



We hope you find something of interest in this second newsletter of the ALNORTHUMBRIA VETERINARY GROUP, formed on 1st July 2007 by the merger of Aln Veterinary Group and Northumbria Veterinary Partnership. We have already taken steps to improve the care, expertise and facilities provided for our patients. Recent investments include state-of-the-art digital xray and colour doppler ultrasound scanning machines, which will improve our diagnostic capabilities. There are other major investments in the pipeline: watch this space! Please phone for an appointment at one of our eight centres:

Belvedere Terrace
ALNWICK
Tel: 01665 602516

1-3 Bede Street
AMBLE
Tel: 01665 713111

Fairmoor
MORPETH
Tel: 01670 505321

Newmarket
MORPETH
Tel: 01670 512940

Abacus House
PONTELAND
Tel: 01661 871570

Front Street
ROTHBURY
Tel: 01669 620638

65 Main Street
SEAHOUSES
Tel: 01665 721800

29 Rycroft Way
WOOLER
Tel: 01668 281323

Winter aches and pains...



DOES YOUR dog, or cat, seem a bit stiff when he first gets up? Does he limp at the beginning of his walk? Do these symptoms ease off once he gets going? Does he spend some time licking at his joints?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes' or if you have noticed that your pet seems lame, it may be that he is

suffering from joint pain and stiffness due to arthritis.

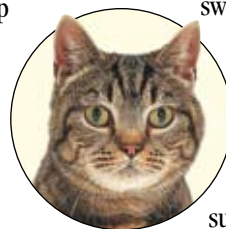
In the majority of cases, arthritis occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints.

Arthritis may also occur following joint trauma or due to malformation of a joint (for example hip dysplasia).

The joints permitting free limb movements are called synovial joints. A healthy joint has a smooth layer of cartilage covering the bones and is lubricated by synovial

fluid produced by the synovial membrane.

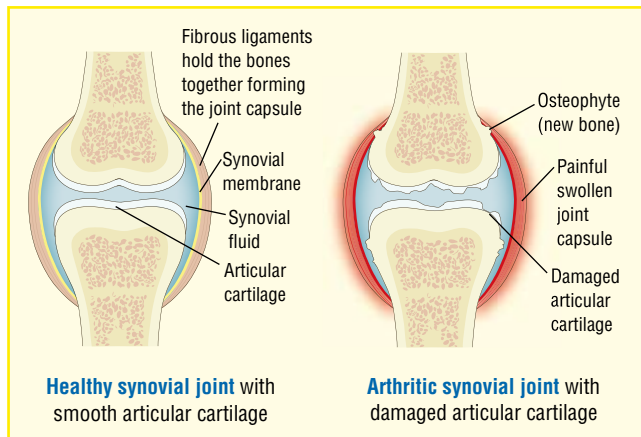
Arthritic joints typically show progressive breakdown and thinning of the cartilage, formation of new bone (osteophytes) and thickening of the joint capsule. Affected joints usually appear stiff, swollen and painful.



Treatment includes weight control, regular appropriate exercise, the use of food supplements and

anti-inflammatory pain relieving medicines to help reduce pain, promote mobility and maintain limb strength for as long as possible. Hydrotherapy and other treatments such as acupuncture may also be appropriate in some cases.

If you suspect that your pet has a problem please make a prompt appointment! That way we can identify what's wrong and get him back on his feet and feeling more comfortable without undue delay.

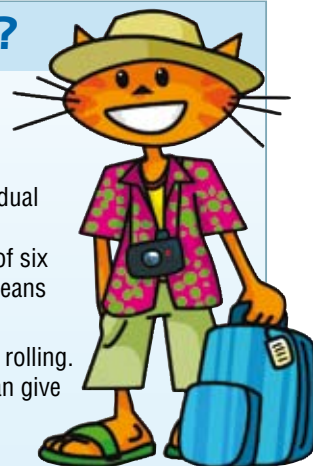


All going on a summer holiday?

DO YOU FANCY taking your pet on holiday? Around 80,000 pets used the Pet Travel Scheme last year, which allows dogs, cats and ferrets to return to the UK after a trip abroad without the need for quarantine.

Before they go, pets first need to have been **microchipped** for individual identification, **vaccinated against rabies**, and **blood tested** to show adequate rabies immunity. They may then enter the UK a minimum of six months after the blood test which confirms rabies immunity. This means that you may need to start planning now for next summer!

So, if you have a pet with itchy paws, now is the time to start the ball rolling. Get your pet booked in for a microchip and rabies vaccine, and we can give you further advice on travelling with your pet. Alternatively visit www.defra.gov.uk where more information can be found.



Lumps and bumps – don't ignore them!



IN ADDITION to the regular health checks that your pet receives when visiting us (often in conjunction with a vaccination), a thorough grooming session at least once a week will alert *you* to any developing lumps – or any other problems for that matter. Just as in ourselves, pets can develop lumps and bumps on their skin that range from those that are slow growing, to lumps that are very fast growing – rapidly increasing in size.

If your pet does develop a lump, there are several possible causes; these include allergic reactions (such as wasp stings), abscesses (common in cats and rabbits), hernias, and tumours.

The most serious of these are tumours, which are either *benign* – which tend to be slow growing and remain in one place, or *malignant* – which invade the surrounding tissues and may also spread to other parts of the body.

If you do find a lump on your pet, it is 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. Timing is everything and a delay in appropriate treatment can be the difference between a small mass that is easily treatable by surgical removal and one that is far more difficult to treat – or possibly untreatable. So, *now* is a good time to check your pet over and to give us a call if you find anything unusual.



Small skin lump on a dog



Winter weather – a seasonal survival guide!

gaining a few extra pounds as we can give you some nutritional advice, since carrying too much weight has a multitude of adverse effects on the body.

When out and about, beware of hazards such as frozen ponds and when walking in the evening, use reflective jackets/collars to aid visibility. It is also the time of year when many people top up their car radiators with antifreeze and spillages can easily occur. Antifreeze tastes very sweet to pets, but most brands are very poisonous if consumed and can be fatal.

Fleas and worms remain a problem throughout winter months, therefore regular treatments are advisable!

The choice of products can be bewildering, so please ask us to advise you on the best treatment regime for *your* pet!



Toxocara canis roundworms

Inside the house, the festive season also presents us with many hazards for pets. Items such as ribbon and tinsel are very attractive to mischievous pets and if swallowed may lead to an intestinal blockage. Similarly, make sure that turkey carcasses and string (used to tie up the carcass) are safely disposed of.

Winter is also a difficult time for animals that live outside, especially guinea pigs and pet rabbits. Ensure that hutches are dry, warm, clean and are in a sheltered position. Bedding needs to be plentiful and changed on a daily basis. Give them fresh food and water every day checking to ensure that the water in the bottle has not frozen.

If you have any queries on pet care or flea and worm control, please give us a call!

An eye for a problem!



THE eyes are very complex organs and thankfully function normally most of the time. Your pet's eyes should be bright and clear, moist, and free of excessive tears (as in the photo on the right). Any itchiness of the eyes that causes the pet to rub at them, or any abnormalities that you can see may indicate problems which could need treatment.

Without appropriate treatment, eye diseases can progress quickly as the eyes are particularly delicate and can be slow to heal and recover.

One problem seen reasonably commonly in dogs is '**dry eye**'. This is caused by a *reduced or total lack of tear production*. Tears lubricate the movements of the eyelids and provide oxygen and nutrients to the cornea (the clear outermost part of the eye). There are many different signs of dry eye and these can develop over time. Affected eyes commonly develop a thick yellowish discharge and may be reddened.

Another common problem seen in many older pets in particular, is **loss of vision**, which may cause pets to start bumping into things even if their eyes appear normal. Any indication of poor vision should be checked out rapidly, as should any change in the appearance of the eyes.

We can perform a thorough eye examination and assess your pet's vision, allowing us to recognise and treat any problems promptly.



Normal eye



Dry eye