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## Practice News



We are very pleased with our recent upgrade of the laboratory equipment at Kingsbridge. The haematology analyser has been replaced with the most advanced in-house analyser available, and we have also acquired an electrolyte analyser. With our current biochemistry machine this will enable us to more fully investigate illnesses, infections and anaemias, and to fine-tune our intravenous fluid therapy. Quicker diagnoses and treatment should lead to faster recoveries, and all this will be available 24/7, and unaffected by postal problems!

### Topics in this issue:

- *Welcome home...*
- *Is your dog protected against kennel cough?*
- *Caring for your rabbit*
- *Make sure your pet stays worm free!*
- *Household hazards*

## Welcome home...

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!



### 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

Other topics include **pet insurance, dental care, and early socialisation of puppies** – to name just a few! For further information on any of these topics, please ask a member of the practice team.

Puppy photo: Jane Burton.

## 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 intranasal 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 members of the family and just like dogs and cats, we need to see them from time to time for routine health examinations and vaccinations. Here are some 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.

Happily, we can now offer vaccination against both of these distressing 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.

### Feeding

Their ideal diet includes plenty of good quality hay, together with a selection of fresh food and a small amount of good quality commercial rabbit food. This type of diet encourages tooth wear (reducing the incidence of dental disease), reduces the chance of obesity and keeps them occupied for several hours each day! Commercial rabbit foods are now also available as *compounded pellets* and this helps to avoid the problem of selective feeding – leaving all the vitamins and minerals uneaten.



So, as you can see, there is a lot you can do to keep your rabbit healthy! If you would like any further information on any of the topics covered, or for that matter on other issues such as **neutering** or **dental care** – please just ask!

## Household hazards



DID YOU know that many everyday items around the house can be lethal to our pets? Here we look at a few of the more common ones.

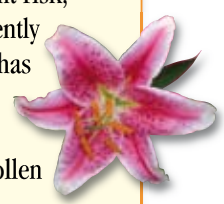
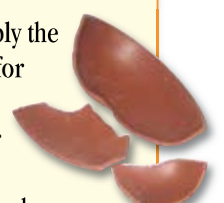
**Chocolate** is probably the number one hazard for *dogs*, particularly at Christmas and Easter when there may be more lying around the home. The toxic component is called theobromine, which is present in variable concentrations – the higher the cocoa content, the more dangerous the chocolate.

Turning to *cats* – most varieties of **lily** pose a significant risk, although it is only recently that awareness of this has been raised. All parts of the plant including the flowers and the pollen are poisonous.

So what other foodstuffs present a danger? 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.

So – don't panic, do remember that lilies are toxic to cats, and in terms of feeding, the best bet is always to feed diets and treats *specifically formulated* for pets.



## 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!!