WINTER 2011

Your Vet

FREE! Please take one

CITY.BEACH Veterinarians

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Our Vets

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

DR ALAN WADE
BSc, BVMS(Murd)

DR SARAH ALEXANDER
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

Winter woe – Giving your pet extra care in winter

Winter has arrived. The nights are getting longer, the days are getting shorter and our pets are getting stiffer. The colder weather of winter often exacerbates the symptoms of arthritis. Dogs may be reluctant to run, experience intermittent lameness and have stiffness on rising. Arthritic cats may have difficulty jumping onto furniture. Often they experience bad hair days along their back, as the twisting movements required in grooming are painful. Some arthritic cats may also appear grumpy.

There are all kinds of arthritis (septic, rheumatoid, etc.) but the arthritis we refer to here is the most common of all – *osteoarthritis*, or degenerative joint disease. 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 and luxating patellae (dislocating kneecaps) – both common inherited conditions.

Osteoarthritis is a progressive condition but there are many things we can do to help control and slow its progress. 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 side effects, including death! 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. Controlled exercise such as leash walking and swimming helps maintain muscle bulk without putting the joints under excessive strain. Extreme sports such as ball chasing, frisbee catching, jumping and rough housing with other dogs should be avoided. Obese animals should be placed on a diet.

The winter weather brings along special challenges for our cats and dogs. While a healthy young pet with a good coat of fur will not usually find winter too hard to bear, with a few simple changes or additions to their housing arrangements we can significantly improve their comfort this season.

Most pets that sleep inside will, in the cooler months, only require a thicker and deeper bed than usual. 'Igloo' type beds are ideal for cats because they provide a soft underlay plus an outer soft shell that helps trap the natural warmth generated by the cat. This also helps to alleviate the effect of any cold breezes coming into the house, common especially when beds are at floor level. An indoor dog likewise might just need a softer, deeper mat than usual, perhaps one with raised edges.

Outside pets, or older pets, may face extra challenges depending on the weather conditions where they live. In Australia, our winters range from warm and balmy to windy, icy and snowy, and climatic conditions can even vary slightly from suburb to suburb, and house to house! Adapt your pet's surroundings to your local 'microclimate'.

During winter, our pets need extra care. Make sure they have a warm protected bed, away from winter chills and rain. Consider taking them to the vet for a winter 'check up'. This is especially important for older pets, who may struggle through the long, cold nights.

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

- Brush Brush Brush
- Beware - cold and flu remedies
- 'Mangy' guinea pigs

inside

Symptoms of disease

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 homecare 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.

NEW Competition for our readers!

Be in the running to WIN a $50 shopping voucher

1) Just write the name of the feature/ article that you enjoyed most in this issue:

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2) Tick the box next to your preferred voucher below:

- ☐ Coles Myer Ltd
- ☐ Target Australia Ltd
- ☐ K Mart Australia Ltd
- ☐ Dymocks Book Stores
- ☐ JB Hi Fi

3) 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

Must be received by latest post marked 31/07/2011 to be in the running

The winner of the Autumn competition was C. Conti of VIC.

THAT'S IT! GOOD LUCK!

Beware – cold and flu remedies

As winter approaches, the rivers of sniffles and sneezes herald the flu season. The viruses that cause these ailments in humans are highly contagious to other people but do not affect cats and dogs. However, the medications that we take to relieve our symptoms can result in lethal side effects if ingested by our pets. Crinkly foil-wrapped pills fascinate cats, and especially young dogs, and a fun chewing game can end in the disastrous ingestion of drugs such as *paracetamol* and *ibuprofen*.

Paracetamol causes liver failure and damages red blood cells so that they lose the ability to efficiently transport oxygen around the body. Symptoms of poisoning can occur within 4 hours of ingestion, especially in cats, who are exquisitely sensitive to its toxic affects. The animal's gums will lose their normal reddish colour and become blue. They may have difficulty breathing, become depressed, have vomiting and diarrhoea and their feet and face may swell. Seizure and coma can develop and death from liver failure usually occurs 2-6 days later. *Ibuprofen* is a potent anti-inflammatory drug which, when ingested in toxic amounts, causes gut ulceration and kidney failure.

If you suspect your pet has ingested human medications, seek veterinary advice immediately. In theory, treatment for ingestion of these chemicals is possible, however successful treatment relies on early detection and aggressive therapy. Treat your pet as you would a baby and keep any medications locked away.

Emergency!

'Mangy' Guinea Pigs

Mange is the most common reason for a guinea pig to be presented to a vet. It is caused by a small mite that lives in the outer layers of the skin. The mite is transmitted by direct contact with infected guinea pigs and can often lie dormant for years. Stressors such as pregnancy, poor husbandry, poor nutrition or a change in environment can then trigger an outbreak of the disease.

Guinea pigs with mange are incredibly itchy, especially along their back. In the early stages of the disease, all that may be seen (and heard!) is the cranky 'chunterings' and 'ticklishness' of the guinea pig when the strip of hair along his back is played with. This soon progresses to hair loss and crusting skin along the back and shoulders. The intense itchiness of mange causes the guinea pig to scratch aggressively with his back legs to the point that lacerations and scabs soon appear over the affected area.

Severely affected guinea pigs will itch in such a frenzied way that they can start fitting.

There are many different treatments available from your vet to kill the mites. In addition, your guinea pig may require vitamin C supplementation and a special shampoo to lift off the scabs and crusts. It is recommended that all contact animals are treated and the cage is thoroughly cleaned.

Clever Crossword

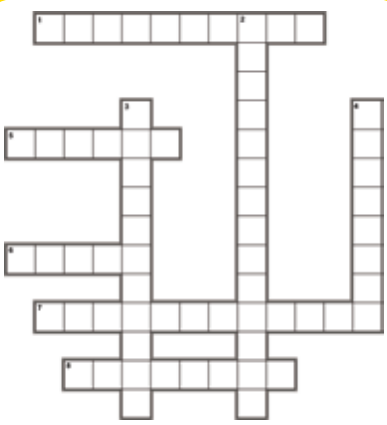
Each of the words can be found in this issue of "Your Vet". Answers are shown on bottom of back page.

Across:

1. Type of arthritis
5. This French veterinarian devised a new way to calculate your pet's chronological age
6. Common disease in guinea pigs
7. This avian disease is also known as psittacosis or parrot fever
8. This means that the disease can be transmitted from animals to humans

Down:

2. Degenerative joint disease
3. This medication for humans may cause liver failure and damage red blood cells when ingested by pets
4. Calcified plaque



How old is your pet?

Vets are often flummoxed during a consultation when, after asking the question, "How old is he?" they are given the answer "75". Owners commonly convert their pet's age into human years – multiplying by seven for a dog and nine for a cat.

Using this old formula is simple and easy to remember, but it does not give an accurate calculation when comparing a pet's age to humans. For example, a two-year-old cat or dog is considered an adult, whereas a fourteen-year-old teenager still has a long way to go before becoming an adult.

In the 1950s, a French veterinarian named Monsieur LeBeau devised a new method to calculate your pet's chronological age. According to his formula, a one-year-old pet has matured at the same level as a 15-year-old human. At age two, your pet has reached maturity and is chronologically the same as a 24-year-old human. Every year after two, add 4 human years to 24. A three-year-old pet is therefore 28 (24 + 4).

In dogs, there is also a considerable variation in longevity between breeds. Generally, the smaller the breed, the longer they live. A Jack Russell Terrier may happily survive to his late teens whilst a Great Dane is looking decidedly geriatric at the age of 8 years.

While it is fun to know the relative age of your pet in human years, it can also help you to understand your pet's needs as they get older. Proper nutrition, exercise, mental stimulation and regular vet care are very important and will help to keep your pet healthy and live a long and happy life.

Avian Chlamydiosis

Chlamydiosis (also known as psittacosis or parrot fever) is an infrequent disease of many bird species and is caused by the organism *Chlamydophila psittaci*. This infection is generally referred to as avian chlamydiosis (AC) in birds and psittacosis in humans.

Avian chlamydiosis is a zoonotic disease, which means that the disease can be transmitted from animals to humans. The illness in people is usually respiratory and characterised by flu-like symptoms.

Recognition of the disease in birds can be difficult without pathology testing. An infected bird may display one or several of the following symptoms: eye discharge or swelling, respiratory problems (such as laboured breathing), diarrhoea, weight loss, poor appetite, lethargy or weakness. A big problem in controlling the disease is that a bird may be infected, but not show any symptoms.

Transmission between birds is primarily through inhalation of contaminated faecal or feather dust.

Any stress such as transportation, malnutrition, concurrent illness, poor ventilation, overcrowding and breeding can cause shedding of the organism. Therefore, prevention is most effective by providing a healthy diet and suitable housing for your birds to their keep stress levels as low as possible.

There is no vaccine available to prevent the disease and treatment is usually based on antibiotics, which can be administered via drops in the water, or by injections. Antibiotic dosage and treatment should be directed by your veterinarian to ensure the appropriate course of therapy is undertaken and followed.

Fun facts about birds

Ratites are a category of large, flightless birds. However, unlike other flightless birds, the ratites do not have a keel on their sternum (breastbone). Without this to anchor their wing muscles, they could not fly even if they were to develop suitable wings.

- The African Ostrich is the largest living ratite and also the largest bird in the world. It weighs up to 160 kg and stands almost 3 m high.
- The ostrich is native to Africa, yet thrives in countries all over the world.
- Of the living species, the emu is the second largest bird in the world after the ostrich and the largest bird in Australia. It can reach up to two metres in height. Like the ostrich, it belongs to the family of ratites.
- An emu is able to swim when necessary.
- Emus can run at speeds up to 45 km/hr!
- The smallest ratites are the five species of kiwi from New Zealand. Kiwis are chicken-sized, shy, and nocturnal.
- Kiwis cannot fly, and live in burrows on the ground.
- Kiwis mate for life; some have been together for 30 years!

Answers to this edition's crossword:

Across: 1. Rheumatoid; 5. LeBeau; 6. Mange; 7. Chlamydiosis; 8. Zoonotic;
Down: 2. Osteoarthritis; 3. Paracetamol; 4. Calculus.

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.