

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

Should I have my dog neutered?

DID YOU know that apart from preventing unwanted pregnancies there are many other benefits to having your dog neutered?

An un-neutered female dog usually comes into season (heat) twice a year. Seasons typically last for about 3-4



weeks and during this time she will become receptive to the advances of the male dogs in your locality. She may also roam – seeking a mate, and despite your best efforts accidents **do** happen!

Photos: Jane Burton

Neutering (called spaying in female dogs)

involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus under a general anaesthetic. The most obvious benefit of being spayed is that your dog will no longer have to endure the frustration of coming into season or run the risk of a phantom pregnancy. Spaying also removes the possibility of life threatening uterine infections (pyometras) and reduces the risk of developing potentially fatal mammary tumours later in life.

Entire (un-neutered) male dogs are often driven to distraction when a local

bitch is in season. They may escape and may be involved in a road traffic accident or go missing permanently.

Neutering a male dog involves removal of both testes under a general anaesthetic. As well as making your dog less likely to stray, it also eliminates the possibility of testicular cancer, reduces the incidence of prostate gland problems and can be of help in controlling excessive sexual drive and with certain behavioural problems.

Please don't hesitate to ask us for any further information on neutering your pet!



Planning for Summer 2004 starts NOW!

THE WINTER is a good time to talk about the PETS Passport Scheme! Why? – simply because if you are planning on taking your dog or cat abroad in Summer 2004, now is the time to act since you must *start* the process at least **seven months** before you intend to *return* to the United Kingdom!

Since March 2000, dogs and cats qualifying for the scheme have been able to travel abroad to European destinations and return to the UK without having to spend six months in quarantine. More recently the scheme has been extended to cover the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and several other countries.

There are several steps you need to take in order to qualify for the scheme – these include having your pet **microchipped** and **vaccinated against rabies**. Please contact us if you would like any further information – but don't delay!



Ear Disease: A word in your ear!



EAR problems are surprisingly common in dogs and cats. However, in order to understand them better we need to know a little about the anatomy of the ear.

The ear is a complex structure protected externally by a pinna (or flap). A narrow external ear canal carries sound down to the ear drum, where it passes onto the middle and inner ear.

In the healthy ear – as seen in Figure 2, the opening to the external ear canal is lined with smooth pink (or pigmented) skin with no evidence of any discharge. Most of the ear problems seen in dogs and cats occur in the *external* ear canal – a condition called **otitis externa** (sometimes called canker). Signs of otitis

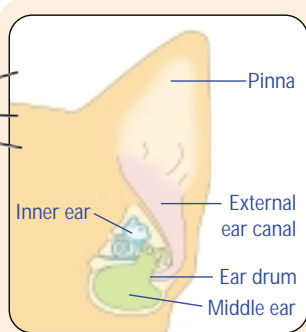


Figure 1. The ear in cross section



Figure 2. Healthy ear in a dog: view of the pinna and opening to the external ear canal.



Figure 3. Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*) with a characteristic crusty brown discharge in the external ear canal.

externa commonly include **ear rubbing** **head shaking** and **reddened, irritated skin** lining the external ear canal. Additionally there is often a **discharge** which may be **foul smelling**.

There are several underlying causes of otitis externa. These include ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*) and trapped foreign bodies such as grass awns. Localised allergies affecting the skin lining the external ear canal are another cause, leading to scratching, which allows opportunistic bacterial and fungal infections to infect the external ear canal. In common with many conditions, the key to success with otitis externa is *early* diagnosis and treatment. If your pet is showing *any* of the symptoms described above, please bring them in for a thorough examination.



Otodectes cynotis (x 30)



Grass awn (x 1)



Beware spilt antifreeze



Should I worry if I find a lump on my pet?

IN ADDITION to the thorough clinical examinations we give your pet from time to time, you can also help your pet by keeping a watchful eye out for any lumps and bumps.

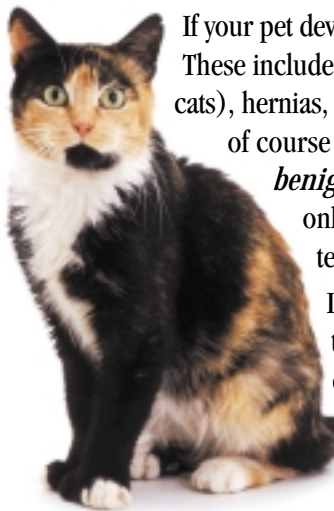
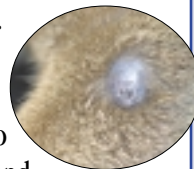


Photo: Jane Burton

If your pet develops a lump there are several possible causes. These include allergic reactions, abscesses (common in cats), hernias, and tumours. The most serious of these are of course tumours and these can be further divided into *benign* tumours – which tend to be slow growing and only locally invasive, or *malignant* tumours which tend to be fast growing and spread to distant parts of the body.



Skin lump on the elbow of a cat

If you find a lump on your pet it is therefore *very* important that we examine it as soon as possible – in order that we may establish the underlying cause and start any required treatment without delay. If you are concerned about a lump on your pet – or any other health problem – please contact us today for an appointment.

Winter awareness!



THE ONSET of colder winter weather brings with it a new set of hazards for our pets.

When out on walks, it's great to enjoy the winter weather, but beware of **frozen ponds and lakes** which are a hazard to both pets and their owners.

At this time of year many people will also be topping up the antifreeze in their car radiators.

Antifreeze usually contains ethylene glycol which is very toxic to both humans and pets.

Ethylene glycol has a sweet taste and any spillage is very attractive to dogs and cats who will readily drink it. If ingested, even small amounts can cause serious kidney failure and usually death. Thus it is very important to ensure that *any* spilt antifreeze is cleaned up.

Additionally, don't forget that **chocolate** – especially the plain variety, can be very toxic to dogs. If you want to feed your dog chocolate, specially formulated pet chocolate is the safe option!

Small pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs are very susceptible to cold and damp weather. With this in mind, move their hutches into a sheltered area or garden shed, give them extra bedding and check water bottles regularly to ensure they don't freeze.