AUTUMN 2012

Your Vet

FREE! Please take one

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus infection needs special care

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is similar to the *Human Immunodeficiency Virus* (HIV) in humans. Like HIV it may or may not proceed to cause clinical illness in the cats it infects. FIV is transmitted primarily via saliva and the most common causes are fighting and biting. FIV infection can predispose cats to numerous problems including infections (fungal, bacterial and parasitic), bone marrow disease, oral disease, cancer and eye problems. A vaccine is now available for kittens or older cats, but your cat should be confirmed clear of infection before its use.

Diagnosis usually relies on the detection of *antibodies* to the virus in the cat's blood sample. It is rare to get a "false-positive" result, however nursing kittens of FIV-positive mums may test positive for some time. They may not be truly infected with the virus but have antibodies from the mother's milk.

If your cat has been in a fight, it is wise to wait at least 60 days before testing for FIV in order to minimise the risk of a falsely negative result. While a positive test result usually indicates infection, a negative result could indicate that either the cat is not infected, or it has been exposed but is not yet producing antibodies. A negative result may also occur if the cat has been immunosuppressed by the virus and cannot produce antibodies, or if the test itself is faulty.

Management of cats with FIV requires some adjustments to their lifestyle. These cats should be kept indoors to minimise spread to other cats AND to decrease exposure to disease. Ideally, infected cats will have a full clinical examination twice a year. Your vet will usually spend time examining the mouth, lymph nodes and eyes, as these are all areas that can be affected by the disease. Your cat will often be weighed as weight loss can be an early warning sign of clinical disease. Some vets will also recommend an annual blood profile, and occasionally urine or faeces tests. Generally, vaccination programs for FIV-infected cats should be similar to those for uninfected cats, however vets will often use a 'killed' vaccine where available.

When a cat is diagnosed with FIV-related disease, treatment decisions (including euthanasia) should not be made solely on the grounds of the cat having FIV. Similarly, diseases in cats infected with FIV may not necessarily be a result of that infection, but may have occurred independently. Overall, many FIV infected cats, will live long and happy lives regardless of their infection status.

READERS! Enter our competition and **WIN!** Details above

- Pregnancy diagnosis in dogs and cats
- Precocious guinea pigs
- Feline hyperthyroidism

inside

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Our Vets

DR NEVILLE ROBERTSON
BVSc(Syd), MVS(Murd)

DR ALAN WADE
BSc, BVMS(Murd)

Our Nurses

We have a group of talented, versatile and fully trained nurses. Our nurses love animals and are passionate about animal care. They run the puppy classes, weight clinics and help us keep your pet health and happy during their stay with us. Our nurses can help you with all of your pet's needs.

Our Hours

Monday to Friday	7.30am to 7pm
Saturday	8.30am to 4 pm
Sunday	Closed

Consultations are by appointment.
We are closed on Public Holidays.

After Hours

For urgent attention after hours including Public Holidays please call Perth Vet Emergency (PVE) on 9204 0400. This is a dedicated local emergency centre and they are located at 305 Selby Street North, Osborne Park. Alternatively call Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) on 1300 652 494.

Our Webpage

City Beach Veterinarians has a new web page! Visit the site for information about your pets health, us and many other interesting items. Let us know what you think. Our web address is www.citybeachvet.com.au

False pregnancy in the bitch

It is possible for any bitch that has not been spayed to exhibit symptoms of pregnancy without actually being pregnant. Some bitches can completely fool their owners with convincing displays of maternal behaviour. Just like a real pregnancy, false-pregnant bitches gain weight, produce milk and make nests. They may be listless, off their food and will often "mother" toys.

It is unclear as to why some bitches experience false pregnancies, but we do know that any bitch that ovulates, whether pregnant or not, will experience the same blood levels of a hormone called progesterone. Around two months after ovulation, the progesterone levels drop and the "milk" hormone prolactin starts to increase in concentration. It is prolactin that is responsible for milk production and maternal behaviour.

False pregnancies generally run a course of 2-3 weeks and treatment is not usually required. In severe cases, where large amounts of milk are being produced, a reduction in daily food intake may help the milk supply to drop. The bitch must not be allowed to lick at her nipples as any stimulation of the mammary glands promotes milk production.

False pregnancies are a normal phenomenon and are not associated with fertility problems. They frequently recur but can be prevented with sterilisation. If the bitch is intended for breeding then she should be bred from at her next season and then sterilised once her breeding days are over.

Desensitise senstive areas

Many animals have particular areas of their body that they consider private and would prefer to keep that way. Unfortunately as Veterinary Surgeons we are often forced to invade this privacy and go into those forbidden zones. Taking a rectal temperature, clipping nails, examining down ears and checking teeth can cross the boundary for some animals. To help visits to the vet be smoother and less traumatic for your pet we would recommend a gentle desensitisation program. Handle your pet's sensitive areas regularly – ideally daily. Pick up their feet and gently finger between the toes, lift up ear flaps, handle around the lips and gums and raise the tail. This can be disguised as play and rewarded with food treats and verbal praise.

Precocious guinea pigs

With most animals, the general consensus is to wait until they are fully grown and mature before allowing them to breed. The opposite is true with guinea pigs. If you do wish to breed your female guinea pig, it is important to do so BEFORE she is fully mature. This is because guinea pigs produce relatively enormous offspring. In order to deliver such a large baby, the sow's pelvic canal must enlarge by an extra 1.5 to 3 cm. A young guinea pig's pelvic bones will separate easily and the resulting gap will fill with fibro-cartilage (gristle).

By the time a sow is 9 months old, her pelvis will be fully formed. The small joints or suture lines in the pelvis, where separation was possible, will now be fused with solid bone. The resulting birth canal is usually too narrow to allow a natural delivery and the sow gets into birthing difficulties.

The only treatment in this situation is a caesarean section under general anaesthetic - a risky procedure in an animal predisposed to anaesthetic complications. To prevent this scenario, breed from your sow prior to 7 months of age and you will be able to enjoy her wonderfully precocious offspring with minimal stress.

Word Sleuth answers

1. Abyssinian; 2. Balinese; 3. Burmese; 4. Sphynx; 5. Siamese; 6. Ragdoll; 7. Persian; 8. Manx; 9. Korat; 10. Tonkinese

Feline hyperthyroidism

Feline hyperthyroidism is one of the most common diseases affecting middle aged to older cats. Affected cats have over-active thyroid glands that produce too much thyroid hormone. This is usually caused by over-functioning nodules within the thyroid gland. Occasionally, in 1-2% of cases, it is secondary to a cancer of the thyroid. Since thyroid hormone affects multiple organs and helps to control an animal's metabolic rate, there can be many different presenting symptoms.

Hyperthyroid cats usually have an increased appetite and thirst. However, despite eating more, they lose weight and condition. They often exhibit changes in behaviour and may become more cranky and agitated. Owners can be woken up at night to a loudly vocalising feline demanding a snack RIGHT NOW! Many hyperthyroid cats have intermittent vomiting and diarrhoea. As thyroid hormone also affects the heart, an increase in thyroid hormone levels will increase the heart rate and blood pressure. Left unchecked, hyperthyroidism can eventually result in heart and/or kidney failure.

Hyperthyroidism is diagnosed by blood tests. There are several treatment options that your vet will discuss with you. Affected animals may be managed on oral medication. Sometimes they can have the affected thyroid surgically removed or undergo treatment with radioiodine. This involves the injection of a radioisotope of iodine that concentrates in and destroys abnormal thyroid tissue, while leaving normal thyroid tissue unharmed. Although this is an excellent treatment option, it is only available in a limited number of specialised facilities.

Treatment of hyperthyroidism may make underlying kidney problems worse. Therefore, your vet will need to monitor your cat's progress and occasionally may even elect not to treat the condition.

Competition for our readers!

WIN a $50 shopping voucher

1) Just answer the following question: Which article did you like best in this issue of Your Vet? .....

2) Tick the box next to your preferred voucher: ☐ K Mart Australia Ltd
☐ Coles Myer Ltd ☐ Target Australia Ltd ☐ JB Hi Fi

3) What is your email address? * .....

* By providing us with your email address, you agree to receive future marketing material.

4) Post with your name and address on the back of the envelope to:
Your Vet Voucher Competition, Unit 5/1 Almondbury Road, Mt Lawley WA 6050

The winner of the competition in *Your Chiropractor's* November edition was **Ms S. Coates of NSW**.

THAT'S IT! GOOD LUCK!

Must be received by latest post marked 02/05/2012 to be in the running

Stimulating birds in captivity

Birds are intelligent creatures that need visual stimulation and exercise. Unfortunately, due to our busy modern lifestyle, our pet birds are often left on their own while we are at work.

Encouraging foraging behaviour helps prevent obesity and boredom. In the wild, birds must constantly forage for food. This natural behaviour provides a varied diet and exercise. In captivity, a food bowl is hardly a workout and the bird can quickly gorge until full and then has nothing to do to fill his day.

Provide a stimulating and varied diet with lots of fresh vegetables, some fruit and a complete pelleted ration. Try things such as corncobs, capsicum strips, carrot tops and wheat grass that can be hidden inside things or strung on a leather strip. Place a vase in or next to the cage and fill it with small branches and natural vegetation.

Toys can also help to create a stimulating environment for your pet bird. Provide a variety of toys and rotate them. Include 'destructible' toys, such as wooden clothes pegs and leather strips that can be chewed. You can also hide food inside toys to encourage play.

Interaction with toys can provide hours of fun, and the activity provided by toys is essential for good physical and emotional wellbeing in a captive environment. However, care should be taken to ensure that your pet bird is not swallowing pieces of indigestible toys.

Tell tails

The tail is a great mood barometer and can be the bringer of good news and bad from our pets. The perky "tail up" position is used by happy cats in combination with a bouncy trot when they greet their owners. A fluffed-up cat's tail held aloft over raised hackles indicates fear and anger. It gives the impression of a much larger animal and is used to intimidate an enemy. Prior to pouncing, a cat will hold its tail rigid and just let the tail tip twitch.

Dominant and aggressive dogs will approach a potential conflict situation with an upright tail that may be wagged slowly. This is a totally different wag to the exuberant wag of a happy dog. Unfortunately some dogs' relentless happiness can lead to a medical condition commonly known as "happy tail". This occurs when repetitive smashing against hard surfaces chronically damages the wagging tail tip. Some of these animals end up requiring amputation of the damaged tail tip. Shy and submissive dogs use a low quick wag as they crawl along whilst really frightened dogs stop wagging all together and tuck their tail firmly between their legs.

Who needs language when you have a tail!

Cat Quiz Word Sleuth

Q	T	B	U	R	M	E	S	E	N
I	E	T	A	R	O	K	O	A	N
L	S	S	W	L	H	Y	I	M	N
L	P	M	E	U	I	N	K	A	R
O	H	A	T	N	I	N	I	F	J
D	Y	N	T	S	I	S	E	W	U
G	N	X	S	K	R	K	A	S	O
A	X	Y	I	E	S	E	N	A	E
R	B	G	P	X	O	Z	E	O	B
A	E	S	E	M	A	I	S	W	T

Please find the following cat breeds in the word sleuth

CLUES

1. This lithe and sleek cat is one of the oldest short-haired breeds and looks similar to drawings of Ancient Egyptian cats. 2. These long-haired, active and highly talkative cats are part of the Oriental family and were given their name because their grace and elegance reminded breeders of the native dancers of Bali. 3. This is the only natural breed of brown cat. Powerfully built with a rounded chest, they are easily trained and enjoy performing tricks. 4. This cat is the only recognised hairless breed of cat in Australia. It is also the only cat that has sweat glands and therefore does not need to pant to keep cool similar to other cats and dogs. 5. This cat breed is very slender with blue almond-shaped eyes. They are often very vocal. 6. This cat originated in the USA. It is known for its gentle and docile nature and its tendency to relax and become floppy when picked up. 7. One of the most popular breeds in Australia, this cat has a long fluffy coat and a slightly squashed-in facial appearance. 8. This cat breed usually has no tail. Its hind legs are also thicker and longer than the ordinary cat. 9. One of the oldest breeds of cat in the world, this silver-blue cat originated in Thailand and is considered to bring good fortune. 10. This cat breed was developed by crossing a Siamese with a Burmese.

Answers can be found on the bottom of the inside left page.

Practice Update

Complete Health

City Beach Veterinarians is committed to making it easy for you to look after all of your pet's needs.

Our Complete Health packages provide all of your pet's routine preventive health care. You do not need to remember when your pet is due for any products as we mail them to you monthly!

Each Complete Health package includes

- Monthly Flea Control
- Heartworm Prevention
- Intestinal worming medication
- Annual vaccinations

By taking out a Complete Health package you will save 5% off the price you would normal pay for the products and services listed above.

There are **extra rewards** for being a Complete Health member. These include

- $20 discount off every primary consultation
- Unlimited free nail clipping
- Pet food discount vouchers
- Microchipping discount (transferable)
- For dogs there are 4 free hydrobaths which include blow drying.

Complete Health means peace of mind.

Puppy Preschool

Just like humans it is best to start training young! We run regular puppy classes that are great fun and informative. Your pup will learn to socialise with other pups, enjoy visiting us and you will start to learn the basics of training.

This is a great start to your pup's life and helps cement a long lasting relationship between you and your pet. Ask one of our nurses for more information.

Vet Profiles:

Dr Neville Robertson

Neville graduated from Sydney University in 1985. He moved to WA a year later to take up a position as an Intern in Veterinary Anaesthesia at Murdoch University. Nev has completed a Masters Degree in Veterinary Science at Murdoch University. Neville represents the AVA on the Vet Nurses National Industry Advisory Group.

Dr Alan Wade

Alan graduated from Murdoch University in 1988. Alan worked extensively in the United Kingdom before returning to Australia 9 years ago. He has worked in many large practices and gained significant experience dealing with complicated cases over the years.