



SUMMER 2017

FAIRFIELD VETERINARY CENTRE

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NEWS

Comment

Making the decision to end your pet's life is a highly emotive dilemma. Knowing that you are alleviating suffering can help to rationalise that choice. However, where pain is not the primary concern and evaluating the "quality of life" of a companion is the yardstick by which that calculation is made can often leave owners greatly troubled. Counselling owners on this matter can occur on a daily basis for veterinary surgeons and determining the right outcome is unique to each and every case.

Recently, I had to support my wife in concluding that this was the right decision for her much loved cat, Maggie, who had been her companion for almost 19 years. This was never a moment that either of us had wished but on reflection was entirely appropriate.



Maggie

There is some comfort in recognising the full life that she led and by burying her in the garden beneath some freshly planted snowdrops we will be reminded of her presence in the years to come.

Terry Dunne
BVMS, Cert SAO, MRCVS



Fairfield Veterinary Centre

Summer itches – could it be parasites?

At last, summer is here! However, the warmer weather is not only enjoyed by us and our pets, it is also the time when parasites that cause skin irritations flourish as well!



Fleas are living in abundance on wild animals as well as domesticated ones at this time of year. Therefore, cats that hunt are particularly vulnerable to catching more than they bargained for! Dogs can also easily pick them up from simply being out and about.



Symptoms of flea infestations are different for cats and dogs. In dogs problems are generally easier to spot as they tend to start to scratch excessively. Cats will lick and groom themselves more, sometimes so much that they cause bald patches. However, they often remove any signs of fleas from their coats, so the cause of the problem isn't always obvious.



Many animals aren't particularly sensitive to flea bites, so just because they aren't showing any signs of a problem, it does not mean your pets aren't infected! At this time of year, without protection, it is reasonable to assume that most pets will be carrying a few extra passengers!



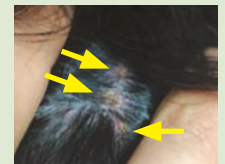
Harvest Mites will also cause itching issues in the summer and are picked up in woodland and grassland where they swarm onto passing pets. They are tiny, bright orange, and tend to congregate between the toes or on the ear flaps. They are very irritating, causing itchy crusting lesions, but can be difficult to spot as they are so small.

We are here to help, so please do get in touch if your pets are suffering with summer skin problems. We can check for signs of fleas and other parasites and recommend the best form of parasite prevention for your pets.

Permethrins beware! Finally, many supermarket bought spot-on flea products for dogs contain permethrins. These are generally safe for dogs, but should NEVER be applied to **cats** as they are VERY TOXIC!



Flea infestations in cats often lead to over grooming and bald patches, commonly with crusting



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes

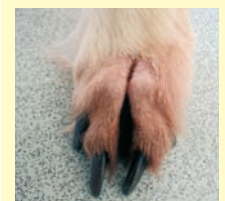
...or could it be an allergy?



Skin allergies are reasonably common in dogs, especially at this time of year. Pollens from plants, grasses and trees irritate the skin. The most common places for sore spots to develop are where pollens land – typically the feet, stomach, armpits, groin and ears.

The skin in these areas will become pink and the dog will start to excessively lick, scratch or chew at them, causing more damage which often triggers bacterial infections, making the problem even worse.

The initial treatment for this condition is medication to reduce the itching, combat any infections introduced by scratching or licking, and also to reduce the exposure to allergens if possible. Longer term treatments may include attempting to identify the underlying cause of the allergy and then creating a 'vaccine' to gradually desensitise the pet to the allergy and this can prove helpful in many dogs. Please contact us today if you are worried about your pet's skin.



Allergic irritation and foot chewing in a dog.



Things are hotting up!

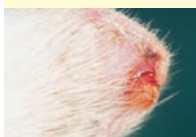
Woo hoo – the summer is here! But when the heat turns up, the dangers to pets increase too. To keep your dog, cat and other furry friends safe, make sure you are prepared. To help you we've put together some top summer survival tips:

Summer walks: When walking your dogs, do try to avoid the hottest times of the day. Heat stroke is a real risk for many breeds but particularly those with shorter noses or who are overweight. However, this doesn't mean they can't enjoy the great weather – just make use of the light evenings and go out when it is cooler.



UV Alert! Just like us, sunburn can cause problems for our pets. Cats are natural sun bathers, but cats with white noses and ear tips are particularly vulnerable to sun burn and subsequent skin cancer.

This risk can be reduced by keeping them out of the sun, or by applying sunblock to these areas during the summer months.



Ear tip of a cat showing early (reddened) cancerous changes. If your pet is showing signs of skin changes, please call us at once.

Summer shade: Guinea pigs and rabbits need an area of shade so that they do not overheat – guinea pigs in particular are unable to regulate their body temperature and both they and rabbits are vulnerable to sunburn.



Flystrike is a very serious problem at this time of year. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots which can cause life threatening infections. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out daily. Call us immediately if you are worried.



Bee and wasp stings are another seasonal problem. Some pets are allergic to their stings and may need prompt veterinary attention.

So – do enjoy the summer and remember to check your pets' coats for pesky **grass seeds** which can get trapped and cause problems. And finally – **NEVER leave pets in cars. Even on dull days, they can heat up and become ovens.**

Brushing up on dental care!

Did you know that poor dental hygiene can be a source of long term pain and discomfort for many pets? Worse still, without regular check-ups, dental problems in pets are frequently overlooked as pets usually tolerate the pain – suffering in silence.

In order to prevent dental problems in our pets, it is helpful to understand how and why they arise.

Pets are usually born with healthy mouths, with shiny white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums. However, over time the accumulation of plaque bacteria on the surface of the teeth leads to inflammation of the gums – termed **gingivitis** (or gum disease). This is often accompanied by very bad breath and also the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the tooth surface.

If the gingivitis is not treated at this stage, the plaque will start attacking the underlying tooth supporting structures, resulting in gum and bone loss, dental pain, marked bad breath and eventually leading to tooth loss. This condition is termed **periodontitis**.



As well as gum disease, cats may also suffer from one or more **tooth resorptive lesions** usually found at or below gum level. These are unique to cats and still not fully understood.

They are very painful, however, and again most cats will not show obvious pain.

Regular dental check-ups (as part of the booster visit) are a key part of monitoring for dental disease. The good news is that if gum problems are identified at an early stage (where there are signs of gingivitis), a combination of a Scale and Polish and ongoing Home Care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health.

Please contact us today for a dental check-up and to find out more about caring for your pet's teeth.



Gingivitis with inflamed gums



Periodontitis with gum loss



Tooth resorptive lesions
Typical lesion (arrowed). The tooth is progressively destroyed and is usually very painful.



Scale and Polish: Removing the calculus using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing, is a very effective form of treatment

Terrier photo: Warren Photographic

Stick to balls!



If you have a dog who loves to play fetch, but you forgot to take a ball with you on a walk (or you threw it and they lost it!), it is tempting to use a stick instead. After all, there are always plenty lying around and who hasn't seen a dog with one in their

mouth's, looking very pleased with themselves?! However, throwing sticks can be extremely dangerous and they have the potential to cause some very nasty injuries. If your dog runs onto it while it is pointing upwards or catches it by one end rather than the middle, it can easily rip into the soft skin and tissue of the throat, leading to massive damage and bleeding. Less dramatically, splinters can dig into the gums and lips, causing pain and abscesses, some of which aren't always obvious and our dogs end up suffering in silence.



This is a typical stick injury – in this case the stick has become lodged in the dog's throat.

Photos: courtesy Bath Veterinary Referrals

Most vets and veterinary nurses have seen 'stick injuries', the most serious of which can be extremely difficult to fix or potentially even be fatal. Certainly it is far safer and also cheaper to buy a new ball for every walk – rather than resort to a stick!