



WINTER 2010

Your Vet



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Our Vets

DR NEVILLE ROBERTSON
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DR ALAN WADE
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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 10am to 1pm

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

Filling in the day – Environmental enrichment for your pet

Modern life comes at a cost for modern pets. Our cats and dogs are often left unattended for large portions of the day, which can result in undesirable behaviours related to separation anxiety, boredom and loneliness. Numerous strategies can be employed and a combination of some of the following should help.

1. TOYS

Toys should be provided but only given out one or two at a time and rotated – a large mound of toys is overwhelming and not conducive to play. Experiment with different types of toys and see if your pet has a preference for chewy, soft, squeaky or tasty. Toys do not need to be fancy so feel free to make your own – tie feathers onto string and dangle off door handles for your cat or just crumple up a ball of paper.

2. TREATS

Bones are an excellent time waster and can fill many happy hours. They must be given raw. Always check that your vet is happy for your animal to have a bone as many pets can have medical problems related to bone ingestion. Bones should be given judiciously in multiple-dog households, as they are often a “bone of contention” and a potential source of conflict.

Titbits can be hidden around the garden or inside toys that then randomly distribute small rewards when the toy is rolled around. Another good idea is to freeze small treats (pieces of meat, carrots and dried biscuits) into a large block of ice. Throughout the day, with the help of some diligent gnawing, the treats will be slowly released.

Small tubs of grass and *catnip* (a type of mint) can be grown in windows for indoor cats. Cats seem to enjoy nibbling on these and catnip gives some cats feelings of euphoria and goodwill demonstrated by much happy rolling and rubbing.

3. SACRIFICIAL GARDEN BED

Dogs do enjoy digging holes to sleep in and bury their treasure. A sacrificial area of garden can be utilised in which to perform these excavations.

4. STIMULATING THE SENSES

The sights and sounds of television or access to a window to see the world go by can help pass the hours for indoor animals. Note that for some yappy dogs, stimulation from the outside world may induce a barking frenzy. For these dogs, the opposite tactic is advisable – keep curtains shut and use fencing and hedging to deny access to bark-inducing activities. Radios are useful to provide a distracting background white noise.



5. FIND A FRIEND

Dogs especially enjoy company and can benefit from a companion. The downside of canine friends is that any less desirable behaviour such as barking, digging or escaping will be taught to the new dog resulting in double trouble. Some owners get around this problem by using doggy day care, dog sitters or dog walkers. This way your dog gets the benefit of socialisation without the undesirable consequences.

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

- Foot-sore guinea pigs
- Get your pet checked for arthritis
- Cat litter aversion

inside



Symptoms of disease Twitchy Cats!

Twitchy cats are not a common occurrence in veterinary practice but when they are presented, one of the questions we ask is 'have you applied a flea product in the last few days?'. Very often the answer is 'yes' and it transpires that the product in question was a dog flea drop applied in error. *Pyrethroid* based flea products are very effective at killing fleas and are an excellent flea control in dogs. These products are available as spot-ons, sprays, dips and shampoos. Some specific cat products contain a very dilute form of the pyrethroid, and these are generally safe to use. Cats are inefficient at metabolising the drug in the liver, which is why they are so sensitive to it in inappropriate doses. In natural form, *pyrethrins* are derived from the chrysanthemum plant family and are toxic to the nervous system of the flea.



Poisoning in dogs is rare, but can occur if they are used in incorrect doses or if they are eaten instead of applied. In cats however, it is almost always that a dog product was accidentally or deliberately applied to the cat. Very occasionally, a cat will become ill when a dog in the household has been treated with these products, but this usually only occurs when they are very good friends indeed! Dogs who have cats that snuggle up to them, should not have topical pyrethroid flea controls applied for this reason.

In cats, intoxication may be immediate or delayed. Symptoms can include salivation, vomiting, ear, face and paw flicking, diarrhoea, trouble walking and over reactivity to stimuli. Tremors then seizures can lead to death in severe, untreated cases. Treatment involves intravenous (IV) fluids to protect the kidneys from the by-products of muscle tremors, and a drug called *methocarbamol* to control the seizures and tremors. Following this, multiple detergent baths, to remove any residual toxin, and sometimes the oral administration of charcoal may be required.

Most cats with this poisoning do just fine with appropriate treatment. They may however need 24–48 hours in hospital, which can be quite expensive. Check with your vet which flea products are safe for your pet.

Winter reminder!

Get your pet checked for arthritis

The cold weather of winter seems to play havoc with arthritic patients. If you have noticed that your pet is stiff on rising, has a limp or is reluctant to jump into the car (or onto the kitchen bench in the case of cats) then it may be time to have a '10,000 mile' service and check out their joints. Arthritis is not just a disease of the elderly – some sources state that one in five dogs over one year of age are affected.

Arthritis needs to be attacked from many different angles. Weight loss, exercise modification and diet all need to be addressed. Your vet can also advise you on appropriate medications for your pet, from disease modifying drugs (drugs which slow down the progression of arthritis and keep the joints happy longer) to anti-inflammatory drugs and pain relief.

Treat my pet!

Chronic Renal Disease in Cats

Chronic Renal Disease/Insufficiency (CRD/I) is a kidney disorder with various underlying causes including cysts, infections and inflammation of the tiny kidney filters. Some viruses and cancers (like *lymphosarcoma*) may also cause kidney disease. The kidney's job description includes removing toxins; managing body salts, proteins, glucose and water; regulating blood pressure; balancing the acidity of the blood and some hormonal functions such as the generation of red blood cells.

CRD/I can present with a variety of symptoms including dietary fussiness, weight loss, lethargy, fur changes, increased thirst and urination (often hard to spot in cats due to their secretive habits), vomiting, dehydration, mouth ulcers, increased drooling, pale gums and constipation. Diagnosis is based on blood and urine tests, scans and x-rays, and sometimes a kidney *biopsy* (removing a tiny piece of the kidney to examine microscopically). Biopsies can help determine prognosis or specific therapy.

The goal of treatment is to reduce 'unwellness', stabilise blood salts and minerals, provide adequate calories and protein and modify the progression of the underlying disease where possible. The therapeutic plan is not a 'one-size-fits-all' treatment and must be tailored for individuals.

While advanced therapies exist worldwide, conservative medical management is still appropriate for the majority.

Initial care involves correcting any existing dehydration with intravenous fluids. Ongoing hydration is essential. Some owners may administer fluids (under the skin) at home though this does have some risks including over hydration and changes to the pet-owner relationship. Dietary therapy often involves restricted but excellent quality protein. The goal is to maintain the cat's body condition and energy levels while minimising protein waste build-up that can cause problems in affected cats. Oral medications may be prescribed to manage levels of potassium, phosphorus and calcium according to blood test results. *Anaemia* (lack of red blood cells) can be treated with an improved diet, iron tablets or specific hormone injections if severe. High blood pressure may be treated with medications while other drugs are available to manage symptoms such as nausea, salivation, loss of appetite and vomiting.

In all cases of CRD/I, regular veterinary assessments, blood tests and urine samples are required to stabilise then adjust individual management plans for affected cats. Even when there is no underlying 'cure' for this problem, the quality of life made possible by good medical management can be excellent.



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.

Bitter litter – cat litter aversion

It can be frustrating and messy when your cat refuses to use its litter tray. Initially, a veterinary check up is important to exclude medical conditions such as *cystitis*, *diabetes* and *inflammatory bowel disease*. If all is well, some helpful strategies to encourage litter tray use include:

- Experiment with different types of litter from the array of options available.
- Make sure sufficient litter trays are present. A good basic rule of thumb is that the number of litter trays should equal the number of cats in the household plus one.
- Locate litter trays wisely. Cats are private animals and litter trays need to be out of the main flow of household traffic yet easily accessible.
- Clean litter trays regularly. Cats are fastidiously clean and can refuse to use a tray simply because a previous offering is still present. Cleaning out a litter tray is infinitely preferable to scrubbing stained carpet!

True or False Quiz

Questions

1. The pregnancy of a bitch lasts 21 days.
2. Rats can have red tears.
3. Airedale Terriers are the largest terrier in the terrier group and were once used as patrol dogs by the German Railway Police.
4. Guinea pigs must have fresh fruit and vegetables in their diet to stay healthy.
5. Sunflower seeds are an excellent sole food for parrots.
6. Eating small amounts of grass is normal for cats and dogs.
7. When cats affectionately rub their face and chin on you they are applying *pheromones* from scent glands.
8. Guinea pigs with coat patterns made of whirls of hair are called Peruvian Guinea pigs.

Answers

1. FALSE. The pregnancy of a bitch lasts 63 days, although 5 days either side of this is considered within normal limits.
2. TRUE. Rats can have red tears caused by the release of red stained pigments from a gland near their eye. These pigments are released when the rat is stressed either because of poor husbandry or secondary to illness. The tears themselves are not painful or a problem, but indicate the need to look for underlying stressors.
3. TRUE
4. TRUE. Guinea pigs are unable to synthesize their own vitamin C so must obtain it from dietary sources. Vitamin C is broken down in stored food hence fresh food is the best way of providing a source.
5. FALSE. Sunflower seeds are not an excellent sole food for parrots as they are high in fat and low in calcium. They are also very palatable to some birds that will select them in preference to other healthier foods. Diets high in fat predispose parrots to obesity, fatty livers and fatty tumors called *lipomas*.
6. TRUE. Grazing behaviour is normal in cats and dogs however excessive consumption of grass is associated with nausea and gastrointestinal upset.
7. TRUE
8. FALSE. Peruvian guinea pigs have very long hair coats and resemble mops. Abyssinian guinea pigs have whirls of hair.

NEW Competition for our readers!

Be in the running to WIN a \$50 shopping voucher

1) Just write the name of the feature/article 'Blackie' the cat is lurking in for this issue:

.....

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

- Coles Myer Ltd
- Target Australia Ltd
- K Mart Australia Ltd
- Angus & Robertson 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 31/08/2010 to be in the running

THAT'S IT!
GOOD LUCK!



Note on Xylitol®

Your Vet is always the first to front up when we cause controversy, as we have amongst some astute readers of the last issue.

The article on poisons in our Autumn 2010 issue discussed the toxic effects of a drug called Xylitol®, which can cause fatal poisoning in dogs. There is no safe amount for a dog to accidentally ingest. However Xylitol® is also found in minute quantities in some dental hygiene products made especially for pets. The manufacturers have assured us that, when used 100% according to instructions, these products cause no side effects (except of course for sparkly fresh teeth!). However, Xylitol® from other sources (baked goods etc) is still considered highly dangerous and please, NO chewing gum!

We strive to give readers cutting edge information, with fresh and balanced insights into veterinary procedures and protocols, which can sometimes encourage lively debate.



Emergency!

"Terrible Toxins": Household Poisons

We love our pets and want to keep them safe. However, lurking in our homes and gardens are a host of potential dangers!

Commercial **CLEANING PRODUCTS** can cause corrosive or caustic burns of the digestive tract, ranging from mild burns of the lips and tongue to severe oral damage and burns of the gullet and stomach. Burns may be obvious almost immediately or take a day or so to become apparent.

When **BATTERIES** are ingested, they may require surgical removal from the stomach if *emesis* (induced vomiting) is not successful. Small 'button' batteries can stick inside the gullet and cause severe burning, as can lithium batteries.

MOTH BALLS (*naphthalene*) even in very small amounts can cause vomiting, severe anaemia and potential liver damage.

BIRTH CONTROL PILLS usually contain oestrogen, which in high doses can cause bone marrow suppression. Some of these pills contain iron, also dangerous in large amounts.

NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDs) such as *ibuprofen* and *naproxen* are commonly found in the medicine cabinet. If accidentally ingested by pets, these can cause severe gut ulceration with potentially fatal bleeding and perforation, kidney failure and neurological disease.

In our gardens, **FERTILISERS** occasionally cause problems in pets. They may cause only a mild gut upset but those containing more than 1% iron can cause iron intoxication, which is more serious. Some fertilisers also contain pesticides, which can cause seizures if ingested. Ingestion of **BLOOD** and **BONE** meal can cause problems ranging from stomach engorgement to vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation and a disease called *pancreatitis*. Ingestion of animal **MANURES**, **MULCHES** or **COMPOSTS** can cause seizures or tremors and may potentially cause severe bacterial infections.

GLYPHOSATE (known under many brand names) is a weed killer that has low toxicity to pets. However, it can make toxic plants more palatable and increase the chance of ingestion by your pet.

ANT AND COCKROACH BAITS often contain *organophosphates*, to which cats are very sensitive. Treatment may be required if large volumes are ingested.

RODENT BAITS, if ingested by cats or dogs, may cause a fatal *haemorrhage* (bleeding). This may occur days after ingestion, often without warning.

When ingested, **SNAIL PELLETS** containing *methiocarb* or *metaldehyde* cause neurological symptoms such as trembling and seizures that can be quickly fatal. Snail baits containing Iron EDTA are also dangerous for pets, causing gastro intestinal problems if ingested in large amounts.

The **LILIUM** species of plants can cause gastrointestinal irritation in dogs and potentially fatal acute kidney failure in cats. These plants include the Easter lily, the Tiger lily, and the Rubrum lily amongst others.



It is wise to call your vet **immediately** if you know that your pet has ingested something they should not have. Advice may range from no treatment to veterinary care such as induced vomiting and occasionally intensive and expensive treatment. As with most things, prevention is better than cure. Keep all household medicines, cleaners, chemicals and garden products well away from pets.

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 normally 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.