YOUR VET

WINTER 2013

CITY.BEACH Veterinarians

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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**

THUNDERSTORM PHOBIAS

This winter, many parts of Australia will be lashed by thunderstorms. This may bring welcome rain for some, but for dogs with thunder phobia it means anxiety and stress. Thunder phobic dogs respond to the thunder, lightning, rain and changes in barometric pressure caused by storms with an exaggerated fear response. They may pant, whimper, tremble, hide and experience incontinence and destructive behaviours.

Any dog can have thunder phobia but it does seem more common in the herding breeds. The symptoms tend to worsen with age and owners unwittingly often reinforce the behaviour by attempting to comfort the animal during storms. This just confirms to the animal that there is indeed something happening that's worth worrying about!

Thunder phobias can be improved by desensitising affected animals to the sounds of a storm. Speak to your vet about obtaining a 'Thunder CD'. The recording is played at a very low level, or one that does not trigger a fear response. Gradually, the volume is increased until the animal can tolerate the loud noises. During this time, owners take a "jolly hockey stick" approach to their pet and neither comfort nor reprimand their animal but carry on their normal daily tasks. Because sound recordings do not mimic the other meteorological aspects of storms, such as atmospheric pressure changes, they are unlikely to actually cure a phobic dog. Medications can be used to decrease anxiety and to sedate if the pet is at risk of trauma.

Exposure of young pups to loud noises and flashes in a friendly, relaxed setting can help prevent a thunderstorm phobia developing.

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DOG MASSAGE

As in humans, massaging your dog can be a complimentary treatment for their wellbeing. It can be beneficial to the muscles, joints, digestive, nervous and immune systems of your dog. In fact massage is increasingly being used on all types of animals, such as horses, as extra treatment and therapy.

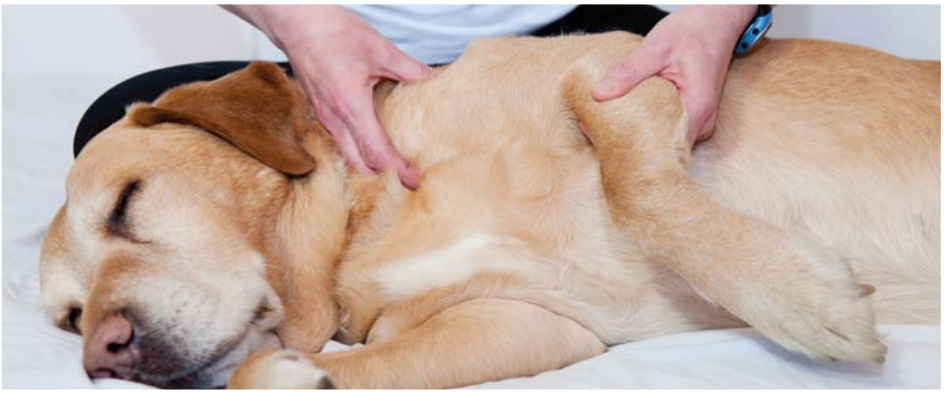
Before you start, you must make sure that your dog is in a healthy condition. Never massage a dog that is unwell, for example if they have a fever, are in shock, have cancer. It is also important to avoid areas of swelling.

Do not massage your dog directly before or after a feed. At least two hours either side is a good idea. If you have a high energy dog, it can be good to take them for a walk first so they are a little more relaxed.

To start with you are just placing your hands on the dog, saying hello and getting them comfortable with the situation. Then you can move on to the next stage. During this stage apply pressure evenly in a fluid motion across your dog's body, keeping your fingers closed and leading gently with your thumb. The warm up can be used over most of your dog's body. Here are some pointers for movements:

- Stroke all the way down the side of the dog's neck to its shoulder then to the top of its leg. Next go down the neck again and between the front legs and onto the chest.
- From the top of the shoulder move down the shoulder to the top of the leg. Then massage all the way down both sides of the spine.
- After the spine begin from the top of your dog's back leg moving down to the front leg and massage.
- The next stage is under your dog's tail and including all of the muscular area of their back leg.
- Repeat these movements on the other side.

There are a few variations and techniques that you might like to look into trying out such as Passive Touch and Petrissage (kneading, skin rolling and light pinching). You can find instructional videos and tips to help your technique and find what works best for you and your pet. Check out How to Massage your Dog at www.monkeysee.com/play/2163-how-to-massage-your-dog.



TIPS FOR DEALING WITH 'BITEY' PUPS

A pup's main tool of exploration is his mouth and a set of pointy baby teeth. These can make any boisterous puppy game a painful experience for their owner, so pups need to be taught acceptable play behaviour.

When mouthing behaviour becomes nippy or too exuberant, use a short sharp verbal command such as "NO" or "BA" Hopefully this will stop the pup in his tracks and give you a moment to regroup. Remove your hands from his mouth, ask him to sit and reward him with a treat and a pat. If the pup has progressed past the point of listening, he should be placed in a 'time-out' area, such as the laundry, to settle down until he can play nicely again.

Never hit a puppy, especially on his nose or around his face. This creates head-shy animals, who may bite from fear when hands approach them.

Provide suitable toys as substitutes for hands. Pups need to learn that toys are acceptable to chew on but hands are not.

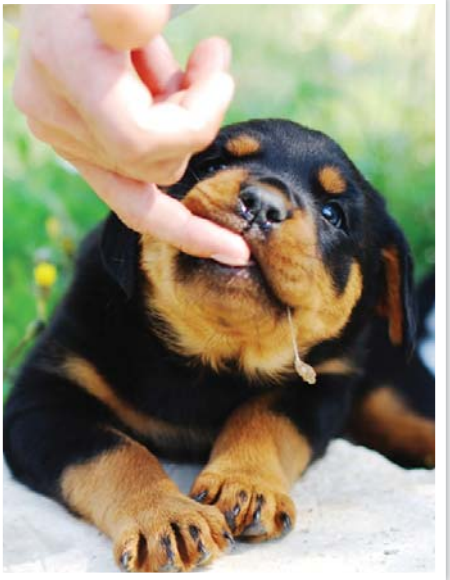
Encourage retrieving games but avoid tug-of-war games. It is highly likely that you will tire of tug-of –war long before your puppy does. He will perceive your eventual disinterest as a 'win' which, in his mind, elevates him in the family hierarchy.

As tempting as floppy jowls are, avoid grabbing them and rough-housing with your pup. This tends to cause over excitement, and stimulates mouthing behaviour.

Children also need to be taught how to behave around puppies. The squealing and flapping arm movements of excited children stimulates puppies to mouth and jump up to try and catch the tantalising waving fingers. Get the children to tuck their hands in their armpits until the puppy is less excited, then they may pat him or use a toy to play with him.

Be sure to provide plenty of exercise and environmental enrichment (bones, chew-toys and sacrificial digging areas in the garden) for your puppy. This will alleviate boredom and may make a pup a little less likely to use you as their chew-toy and plaything.

Persevere with all of the above - young dogs can learn new tricks very quickly.



MAKE SURE YOUR BIRDS HAVE HAPPY FEET

Budgies and other caged birds can suffer from the comically named condition Bumblefoot. This disease is no laughing matter for the bird concerned and results in swollen, painful feet. Bumblefoot is caused by bacteria entering the bird's foot through damaged tissue. Birds kept in cages where the perches are all the same diameter are at increased risk of this condition because of constant pressure and wear on one particular area of their foot. Using perches with differing widths and textures will vary the point of contact with the foot and help prevent pressure areas. A tree branch (from a non toxic species) is ideal and will help keep those feet happy.

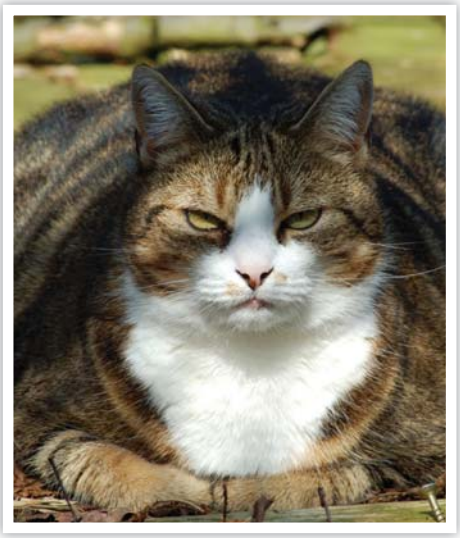
THE FAT CAT

Obesity is becoming an increasingly serious problem for our pet cats. Many cats are kept indoors and have markedly reduced activity levels. This combined with a readily available food source (delivered with minimal nagging by a kind, loving owner) often leads to a weight issue. Cats are particularly predisposed to many weight related diseases. Obesity causes insulin resistance resulting in diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes). In addition, fat cats commonly suffer from arthritis and skin conditions.

Care must be taken when dieting a fat cat, as severe calorie restriction can result in a liver condition called hepatic lipidosis. Your vet will be able to recommend a suitable diet and the correct quantity to be fed each day. Use a smaller food bowl so that psychologically you are not quite so aware of the reduced amount the cat receives. This also reduces the damage when you are tempted to fill the bowl! Have a cup measure with the correct amount of food marked so that there is no guesswork with meal size. Any 'snacks' or 'treats' fed throughout the day need to come from this allotted quantity of food.

Encourage your cat to exercise. Tie feathers to string and then pull these across the floor. Use laser pointers (carefully!) to dance a little light up and down the wall for the cat to chase. Invest in catnip-stuffed pillows, jingly toys, windup mice - whatever it takes to get your cat off the sofa and trotting around.

Finally, stick with the program! Weight loss needs to be a slow, gradual affair. Use your vet's weighing scales regularly to check your cat's progress and adjust their diet accordingly.



'WOT A LOTTA' AXOLOTL

The axolotl or 'Mexican walking fish' is a rather grotesque looking amphibian, which makes a fascinating pet. Most amphibians, such as frogs, have a life cycle that involves the development of eggs into a larval stage (the tadpole) then onto an adult form (the frog), which can survive on land and in the water. The axolotl is unusual in that it is a type of salamander, which never reaches its adult form and consequently spends all its life in water. Despite being a larval form, the axolotl still reaches adulthood and is able to reproduce.

Axolotls range in size from 18-35cm and come in a variety of colours including white, grey, black, brown and a golden colour. They have exuberant, external, fluffy gills through which they breathe. They do have very basic lungs and can occasionally be seen rising to the water surface and taking a gulp of air. Their amazing ability to regenerate limbs or tails, which have been bitten off by a fellow axolotl, means they have been the subjects of much laboratory investigation.

Axolotls have many specific housing and feeding requirements. The water temperature should ideally be between 14˚ and 20˚C with minimal variation. Temperatures greater than 24˚C cause stress and predispose to disease, whilst temperatures below 14˚C slow metabolism and reduce their appetite. The base of the tank should be either fine sand or pebbles larger than 2cm, as axolotls are notorious for eating normal aquarium gravel, which can cause gut obstructions. Water filtration systems need to be appropriate for the size of the tank as both over and under-filtration can cause problems. Axolotls can be fed a combination of live and pelleted foods but prefer food that sinks rather than floats on the surface of the water.

As with any pet ownership it pays to investigate the specific needs of your new pet. Many problems are related to poor husbandry, so seek help in setting up your axolotl's tank and hopefully it will live a long and happy life.

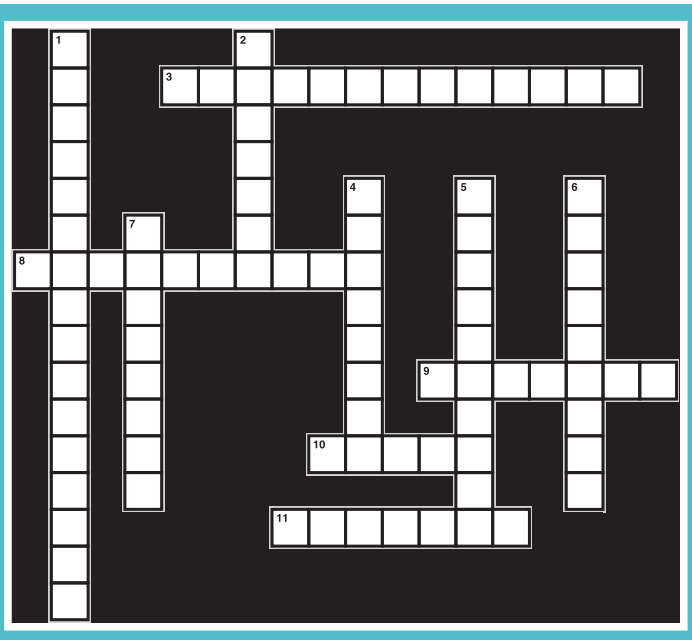
Clever CROSSWORD

ACROSS

3. What will many parts of Australia be lashed by over Winter?
8. Kneading, skin rolling and light pinching.
9. In which types of breeds of dogs is a thunder phobia more common?
10. An _____ type bed traps warmth and prevents breezes.
11. Mexican walking fish.

DOWN

1. Some dogs suffer from Flea Bite _____.
2. _____ and other caged birds can suffer from Bumblefoot.
4. Avoid areas of what when massaging your dog?
5. What condition is caused by bacteria entering a bird's foot?
6. What do fat cats commonly suffer from?
7. What is more important than bathing to keep your dogs coat in good condition?



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

SKIN DISCOMFORT IN DOGS

DRY SKIN

Dogs can be prone to more skin problems over the winter months when the temperatures are colder. Dry skin is a common problem for dogs. It is very important that if your dog is regularly scratching, the best course of action is to seek advice from your vet.

Here are some good preventative measures to try and prevent dry skin problems.

- Give your dog a bath regularly, but not excessively, just enough to keep their coat clean.
- Brushing is very important (more so than bathing). Brushing your dog often removes dead hair and spreads the natural oils through the coat. Your dog most likely will enjoy it too.
- A balanced diet and good quality dog food will help with your dog's health from the inside and this usually translates to a nice healthy coat on the outside. Ask your vet for advice about a suitable food for your dog or even if a supplement could be beneficial.

FLEA BITE HYPERSENSITIVITY

Fleas are a leading cause in pets harming themselves by over scratching and causing skin disturbances. This shows up quite often around the base of the tail. Flea Bite Hypersensitivity is caused when your pet's system over reacts to the flea's saliva. If a good quality flea treatment does not alleviate the symptoms visit your vet to make sure you have the right diagnosis and treatment for your dog.

DIETARY ALLERGIES

Some dogs develop sensitivities to parts of their diet. They can be on the same food for a long period of time and still develop sensitivity. Allergies can build up over time and not be obvious until your dog shows symptoms. It can be difficult for an owner to figure out what is causing the allergy. Quite often it is a major ingredient in the dog's food such as beef, chicken, corn, wheat. Minor ingredients such as dyes and preservatives can also prompt an allergy. Again if you suspect that food could be a cause of your dog's allergies, seek the skilled advice of your vet.

WINTER WARMTH

The winter weather brings with it special challenges for outdoor cats and dogs. While a healthy young pet with a good coat of fur will not usually find winter to 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 stop any stray breezes floating around 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 pets surroundings to your local 'microclimate'.

Good ideas include raising the bed off the floor (trampoline beds are good for this), adding soft warm bedding and a wind-break (if not a kennel, then placing the bed behind corners, out of the prevailing winds). Also, many dogs will quite happily wear a dog coat during the winter. Ready made coats come to fit all breeds, and are available at many vet clinics or local pet shops. If your dog is extra large, or an unusual shape, local horse rug makers may be able to 'custom design' your canines couture!

If you are uncertain how best to increase your pets comfort this season, pop in to see our friendly staff, and we will advise what will suit your frozen feline or chilled canine best!

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

Across: 3. Thunderstorms; **8.** Petrissage; **9.** Herding; **10.** Igloo; **11.** Axolotl.

Down: 1. Hypersensitivity; **2.** Budgies; **4.** Swelling; **5.** Bumblefoot; **6.** Arthritis; **7.** Brushing.

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.