YOUR VET

AUTUMN 2013

CITY.BEACH Veterinarians

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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**

THE AUTUMN YEARS – WHAT TO EXPECT AS YOUR PET AGES

Aging is thought to be a genetically predetermined event that is also influenced by environmental factors. For example large breed dogs age quicker than small breed dogs and lean dogs generally live longer than fat dogs. This enormous variation in the longevity of various breeds of cats and dogs makes it difficult to establish when old age begins, but any dog over eight years and any cat over ten years can be considered a senior.

The aging process is continuous, irreversible and affects multiple organ systems. Elderly animals have reduced activity levels and have limb weaknesses and degenerative joint disease. They cannot regulate their body temperature well and thus can easily get too hot or too cold. They may drink and urinate excessively and have a tendency towards dehydration. Elderly pets experience cognitive decline or senility. This can manifest in many ways, from a loss of learned behaviours such as toilet training to behavioural changes such as irritability, clinginess or a need for frequent naps. Old animals can have greasy, smelly, dull coats. Hairs start to lose pigment, which will show as whitening around the muzzle, eyes and feet. Older animals experience a sensory deprivation with a decreased sense of sight, sound, smell and taste. A poor sense of smell and taste can suppress an old animal's appetite. Whilst a loss of vision and hearing can result in elderly pets being easily startled and disorientated. Elderly pets experience an increased incidence of dental disease and reduced efficiency of digestion resulting in flatulence and constipation. Lots to look forward to!!

The good news is that although these conditions can't be cured many can be helped. Regular senior pet checks by your vet can help identify specific problems. Early detection allows the instigation of diets and medications to help slow down the progression of a condition.

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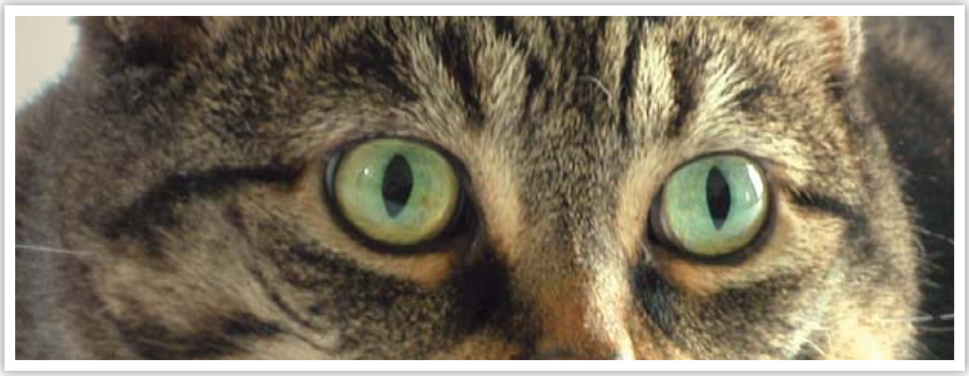
WHAT DO THEY SEE

Many people wonder how animals view the world around them. Is it in shades of grey, or do they see the vibrant colours that our eyes can detect? Plenty of evidence now suggests that cats and dogs do see in colour, but without the vividness and wide colour spectrum available to the human eye. Animals live in a more pastel world.

The reason for this difference lies at the back of the eye, an area called the retina. Here special cells, known as rods and cones, are found. The sensitivity and ratio of these cells is different in animals when compared to humans, resulting in highly efficient vision in dim lighting with a narrower colour range. Dogs see mainly yellow and blue hues and can differentiate between shades of grey so subtle that they would appear as one colour to us. Cats see some colours but their speciality is vision in low light, where their eye is up to 130 times more efficient than ours. Both dogs and cats have difficulty seeing close objects but their sense of smell and taste more than compensate.



NO PURRS FOR THE POISONOUS LILY

If you have an interest in floral arrangements and felines then beware - cats and lilies do not mix. The many varieties of ornamental lily are severely toxic to cats. All parts of the lily are poisonous and as little as two to three leaves can kill a cat. After ingestion, poisoned cats become lethargic, anorexic and may vomit. These symptoms can then progress to complete renal failure. Early and aggressive treatment is required to prevent this catastrophic chain of events. Perhaps this is one time when fake flowers are more appealing then the real thing.

ENRICH YOUR BIRD'S WORLD

Many bird species kept as pets, particularly parrots, are highly intelligent and very sensitive to their environment. Being a bright spark is all well and good when you can explore the wide world, but can become a problem when you are confined to a cage or aviary. Caging a bird inherently places it in an abnormal world, away from a flock and all the social interaction that entails. Food is provided on tap, caging or trimming of wings often prevents flight, and natural behaviours are altered.

Birds become bored easily and can also develop unnaturally close bonds with owners, to the point where they consider them a mate. This creates stress when the owner is away for long periods. Stress and boredom potentiate many medical and behavioural problems. One of the most commonly seen behaviours in stressed birds is feather picking - where the bird tugs out feathers, usually from over the breast, leg and wing tips. Habits such as feather picking are difficult to break and, left unchecked, can result in an alarmingly naked bird. Much can be done to improve a bird's mental health and reduce stress and boredom.

1. APPROPRIATE CAGING

Many birdcages are inappropriate and a direct cause of stress. Tall cylindrical cages may look pretty but, as birds are not helicopters, they do not allow space for flight. Cages can be placed in a window or near a busy thoroughfare so that the bird has plenty to see. Cages should also have a less exposed area that will allow the bird to hide from its environment if it should feel intimidated. As an example, a canary kept in an office had a morbid fear of the fax machine and started pulling all the feathers from his wing tips. Pushing the cage against the wall and providing a small compartment to hide behind, so the bird did not feel completely exposed, solved the problem.

Radios and television can also be used to provide background noise when you are not at home. Perches should be of different diameter and preferably of natural wood with lots of bark to be shredded off. The cage layout should be changed regularly.

2. ENCOURAGE FORAGING BEHAVIOUR

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 provided – reaching the 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.

3. EXERCISE AND TRAINING

Parrots can quickly learn to 'step up' onto your finger and 'step down' back to a perch on command. This home step-aerobics helps reinforce the owner as boss whilst simultaneously stimulating some mental gymnastics.

4. TOYS

Provide a variety of toys and rotate them. Include 'destructible' toys, such as wooden clothes pegs and leather strips that can be chewed. Hide food inside toys to encourage play.

5. DAILY MISTING

Lightly spraying the feathers with a fine mist of water encourages natural grooming behaviour and can help direct a bird's attention away from damaged areas.

IMPORTANT

Any bird that is feather picking should always be checked by your veterinarian as there are many conditions besides behavioural problems which can result in feather loss.

TREAT MY PET - SEIZURES

For a cat or dog owner, there is almost nothing as terrifying as watching your beloved pet have a seizure. Luckily, most pets recover well spontaneously, allowing time for diagnostic tests and therapy where required. A seizure is a loss or derangement of consciousness. A 'classic' or 'grand mal seizure' involves loss of consciousness with jerking or convulsing of the body. 'Focal' seizures may involve repetitive whisker twitching, facial jerks or abnormal limb posturing. Behaviours such as fly chasing or tail chasing, although just a quirk in some pets, can also indicate an underlying disorder.

Seizures have many potential causes and even after initial tests, your vet may not be able to tell you what caused your pet's symptoms. Vets classify the underlying causes as extracranial (from outside the brain), or intracranial (from within the brain). Causes of extracranial seizures can be further divided into those from the body (e.g. liver failure, low blood sugar) and those that arise externally (e.g. toxins, overheating). Intracranial causes of seizures include progressive disease (e.g. cancer or infection) and non-progressive disease such as epilepsy, where the symptoms may progress but the underlying disease does not.

A pet presenting in 'status epilepticus', who has constant seizures, requires intensive emergency care prior to diagnostic testing. Your vet will want to know your pet's history, especially if there has been exposure to toxins such as snail pellets, other organophosphates (pesticides), caffeine, chocolate etc. Any other change in their health might also give clues as to the origin of the seizure.

Initial blood and urine tests will look for organ disease, abnormal glucose levels and sometimes tests for specific infectious diseases. Where no abnormality is found, more invasive tests can be done. A cerebro-spinal fluid (CSF) tap is a sample of the fluid that bathes the brain, and is done under general anaesthetic. It is not without risk, and is generally only done when a diagnosis of progressive intracranial disease is suspected. Advanced imaging includes computerised tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans which may show abnormality in the structure of the brain.

Treatment of a seizure depends on the cause. If the diagnosis points to an extracranial cause such as liver disease or low blood sugar, the focus will be on treating the disease in order to improve the seizures. Seizure control therapy might include drugs such as diazepam (Valium), phenobarbitone and potassium bromide. Drugs such as corticosteroids and antibiotics might be used for specific intracranial diseases.

Prognosis depends largely on the cause of the seizure. A dog with stable, infrequent epilepsy may not even need medication. On the other hand, a pet with a brain tumour might need lifelong veterinary care. In many cases, the decision to treat is made by the owners based on the frequency and severity of the seizures. A dog with a brain tumour and a poor prognosis will, in most cases, have palliative treatment. However even dogs can have brain surgery for tumours (where the facilities and surgical and critical care expertise allow)!

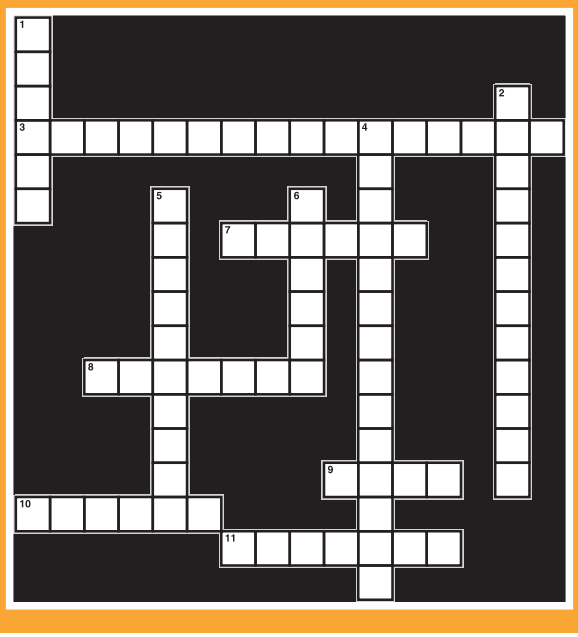
Clever CROSSWORD

Across:

3. Another word for pesticides.
7. What hue, other than blue, do dogs mainly see in?
8. What is a loss or derangement of consciousness.
9. What flower can be toxic to cats?
10. What is in the area at the back of the eye?
11. A common stressed behaviour of birds can be feather _____.

Down:

1. Cats and dogs do see in _____
2. What sort of toys should be provided for birds?
4. What is dermatitis specific to the feet is known as?
5. Radios and _____ can also be used to provide background noise for birds.
6. What is a film across the teeth?



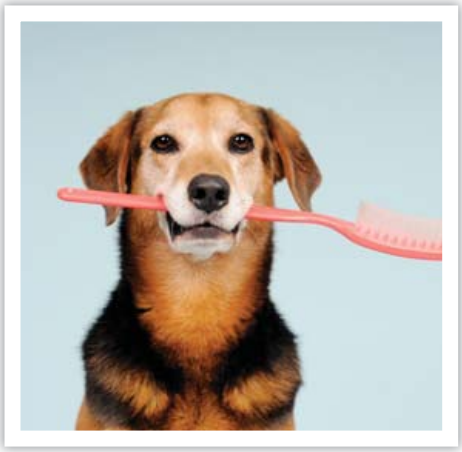
EACH OF THE WORDS CAN BE FOUND IN THIS ISSUE OF "YOUR VET". ANSWERS ARE SHOWN ON BOTTOM OF THE BACK PAGE.

FOOT-SORE GUINEA PIGS

Dermatitis specific to the feet is known as pododermatitis and is a common problem in pet guinea pigs. Guinea pigs have little footpads on the soles of all four feet. With constant abrasion on harsh bedding, particularly in wire-bottomed cages, the skin becomes thickened and hardened. This damaged skin cracks and ulcerates and then is invaded by bacteria to form nasty, non-healing sores. Eventually the lesions can become so deep that tendons and bones are exposed. Obese guinea pigs are particularly susceptible.

This condition is painful and notoriously difficult to treat. Affected feet may be treated with antibacterial foot soaks, antibiotics, bandaging and pain relief. Fat animals need to be gradually dieted by avoiding all concentrates and pellets and just feeding hay and dark leafy greens. Avoid wire-bottomed cages and use a soft substrate such as hay or grass.

BRUSH BRUSH BRUSH



Studies have shown that a significant number of cats and dogs over the age of three years have serious dental disease. One of the key ways to prevent dental disease is daily tooth brushing. Regular brushing removes plaque that can begin to accumulate within 12 hours of eating. Plaque is a film across the teeth, which contains bacteria. A build up of plaque can become calcified. Calcified plaque, or calculus, irritates the gums and can cause infection beneath the gum line. This deep infection can loosen the roots of teeth and may even spread to other parts of the body including the heart and kidneys.

Dental home care needs to begin as early as possible. Start by gently getting the young animal used to having its mouth and face handled. Stroke under the chin, then gradually lift up the lips and insert your finger along the gum line. As most dental disease occurs on the outside surfaces of the teeth, don't worry if your pet will not let you open its mouth to access the inside surfaces of the teeth.

Once your pet is used to having its mouth handled, a toothbrush can be introduced. Use a very soft baby's toothbrush or a finger brush and work in small circular movements. Care needs to be taken not to scrub too vigorously, as pet gums – like ours – are sensitive to brush trauma. Owners should aim to brush teeth at least once a day after eating. The process can be made more pleasant by using pet-friendly flavoured toothpaste. Popular varieties include shrimp, poultry and beef flavour. A reward such as a bouncy game with a toy can also follow to complete the daily routine.

In addition to brushing, there are some excellent products on the market to help your pet's teeth stay healthy and their breath sweet. Some foods are designed as a kibble with fibres arranged in such a way as to provide a good abrasive action on the teeth. There are special chews and mouthwashes containing antibacterial substances to help prevent the build up of plaque. Abrasive foods such as bones and rawhide chews can be used but, as there are potential complications with these products, owners should check with their vet first. Your pet's annual check-up provides an excellent opportunity for your vet to check their teeth and locate troublesome areas.

CLAW WARS

Clawing in cats is a natural, instinctual behaviour that helps remove old claw sheaths and acts as a marking behaviour. As many frustrated cat owners will testify, these natural behaviours are all well and good until they involve systematic destruction of your furniture!

There are several options that owners can adopt. Firstly, provide a highly desirable alternative to the sofa in the form of a scratching post. Scratching posts can be anything from a wooden log to carpeted constructions. They can be made more appealing by using dangling toys and catnip and praising and stroking the cat when they use the post. Cats often scratch on waking so the scratching post should be placed close to the sleeping area.

If owners can catch their cat in the act of destroying the furniture then they should employ some deterrent. Screeching, shouting, hand claps and water spray bottles can all be effective in stopping the behaviour. Double sided sticky tape or contact (applied with the sticky side outwards) can be placed onto the furniture to decrease its appeal.

There are products available that can be glued to the cat's claws and act as a small protective sheath over each claw. These can be quiet effective but do rely on a compliant cat, as they have to be replaced regularly.

If the above fails then consider re upholstering the sofa- but use a smooth, tightly woven fabric, as this will be less appealing to your cat!

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

Across: 3. Organophosphates; **7.** Yellow; **8.** Seizure; **9.** Lily; **10.** Retina; **11.** Picking.

Down: 1. Colour; **2.** Destructible; **4.** Pododermatitis; **5.** Television; **6.** Plaque.

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.

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.