't leave it lying around when getting the car ready for winter.

Finally, be prepared for fireworks – keep pets in and safe around firework night, and bear in mind that background noise and light from the TV, with curtains well drawn can be a helpful distraction for those pets that are firework phobic. However medication to reduce anxiety may also be needed, so do contact us for an appointment if you are worried.



Dental disease: Is it making your pet unwell?



A HEALTHY mouth is vital for good general health. However studies show that 85% of dogs and 70% of cats over 3 years of age show signs of dental disease!

A typical healthy mouth has strong white teeth and healthy pink gums (sometimes mottled with black pigment) – see top photo.

However if plaque bacteria are allowed to accumulate on the teeth and gums, they cause a marginal inflammation of the gum tissue – called **gingivitis**. This is frequently accompanied by the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth and also very bad breath! The middle photo is typical of pets with this condition.

If gingivitis is allowed to continue unchecked, the inflammation will eventually spread down *below* gum level, destroying the tooth supporting structures, leading to tooth loosening and eventual tooth loss – a condition called **periodontitis**.

If your pet has bad breath or is showing any other signs of dental disease – don't ignore it, come and see us for a check-up! The good news is that dental disease is a largely preventable condition – ask us for further information on caring for your pet's teeth!



Healthy mouth



Gingivitis



Periodontitis