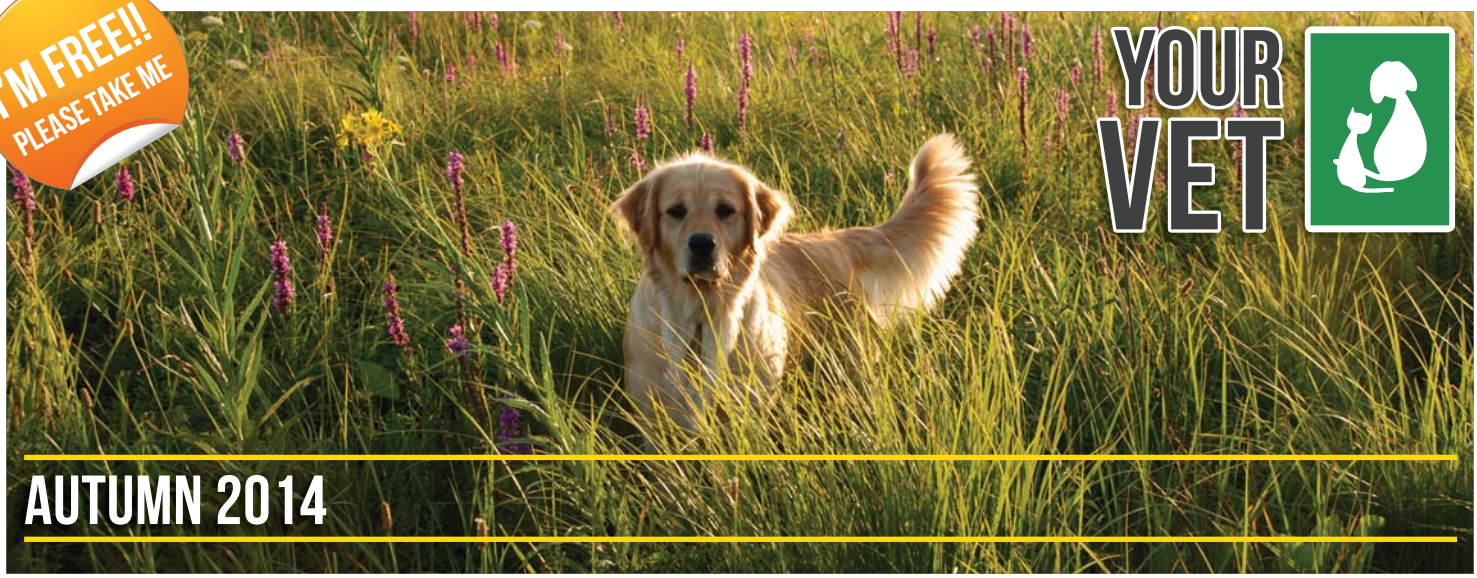

CITY.BEACH Veterinarians

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OUR VETS:

Dr Neville Robertson
BVSc(Syd), MVS(Murd)

Dr Alan Wade
BSc, BVMS(Murd)

Dr Meg Green
BSc, BVMS(Hons)

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	7.30 am to 7 pm
Saturday	8.30 am 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 Specialists Emergency Care (PVS-EC) on 9204 0400. This is a dedicated local emergency centre in Perth Vet Specialists centre 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**

HIND LEG WEAKNESS

Vets are commonly presented with a pet that has hind limb weakness. Sometimes this occurs suddenly and is very obvious. In some circumstances, the changes come on slowly and may only be noticed by the vet during routine examination. This is especially common in older pets where hind limb weakness is seen as part of ageing and often perceived to be 'normal' by the owners. These pets may be reluctant or unable to do things they used to (jump on the bed/sofa, leap up retaining walls), be slowing down on walks, or have difficulty in rising.

When a pet presents with hind limb weakness, whether acute or chronic, a thorough history of the problem will be taken. This includes vaccination status, travel history (particularly in the eastern states in Australia where paralysis ticks are endemic), diet and supplements, previous surgeries or illnesses, medications or possible toxins. Speed of onset of symptoms is pertinent. In rapid onset, a toxin may be suspected, whereas a gradual development of symptoms suggests a chronic disease of some form.

As well as physical examination of all the limbs, the movement of limbs and joints are assessed at various walking speeds. Your vet will check to see if the pet is trying to carry more weight on the front limbs (more likely with bony or joint pain than true weakness) or if there is a 'hip hike' on one side. We also do a full physical examination looking for a systemic (body-wide) cause of the weakness, as well as a neurological assessment, checking reflexes, muscle tone and whether your pet knows where his feet are all the time. Your vet will need to assess whether the weakness is due to an orthopaedic (bony) or joint problem, a neurological (nerve) problem, a muscle problem or a metabolic problem.

Overall, the following conditions are just some that appear as hind limb weakness: hip dysplasia, hip arthritis, knee arthritis, knee ligament rupture, spinal arthritis, pelvic or spinal trauma, spinal cord disease, snake bite, tick paralysis, metabolic disturbances, anaemia, low blood oxygen, and disease of the junctions between nerve and muscle.

In many dogs, chronic, bilateral (both sides) arthritis of the hips or knees will present as weakness. Sometimes a trial of arthritis medication will clarify the diagnosis. However, if the cause of weakness is uncertain, further tests may be suggested. These may include blood tests and x-rays or more advanced imaging such as contrast x-rays, CT or MRI scans where available. In emergency cases of hind limb weakness, diagnosis may come second to emergency therapy. If snakebite or tick paralysis (a regionally variable risk) is suspected, urgent treatment is required.

If your pet develops signs of weakness in the back legs, either gradually or suddenly, a thorough examination by your vet as soon as possible is advisable for diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

INSIDE

- DEALING WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS
- CLEVER CROSSWORD
- ASSISTANCE DOGS
- HIGH PRESSURED FELINES
- INFECTIONS OF THE BLADDER IN CATS & SOME DOGS
- PHOTO COMPETITION
- PRECOCIOUS GUINEA PIGS

DEALING WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative joint disease that can be quite painful, making movement difficult. Most of the joints in the body depend on a layer of cartilage acting as a cushion which also provides a smooth surface so the adjoining bones can move freely over each other. With arthritis, the cartilage deteriorates so that movement of bones becomes less smooth.

It is estimated that 20% of all dogs over the age of one year have some degree of osteoarthritis. This is usually a result of wear and tear on the joint cartilage but can be secondary to underlying problems such as hip dysplasia (a genetic disease where there is an abnormal shallowing of the hip socket) and luxating patellae (dislocating kneecaps). Both of these are common inherited conditions.

Signs that indicate your dog could have arthritis include:

- reluctance to play
- difficulty getting up, climbing stairs or jumping up or down
- limping or stiffness in the legs
- lameness
- repeatedly licking at a joint
- yelping in pain when touched

Osteoarthritis is a progressive condition that cannot be cured medically. There are however many things you can do to help control and slow its progress. These areas include weight control, exercise, medication, massage and environment.

WEIGHT CONTROL

Obesity can contribute to arthritis, as the joint must carry a greater load than that for which it was designed. It is therefore imperative that you keep your dog's weight under control.

Although a pet of normal weight may have OA in one joint as a result of past trauma, the majority of pets have OA in multiple joints as a result of increased body fat. Pets are considered obese if they are 20-30% over their ideal weight.

EXERCISE

Exercise can strengthen the muscles and ligaments, thus reducing the risk of injury. Controlled exercise such as leash walking and swimming helps maintain muscle bulk without putting the joints under excessive strain.

MEDICATION

See your vet for advice on appropriate medications such as anti-inflammatories and chondroprotective agents. These can be administered as pills, liquids or as an injection. Never administer human anti-inflammatories to animals – some of them have serious (or even fatal) side effects.

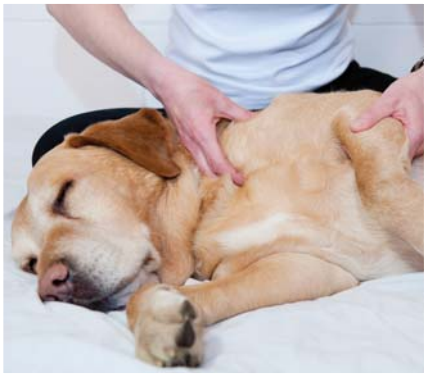
MASSAGE

Massage can increase flexibility and circulation. Massaging around the affected joints helps, as does a range of passive movement exercises. These involve gently bending the joint to its point of maximum flexion and extension.

ENVIRONMENT

During winter, pets need extra care. Make sure they have a warm protected bed, away from winter chills and rain. The bed should be padded so as not to put excess strain on the joints.

To determine whether your dog has OA, it is best to make an appointment with your vet for a full physical examination and assessment. This is important to ensure a proper diagnosis of osteoarthritis is made, as other conditions can mimic this condition. Your vet will be able to discuss the various treatments available and the best treatment options for your dog.



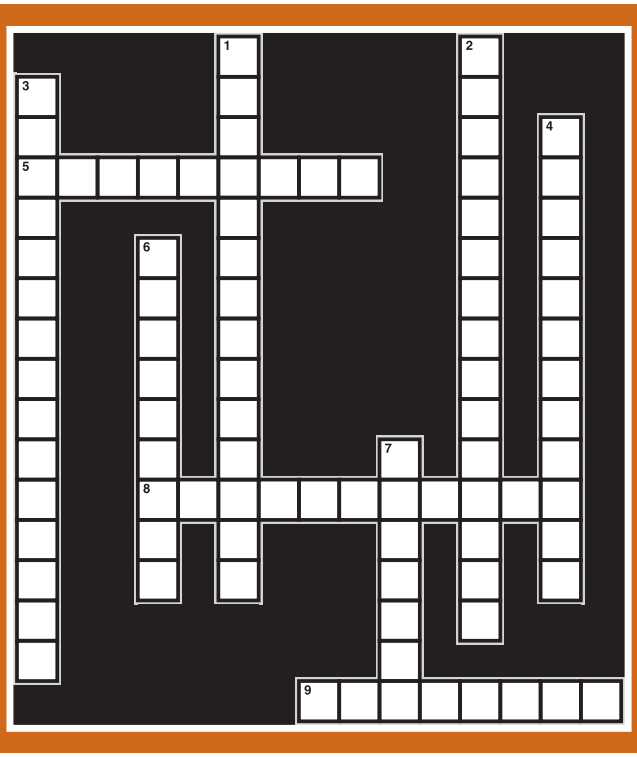
Clever CROSSWORD

ACROSS

5. (both sides)
8. (bony)
9. What can strengthen the muscles and ligaments, thus reducing the risk of injury?

DOWN

1. What is is a degenerative joint disease?
2. An over active thyroid gland is...
3. What will the gap in a young Guinea pig's pelvic bone fill with?
4. (nerve)
6. Assistance Dogs Australia train _____ and golden retrievers to help people suffering from physical disabilities.
7. What can increase flexibility and circulation?



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

ASSISTANCE DOGS

Most of us know about Guide Dogs and the wonderful work they do for humanity. We know that these magnificent animals bring so much joy and independence to people who might otherwise be denied it. But how many of us know about the important work of Assistance Dogs Australia?

This charity is involved in the training of labradors and golden retrievers to help people suffering from physical disabilities. The tasks they perform include opening doors, picking up items, and even pressing road-crossing buttons. The dogs ultimately give their owner more confidence and independence, and help relieve some of the loneliness and isolation that disabled people sometimes experience.

One of the goals of Assistance Dogs Australia is to eventually place up to 100 dogs per year!

If the thought of helping this valuable service appeals to you, there are ways you can help. You can sponsor a puppy financially, for about the cost of a cup of coffee a day! You could enrol to 'puppy raise' a pup for up to 18 months in your home. All of its major expenses are covered, and you have the pleasure of time with the dog, and the brilliant feeling of knowing you are helping someone in the future. However, to qualify for puppy raising, you cannot be working full time and your children need to be school age or older. If you like the idea of helping, but can't commit to puppy raising, you could become a puppy sitter or a puppy socialiser.

Assistance Dogs Australia have centres across Australia and have all sorts of ways that you can get involved, so if supporting a wonderful charity based on the power of the human-animal bond appeals to you, why not get in touch and see how you could help.

For more information, please check out **www.assistancedogs.org.au**.

HIGH PRESSURED FELINES

Just like us, our feline friends can suffer from high blood pressure. This is usually a condition of older cats and can occur on its own or secondary to other elderly cat diseases such as kidney failure and hyperthyroidism (an over active thyroid gland). Whatever the cause, the end result is a consistently high blood pressure or hypertension. Prolonged elevation of blood pressure can cause sudden blindness, bleeding into the eyeball, dilated pupils, kidney damage, nosebleeds and fitting.

Whilst high blood pressure can be measured using specialised machines, interpreting the results can sometimes be difficult. A syndrome known as "white coat hypertension" readily occurs in cats. The stress of cat carriers, car rides to the vet and being attached to a monitor and asked to stay still can raise a cat's blood pressure to falsely high levels. Several readings are taken to ensure the most accurate result.

Treatment of hypertension involves treating any underlying disease and using drugs to help dilate the blood vessels. If your cat is placed on blood pressure medication by your vet, make sure you keep up with follow up checks, as the dose of medication often requires adjustment.

INFECTIONS OF THE BLADDER IN CATS & SOME DOGS

With Autumn right around the corner your cat is more likely to develop a bladder infection. Cats who are more reluctant to go out in changing weather to wee outside, will often get retention cystitis. This is very common in cats and some dogs and the following are some ways to help you deal with bladder infections and some early warning signs.

Firstly, male cats can get a totally obstructed urethra within hours from bladder stones caused by bladder infections, so if you see your cat or dog repeatedly straining to urinate, they must be taken immediately to your veterinarian. Bladder obstructions are serious and can cause death very quickly. Female cats have a wider urethra so can more often be treated safely at home. However, we strongly recommend having your vet take a look if this is the first time they've had this problem.

URINE

To help naturally treat and prevent bladder infections, your cat or dog needs acidic urine. Acidic urine will dissolve bladder stones and make bacterial infection very unlikely, as the bacteria cannot usually survive in acidic urine. Make sure they have plenty of water to drink and mix in a pinch or teaspoon of ascorbic acid powder twice daily. Make sure you use this acidic form of vitamin C (sodium ascorbate or calcium ascorbate are respectively alkaline or neutral so cannot be used). Acidifying the urine can drastically decrease the chances of cystitis.

DIET

Studies have shown that mixing your cats diet with dry and wet food can help a cat get the hydration it may lack by drinking water alone. Some dried foods are specifically made for this type of condition and are more acidic and contain less magnesium (a component of bladder stones). Feeding your cat wet food is a much better option if they are experiencing this problem. Try raw meat, as is produces acidic urine a few hours after it's eaten, giving the bladder a nice wash out.

For the best results for treating bladder infections, you should definitely contact your veterinarian and begin treatments, with ongoing monitoring of urine.

PLAY TIME PHOTO COMPETITION: BE IN TO WIN A $50 SHOPPING VOUCHER

Send us a photo of your pet enjoying their play time and you could be a winner.

Simply email us a picture of your pet enjoying their play time to: cliniccompetitions@gmail.com.

Don't forget to tell us your pets name, your name, address, phone number and the clinic you attend. Please make the subject heading 'Autumn Pet Competition'.

The winner will have their photo displayed in the next issue of Your vet and get to choose from either **Woolworths, JB Hi Fi** or **Dymocks Book Stores.**

Entries must be received by 30/04/2014.

THAT'S IT! GOOD LUCK!

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 can get 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.

IS YOUR PET FAT?

Many owners find it difficult to assess whether their pet's weight is within healthy limits. There are charts available for pedigree dogs that recommend weight ranges for bitches and dogs of that specific breed. These must only be used as a guide as there is always significant individual variation. Regular weighing of the pet can also help determine whether there is a gradual trend towards obesity.

Another excellent method of assessing an animal is the condition score. This involves running your hands over the animal's ribs and hip bones. The bones should be easy to feel but not visibly stand out. The pet should also nip in at the waist and abdomen. An animal in perfect condition is scored a 3 out of 5. A skeletal, emaciated animal is a 1; while an obese, coffee table of an animal is deemed a 5. Ask your vet to help you assess your pet!

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

Across: 5. Bilateral; **8.** Orthopaedic; **9.** Exercise.

Down: 1. Osteoarthritis; **2.** Hyperthyroidism; **3.** Fibro-cartilage; **4.** Neurological; **6.** Labradors; **7.** Massage.

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.