



WELCOME TO the latest edition of our newsletter, designed to keep you up to date with your veterinary practice.

## Practice Facilities

- Completely refurbished and extended practice
- Friendly professional service
- Orthopaedic referral service
- Annual health checks
- Nurse clinics
- Full dental facilities
- Puppy parties
- Weight checks
- Separate cat and dog wards
- Convenient surgery hours
- Senior Pet Healthcare programme, for dogs over 8 and cats over 10 years old

## Consulting Times by appointment

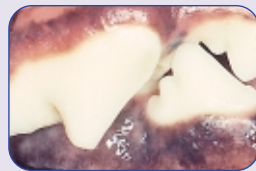
Monday - Friday:  
9.00 am - 6.30 pm

Saturday:  
9.00 am - 12.00 noon

## Take care of those teeth!

WE ALL learn as children the importance of looking after our teeth, but what about our pets?

The good news is that our pets are usually born with healthy mouths – with bright white teeth and firm pink



Healthy mouth



Gingivitis



Periodontitis

(or pigmented) gums.

However, from a very early age, food material, bacteria and saliva are deposited naturally and continuously on the surface of the teeth and gums forming **plaque**.

As plaque accumulates, toxins produced by the plaque bacteria cause inflammation of the gum tissue – termed **gingivitis**. At the same time as this, the plaque may also become mineralised forming calculus (tartar) which is usually very tightly bonded to the tooth surface. This is also frequently accompanied by very bad breath!



If gingivitis is allowed to go unchecked the plaque bacteria will start to penetrate *below* the gum line, leading to destruction of the bone and other tooth supporting structures – a condition termed **periodontitis**. This is a far more serious condition and – if left untreated, results in tooth loosening and eventual tooth loss.

If your pet's breath leaves a little to be desired we are here to help! Dental disease is best prevented, but failing that, early diagnosis of problems can make a real difference to your pet's health.

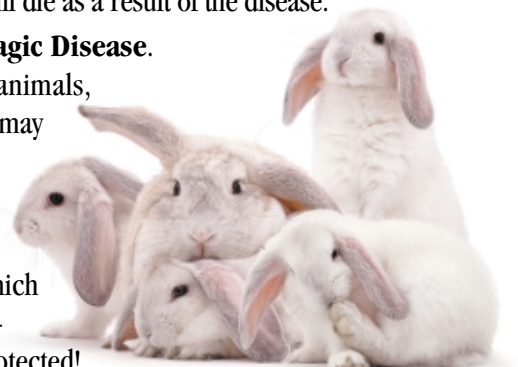
## Rabbiting on: Caring for your pet rabbit!

WITH THE onset of warmer Spring weather, rabbits are once again at risk from the deadly viral disease **Myxomatosis**. The disease is spread by biting insects such as flies and fleas. The disease causes puffy swellings around the eyes, usually leading to blindness. Sadly, even with medication and nursing, most will die as a result of the disease.

Rabbits are also at risk from **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease**.

This deadly virus can be brought home on animals, clothes, petfood and bedding. Affected animals may show a variety of symptoms including loss of appetite, lethargy and nose bleeds. Sadly, most affected rabbits will quickly succumb and die.

Happily, there are safe and effective vaccines which can be given to prevent both of these diseases – don't take the risk, make sure your rabbit is protected!



Photos: Jane Burton

# Kidney disease – is my pet affected?



MOST OF our pets thankfully take normal kidney function for granted, but for some pets kidney disease can be a problem – particularly as they grow older.

Dogs and cats have two kidneys. Each kidney has three distinct areas: cortex, medulla and pelvis. The cortex and medulla contain millions of tiny units called **nephrons**. Blood, carried to each kidney by the renal artery, is then filtered by the millions of tiny nephrons, removing protein breakdown products, excess salts and water. These are then concentrated to form urine which collects in the pelvis,

before passing via the ureters into the bladder.

Over time a proportion of the nephrons will disappear with age and not be replaced. Other factors such as toxins, infections or cancer may also destroy nephrons.

However the kidneys have excess filtering capacity with the result that visible symp-

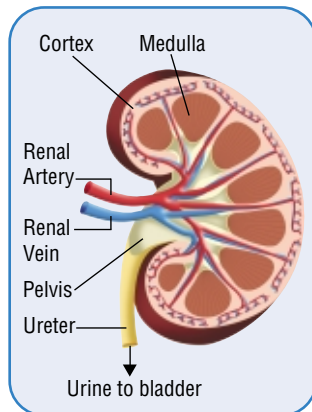


Illustration: Gareth Davies

toms of kidney disease are not usually seen until two thirds of the nephrons have been lost. If this stage is reached, the kidneys start to lose their capacity to concentrate the urine, resulting in large amounts of dilute urine and **increased**

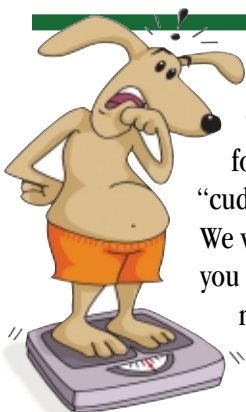
**thirst**. As the filtering capacity falls so toxic waste products will accumulate in the blood, resulting in **loss of appetite, weight loss, poor coat condition, apathy and weakness**.

Regular examinations allow us to detect kidney disease *before* the outward signs (as described above) are visible. However the good news is that – whilst kidney disease cannot be cured – new forms of medication and specially formulated diets can be of great help.

If you are concerned that your pet is showing *any* of the symptoms described above, please contact us for an appointment!



Photos: Jane Burton



## Diets: can you pinch an inch?

THE WINTER months are often a time of inactivity and weight gain for many pets. If you suspect that your pet is becoming a little too “cuddly” the first thing to do is to arrange for us to weigh him or her. We will be able to establish whether your pet is overweight and advise you on an ideal weight. We will also perform a thorough physical examination to check for any medical conditions that can also result in weight gain (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged and older dogs, leading to a lowered metabolic rate).

Being overweight is as much of a problem for our pets as it is for ourselves. Obesity is known to cause or worsen a range of conditions including: joint disease (arthritis), heart disease, diabetes mellitus and heat intolerance – to name just a few!

However, it's not all bad news; if your pet needs to lose weight, we are happy to advise you on the most suitable diet and exercise programme to give you the best chance of success. Please contact us for further details, or to arrange an appointment for your pet.

Cartoon: Gareth Davies

## Garden perils!



Photo: Kim Taylor

FOR MANY of us the warmer Spring weather results in a trip to the local garden centre. But here we must insert a cautionary note; some of the products we commonly use in our garden can also be toxic to pets.

**Slug pellets** frequently contain the chemical metaldehyde and are generally blue or green in colour. Metaldehyde is very toxic to pets and since many dogs will eat almost anything, slug pellets should only be used with great care, keeping pets away from areas where they are used and stored.



Many gardeners also apply a thick layer of mulch to their flower beds in the Spring and Summer months. A little-known, but potentially lethal hazard is the use of **cocoa shell mulch**. Dogs are attracted to these shells by their smell, but they contain theobromine which is very poisonous to dogs. As a result, it is safer to use an alternative such as tree bark.



As a general rule, when applying *anything* to your garden, **ALWAYS** read the label carefully regarding the hazards to pets and (of course!) humans.