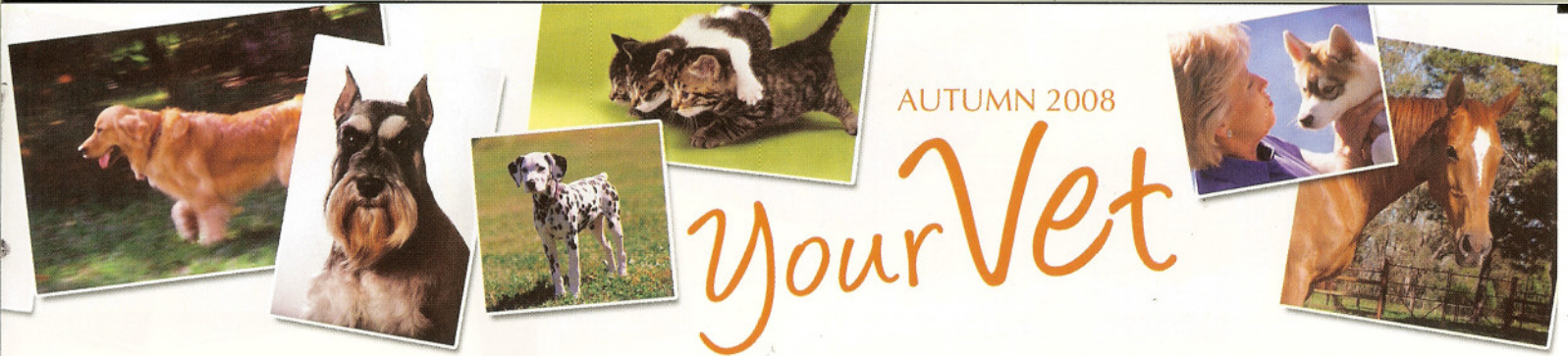


AUTUMN 2008

Your Vet



Know and not only to

Plan ahead when bringing baby home



Suites 17-19
Ocean Village Shopping Centre
Kilpa Court
City Beach WA 6015

Phone 08 9245 1977
Fax 08 9245 2136
Email cityvet@aapt.net.au
Web www.citybeachvet.com.au

Our Vets

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

DR ALAN WADE
BSc, BVMS(Murd)

Our Nurses

Debra and Tammy are our full time qualified and registered nurses. We also have three veterinary students, **Brooke, Jenna and Leah**, who work as nurses on the weekends and holidays. Our nurses are all caring and compassionate people and are committed to looking after you and your pet.

Our Hours

Monday to Friday 7.30am to 7pm
Saturday 8.30am to 4 pm
Sunday 10am to 1pm

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

After Hours

For urgent attention after hours including Public Holidays contact either Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) on 1300 652 494 or Northern Suburbs Emergency Centre on 9345 4644.

New 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.

The arrival of a new baby in the family is a joyous, amazing affair. But with this joy comes a degree of chaos and upheaval. The tiny new person requires huge adjustments to the normal routine, which may leave the furry members of the family feeling bewildered and anxious. There are lots of little ways to make the transition to a larger family a little easier for your pet.

In true Boy Scout fashion- "Be Prepared". Anticipate problems and start making your pet's routine baby friendly long before the baby arrives. This way the baby should not be directly associated with any undesirable changes.

1. Exercise. If your dog is used to frequent regular exercise, and you anticipate this will be impossible once baby arrives, start weaning the dog onto a more realistic exercise program -long before the baby arrives home. Make the most of small windows of opportunity- 10 minutes of intense stimulating ball throwing or a rough and tumble with a furry friend in the back garden is better than no exercise at all. When baby is home make sure that the baby is present during exercise and other pleasurable experiences. The dog will then associate the baby with the good times.
2. Living areas Decide where your pet's living areas will be and set limits. If pets are to be restricted to outdoors only, evict them early- long before the baby arrives. Make sure your pet has adequate shelter and is content outdoors. Provide toys, chews and even a small sacrificial patch of garden for digging. Indoors or outdoors your pet needs a bolthole,

a safe haven away from small sticky fingers where they can rest undisturbed. Baby gates are useful barriers for keeping babies and pets separated- often for the benefit of both!

3. Introducing the baby. As the big day approaches your house will be crammed with tonnes of baby paraphernalia. Hopefully your pet will have had plenty of time to sniff and get used to the strange shapes and smells of cots, prams, highchairs and soft stuffed furry mammals of all species. The final smell to get to know is that of baby itself. Bring home from the hospital some used blankets that have been in contact with your baby so your pet can become familiar with its scent. Always supervise contact between the baby and the pet.

The majority of pets dote on the new arrival and can become quite protective and bonded with "their" new baby. The key to this happy relationship is to have made all the necessary changes long before the baby arrives!



Big is beautiful with bird cages

Like many things in life, when it comes to buying a birdcage, big is better. Choose the longest cage you can afford so that your bird can stretch its wings and fly. Birds are not helicopters and cannot utilise tall narrow cages.

Ideally the cage should be metal. This is easier to clean and can't be destroyed by a parrot's sharp beak. Remember that parrots enjoy gnawing, so avoid old cages painted with lead paint or with lead welds. These pose the threat of lead toxicity for your bird. Similarly new aviaries often use galvanised mesh. The zinc coating on the wire can be ingested and cause toxicity, so it's best to scrub new wire with a vinegar and water solution prior to introducing the bird.

Birds are messy housekeepers. Removable trays at the base of the cage make the task of cleaning out droppings and seed husks far less tedious.



- The Autumn years
- More than a tummy ache
- Another kind of grief



There's another kind of grief

Many pet owners have experienced the sorrow that goes hand-in-hand with the death of a much-loved pet, be it cat, dog, horse or budgie. The classic 'five stages' of grief may often be experienced with such a sad loss.

What many people do not realise, however, is that pet-owners often experience a different kind of grief. This occurs when a pet runs away, or simply goes missing. It is known as an 'ambiguous loss'.

With an ambiguous loss, the whereabouts or cause of death of the pet is unknown. This can occur when the pet has been lost during a walk, or has run away during a storm or fireworks. The owners might suspect the pet has been stolen, or it may simply have gone missing, as is so often the case with cats. They may fear that the animal has been killed or injured.

In addition to grief at their own loss they may feel enormous guilt that they are not with their pet, and that it may need them. i.e. 'I wasn't there for him when he needed me'. They may have fear that their pet feels abandoned by its owner.

The same feelings of grief can occur where the animal has been surrendered to a shelter, for whatever reason. Many owners love their pets, but simply cannot keep them anymore. It should never be assumed that someone surrendering his or her pet does not love it.

In some cases of 'lost' pets there is added guilt because owners don't know when to stop searching for their pet, whether they should ever get another, and when to actually start the healthiest part of grieving.

Owners can be caught in the denial, anger and sadness phases of grief, but not move into acceptance. Friends or family experiencing this kind of pain have special need of our love, patience and understanding.



Hope for the best .. but plan for the worst

While it is easy to budget for our pets' annual vaccinations and preventative treatments which, depending on where you live, might include de-sexing, heartworm protection, intestinal worming or tick prevention, how many of us really plan ahead for the 'worst case' scenario?

Many veterinarians working in practice have been faced with heartbroken owners who have to 'put down' a much-loved pet because the cost of treating them is beyond their means. In times gone by, veterinarians were sometimes able to offer short-term credit to selected clients. Sadly, however, this is now much harder due to bad-debt accumulation and the high cost of running a veterinary facility.

As a result, more and more pet owners are investing in pet insurance as a means to guarantee that their pet receives the veterinary care they need, when they need it, and without compromising the family budget. With some 'trauma only' insurance from \$25/month, and 'full' coverage from \$40/month, this begins to look like a sensible precaution for the average family with an adored pet.

We asked a consulting veterinarian at Murdoch University's Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) to estimate some initial costs with a typical trauma case. Using an example of a cat hit by a car (at midnight), and sustaining minor chest injuries and a simple limb fracture, the costs were estimated as follows:

- initial examination: \$190
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Thus the immediate overnight expense with this 24-hour care facility would be in the region of \$1080. Assuming a simple limb fracture was located on x-ray, requiring 'internal fixation', one could estimate at least another \$1000 on top of this for surgery in private practice.

Veterinary medical care is advancing rapidly. Animals that in the past that would have been euthanased on humane grounds can now be treated aggressively, and with success in many cases. But the costs incurred can be very high. So if you fear a traumatic decision based on finances, it may be worth considering pet insurance as an alternative. While vets are not legally allowed to recommend a specific brand of pet insurance, we can supply you with a number of brochures from different companies, allowing you to choose the plan that best meets your pet's needs, and provides you with peace of mind.



Mammary tumours in mice and rats

If you examine your small rodent's tummy you will notice that female rats and mice have 6 nipples associated with 6 mammary glands. The males of these species do not have visible nipples - a handy hint when deciding who's mum and who's dad! The mammary tissue, however, extends far beyond these areas, reaching right up to the neck and down to the back of the thigh. This means that any growth along this area is likely to be a mammary tumour even if it is not directly associated with a nipple and mammary gland.

Mammary tumours in rats and mice are extremely common but the prognosis between the two species is very different. Unfortunately for mice the most common

mammary tumours they experience are aggressive cancers. These have a tendency to grow quickly and spread easily. It may only take weeks for the tumour to become almost as large as the mouse itself, so get any mousy mass checked out by your vet as soon as you notice it. Unfortunately, because of the aggressive nature of these tumours, euthanasia is often the kindest option.

Rats get a better deal. 80% of their mammary tumours are of the more benign variety. Their tumours tend to grow more slowly and are less likely to spread. These neat round tumours are easily removed, making rats good candidates for surgery.



When it's more than a stomach ache

Owners of 'pleasure' horses are becoming increasingly aware of a medical problem that was previously thought to be limited to horses such as racehorses and high-level eventers in high stress and high fitness 'occupations'.

Gastric ulcers (stomach ulcers) are now known to occur far more often than vets previously thought, and in a wide variety of horses, including pony club mounts, show hacks and pleasure horses. It seems that it not so much the amount of work horses have to do that predisposes them to ulcers, but the style in which they live. Evidence suggests that horses who are managed in the most 'natural' style possible will be less prone to ulcers than those kept in 'high intensity' housing such as stable blocks with limited foraging.

Among the symptoms and signs of gastric ulcers are:

- repeated bouts of colic
- poor or finicky appetite
- crankiness at feed time
- wood-chewing
- 'girthiness' when saddling
- a reluctance to move forwards off the leg when being ridden

And just to confuse us, some horses will have gastric ulcers in the absence of any recognised clinical symptoms at all!

Definitive diagnosis requires access to a 'gastroscope', which is a specialised medical camera 3 metres long. It has to reach from the horse's nose, through its throat into the oesophagus (gullet) within the chest and onwards into the stomach. It is much longer than the 'scopes' used to investigate ailments of the respiratory tract (usually 1.5m). The extra length allows the veterinarians to visualise the stomach lining and locate and characterise any ulcerative lesions. Unfortunately these 'scopes' are highly specialised, and for financial and practical reasons are not routinely carried by most veterinarians.

Avoiding the frustration of lawn burn

Many frustrated gardeners despair at the brown circles of dead lawn indicating where their dog has urinated.

The grass is killed by the high concentration of nitrogen in the urine deposited onto a small area.

Watering the area (if water restrictions allow) within eight hours of urination will dilute the urine and help prevent burning. However

As a result, a 'working' diagnosis of gastric ulcer is often made on the basis of a clinically positive response to therapy. The most commonly used veterinary medications are the drugs *omeprazole* and *cimetidine*, both oral preparations. However many people swear by herbal medications such as comfrey leaf, marshmallow root, liquorice and slippery elm. It is important to remember that herbal remedies are not without potential side effects, and have not been subjected to drug standards testing.

As with many medical conditions, prevention is always better than cure. Management tips for horse owners include allowing the maximum grazing time possible. Horses are designed to be on the go and grazing for the bulk of the day. Their stomachs are designed to ingest frequent small amounts of poor quality food. In these circumstances grazing stimulates the production of alkaline salivary juices. These blend with stomach acids, partly neutralizing them. Horses that cannot graze close to 24 hours a day continue to produce gastric acid, but it is not neutralized, thus increasing the risk of gastric ulcers developing.

If no grazing is available, maintaining as much fibre/forage in the diet as possible (given any working constraints or other health problems) may go some way towards preventing this painful problem.



after 12 hours, watering may actually increase the urine scald on the grass.

Some claim that dietary changes, such as an increase in salt, a decrease in protein, or consuming large amounts of tomatoes will help. The easiest way to combat this common problem is to avoid it in the first place. Teach your pet to urinate in a designated area of the garden that is sand or gravel.

The Autumn Years

Better quality veterinary care means that many pets now live longer than in the past. Their owners have to deal with the 'quality-of-life' issues that come with that increased life span.

In the 'autumn' of their lives our cats and dogs may suffer from osteoarthritis and other mobility problems, dementia, kidney failure, liver disease, cardiac disease and incontinence. As part of our commitment to our furred family, we need to be guided in making the best health and lifestyle decisions we can for them. Unfortunately they can't tell us how they feel about these problems.

Most vets agree that regular health checks (at least 6-monthly), and in some cases annual blood and urine tests, may improve the rates of early disease detection and therefore management in our older animals. Veterinary management and palliative care (in pet-care 'palliative' is not restricted to the care of the dying) can include the following:

- weight management and control (for arthritis, diabetes and heart disease)
- special diets (diabetes, kidney, liver and heart disease)
- lifestyle management (incontinence issues, arthritis, heart disease)
- medical management using drugs where required (arthritis, heart disease).

Most pet owners would not hesitate to use medications to improve quality of life for their human family. So it should be for the fur-family.

Unlike in human medicine, when our pets are in their autumn years we start to worry about decisions on euthanasia. When is the right time? What are the best circumstances (at home or in the hospital)? What are the benefits to our pet of euthanasia versus a 'natural' death?

Answers, or at least a step towards the answers, can be found during a consultation with your regular vet. Appropriate veterinary support can vastly improve the quality of life for your older pets. Do not hesitate to make an appointment to discuss these issues. Autumnal management can be very fulfilling for vets, and we will not be surprised by your questions.





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