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Lung Worm – Is your dog at risk?

There is now a threat to the UK dog population in the form of lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*). This parasite is carried by slugs, snails and even frogs. The problem arises when dogs purposefully or accidentally eat these pests when rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass, drinking from puddles or outdoor water bowls, or pick them up from their toys.

The symptoms of this condition are varied. You may notice coughing, reluctance to exercise, depression, weight loss, fits, vomiting, diarrhoea, weakness and paralysis, or persistent bleeding from minor cuts. If caught early enough the damage can often be reversed but in heavy infections the outlook can be very poor. Treatment is available to help protect your dog. Remember a standard 3 monthly worming regime does not protect against lungworm.

At home try to avoid leaving food and water bowls, bones, chews and toys outside overnight. Wash everything that may have been contaminated with slime trails.

Its important to keep up to date with parasites that can affect your pets. With climate changes and an increase in animal movement across the world more and more are appearing to become potential threats to your pets.



The dog Lung Worm



The arrival of a new pet is a happy occasion and to help with this, we've put together a check-list of things to do to keep your pet fit and well throughout their lives.

Vaccination Provided their mother was vaccinated, pups and kittens will have a degree of immunity to *infectious diseases* that will protect them in the first few weeks of life. However this immunity rapidly falls and in order to restore it, a primary course of vaccinations is required. This immunity will also fade over time and regular booster vaccinations, combined with a health check, are the best way of protecting your pet, *plus* keeping an eye out for any other problems.

Looking after your new pet

Life-stage diets We can offer your pet a tailored series of diets from tiny kittens and puppies, through adult hood and into their senior years. These diets are designed to offer the ideal balance of nutrients for each life stage – as such they come highly recommended.

Parasites It is very important to treat puppies and kittens for roundworms since they can acquire these from their mothers early in life. Following this, since our pets are readily infested with worms, fleas and ticks, treatment is best regarded as a life-long endeavour. We are happy



to offer you advice on the most effective and convenient form of treatment for your pets.

Lost and found It is important to get your pet identified as soon as possible. As well as the traditional collar and tag, we also recommend having your pet microchipped as a more secure and permanent form of identification, since tags can fall off just when your pet may need them the most.

Insurance Whilst we hope your pet stays fit and well, if problems do occur and your pet is insured, we can hopefully ensure that decisions regarding treatment can be made on the basis of *need* rather than *cost*. Very highly recommended!

Early socialisation of pups in the first few months of life is very important as well! Please ask us for further information on this, or any of the topics covered in the article.



Kennel Cough: is your pet protected?



KENNEL COUGH is a highly contagious condition in dogs and is easily spread wherever dogs meet – out on walks, at training classes, dog shows and of course in boarding kennels.

Dogs with kennel cough typically have a dry hacking cough, commonly followed by retching. The cough is often described as having a “honking” sound. In mild cases, dogs will continue to eat and be active and alert. However in more severe cases the symptoms may progress and include lethargy, fever and lack of interest in food. While some mildly affected dogs recover relatively rapidly (usually in 5-10 days), others may take several weeks to recover fully and antibiotic treatment is often required.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella Bronchiseptica*. Although your pet's regular booster vaccinations should provide protection against the viral components of the cough, only intranasal vaccine drops can offer protection against *Bordetella*. Don't take any chances with kennel cough – contact us to ensure your pet is vaccinated!

Puppy photo: Jane Burton

How healthy are your pet's gums?



DID YOU know that – just as in humans – gum disease is very common in pets as well, with typically 85% of pets over the age of three affected!

A **healthy mouth** typically has bright white teeth and shrimp pink (or sometimes pigmented) gums. However plaque bacteria are constantly accumulating on the surface of their teeth and will, in time, lead to inflammation of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis**. Affected gums are more reddened in appearance, and these changes may also be associated with localised mineralisation of the plaque to form calculus (tartar) – see picture (b).



Removing the calculus using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing the teeth is a very effective form of treatment

If gingivitis is allowed to continue *unchecked*, it will over time progress to **periodontitis**; here the problem now spreads *below* the gum line, leading to destruction of the tooth supporting structures and eventually resulting in tooth mobility and finally tooth loss.

Unfortunately once a tooth becomes loose, the problem has usually progressed too far to save that tooth. However if gum problems are identified at an *earlier* stage, a combination of a Scale and Polish and ongoing Home Care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health (and also their breath!). Please contact us today for further details!



(a) Healthy mouth



(b) Gingivitis – with early calculus



(c) Periodontitis

Some like it hot: summer survival tips!



AS WE enjoy the lovely sunny weather how prepared are our pets for this challenging time of year? Here are a few tips to keep your pet safe this summer:

When going on walks it's always a good idea to start early or late, rather than going out in the midday heat. You may also wish to consider taking some water with you on the walk as well.

Ticks are a particular problem for pets roaming through long grass and woodland areas. Ticks

swarm onto passing pets firmly attaching themselves before feeding on your pet's blood.

Worse still they can also spread a range of diseases including *Lyme disease* and *Babesiosis*. Please ask us to advise you on the best method of preventing and (if necessary) removing ticks from your pet.



Don't forget that **fleas** are also a cause of great irritation at this time of year – so make sure you keep your flea treatments going all year round!

Grass seeds are another summer problem – the grass awns of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets – especially dogs. They then migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears (causing severe head shaking) and between toes (causing abscesses). It is always a very good idea to groom your pets regularly – and especially after walks – to keep a close eye out for both ticks and grass seeds.

The **sun** itself can also pose a hazard! Pets (especially cats), with white ear tips and noses are at risk of sunburn, which in turn can lead to *cancerous changes* in the sunburnt areas. High factor sun block applied to at risk (white) areas will help in minimising this risk.



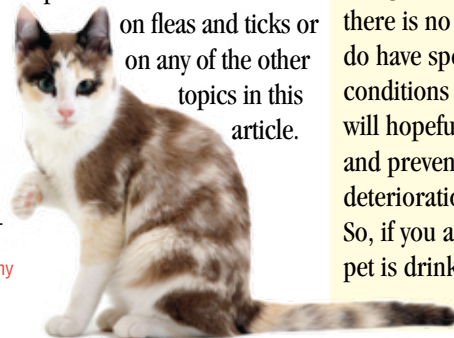
Ear tip of a cat showing early (reddened) cancerous changes.

If your pet is showing any signs of skin changes, please call us at once.

Flies can pose a big problem for rabbits as the weather warms up. Flies are very attracted to rabbits if they have soiled bottoms – here they lay their eggs, which rapidly hatch out into flesh eating maggots. It is important to check bunnies' bottoms on a daily basis and call us at once if you are worried. Also remember that pets in outside runs need a *shaded area* to get away from the sun.

Bees are often irresistible to inquisitive pets who may get stung for their troubles! Some stings can – in allergic pets, swell very alarmingly and may require urgent veterinary treatment.

Finally, please give us a call or drop in for further information on fleas and ticks or on any of the other topics in this article.



Does your cat drink like a fish?



DO YOU notice that your pet's water bowl seems to empty faster than normal? Although hot weather can sometimes be a factor, if you notice your pet seems to be drinking *excessively* this is an important symptom that shouldn't be ignored.

Increased drinking is seen fairly commonly in older cats and may be indicative of a number of conditions including *kidney disease*, an *over-active thyroid gland* and *sugar diabetes* (diabetes mellitus).

As well as giving your pet a thorough clinical examination, *urine and blood tests* are usually very helpful in making a diagnosis.

The good news is that although there is no cure for old age, we do have specific treatments for the conditions mentioned above which will hopefully ease the symptoms and prevent *or slow* the ongoing deterioration of your pet's health. So, if you are concerned that your pet is drinking excessively, please give us a call today!