



We at Alnorthumbria hope you find the items in the newsletter interesting and informative. The format of a newsletter does not allow us to convey as much "news" and information as we would like, but if this has whetted your appetite you might be interested in our practice web site, which has more detail about the practice and useful links to other web sites:

[www.alnorthumbriavets.co.uk](http://www.alnorthumbriavets.co.uk)

For specific advice, or for an appointment, please phone 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

## An itchy problem!

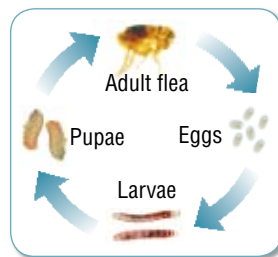


GOT an itch? You will have by the time you've read this!...

As the weather gets warmer, any **flea eggs** lurking in carpets and bedding, or outside in parks and gardens, will start to hatch – developing (via larval stages) into adult fleas (see the flea life-cycle diagram).

Adult fleas are very able hoppers and will quickly make their home in your pet's coat where they will repeatedly feed on their blood. This can cause a multitude of problems including skin itchiness, rashes, infections, hair loss and even anaemia and weakness. If this isn't bad enough, they can bite us as well!

Worse still, each female flea can lay around 50 eggs per day which drop off pets and fall into carpets, bedding and outside areas. With a life cycle (in warm summer or centrally heated conditions) of around one month, the number of fleas in a household can rapidly reach epidemic proportions!



The flea life-cycle

**Ticks** are another parasite to watch out for at this time of year as tick numbers also increase in warmer weather with dogs and cats picking them up in areas of grassland and heathland. Once attached (see photo top right), ticks feed on your pet's blood, often for several days.

Ticks can cause problems in two ways – firstly by causing a tissue reaction at the attachment site and secondly by transmitting serious blood borne diseases such as Babesiosis and Lyme disease, to name just two!



So, NOW is a good time to make sure you are up to date with flea and tick treatments! Please let us advise you on the best form of flea and tick control for your pet!

And remember, when treating pets for fleas, it is essential to treat ALL the pets in the household and don't forget the carpets and bedding!

## Guinea Pigs: Top tips

GUINEA pigs are great pets that are fun to look after and form a close bond with their owners, especially if they are handled regularly. They can be kept as outdoor or indoor pets, but if they are kept outside they need their hutch to be well protected from rain and direct sun.

They enjoy plenty of exercise and do well if given time out of the hutch in the house or in a run each day. Coming from the South American grasslands, they are best fed on a diet of grass, hay, fruit and vegetables together with some high quality commercially prepared food.



Throughout the year, guinea pigs should be checked every day; problems to watch out for include **chest infections** (that can follow bad weather or stress), **diarrhoea** (which can relate to infections or change in diet), **skin disease** due to mange mites and **dental problems** (usually associated with overgrown teeth). Prompt treatment always gives the best chance of recovery, so any problems should be dealt with quickly. Please give us a call if you would like any more information.

Guinea pig and kitten photo: Jane Burton.

## You'd be lost without them

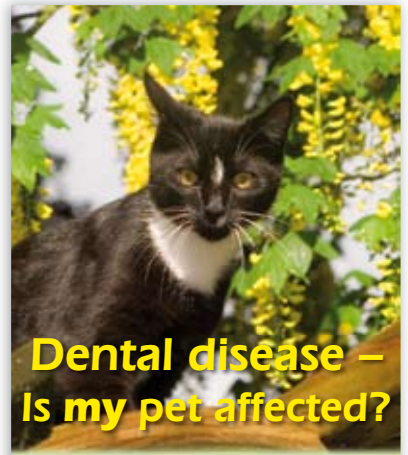


HAVE YOU ever wondered how you would cope if your pet went missing? Sadly it is all too easy for pets to go missing and the key to finding them is for them to be reliably identified. One solution is the collar and tag and this can work well providing it doesn't come off – a common problem especially in cats who seem to lose their collars with great frequency.

The good news however is that modern technology has come to our aid in the form of a tiny microchip

Microchip implant x1

(about the size of a grain of rice) which can be quickly and easily implanted under the skin – *permanently* identifying your pet. Each microchip contains a unique code that identifies your pet and these details are stored on a central computer database. Microchips can be “read” using a special hand held scanner (see photo). Veterinary practices, the police and animal welfare organisations routinely scan all strays, hopefully ensuring that if your pet does go missing, you will have the reassurance that when found – even if the collar and tag have been lost – the microchip should save the day! Don't take the risk – make sure your pets are microchipped!



## Dental disease – Is my pet affected?

DID YOU know that pets, unlike their owners, frequently suffer from dental problems *without* showing any obvious outward signs of pain? Dental disease can occur at any age and recent surveys have shown that as many as 70% of cats and 80% of dogs over three years of age need some form of dental treatment.

A common problem for pets *and* humans is **gum disease**. Plaque is the name given to a film of bacteria which is constantly forming on the surface of all teeth. If allowed to accumulate, it will inflame the gums – a condition called **gingivitis** (see photo above). If left untreated, gingivitis frequently develops into **periodontitis**, a painful condition involving destruction of bone and tooth supporting structures and eventual tooth loss.

Cats may also suffer from one or more **tooth resorptive lesions** usually found at or below gum level. Here the tooth is progressively destroyed, (see photo right) leading to exposure of the nerve running down the centre of the tooth. These are generally extremely painful lesions, although cats will frequently show no obvious outward signs of tooth ache.

Regular dental examinations (often in association with a general health examination) are of great help in identifying dental disease *before* it becomes too serious a problem – please ask us for further information on dental care for your pet!



## Staying cool this summer!

and to remember that throwing sticks for dogs can be hazardous – every year we see pets that have potentially fatal throat injuries from trying to catch sticks.

After cats have been out for the day, or dogs have been walking through long grass, be sure to groom them well to try and identify and remove any **grass seeds** and **ticks** that have found their way into the coat *before* they penetrate the skin and cause problems.



Grass seeds can work their way into the feet (see photo bottom left), or become trapped in dogs ears', usually causing severe head shaking.



Rabbits, in particular, need to be monitored carefully for

**fly strike**. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this attracts flies, which lay eggs, which in turn develop into flesh eating maggots. Fly strike is very painful and frequently results in death. During the summer months, rabbits should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots. Also watch out for **bee** and **wasp stings** that may require prompt veterinary attention since some dogs are allergic to their stings.



Finally please remember that the temperature in a car can rise rapidly and death from heat stroke can follow in minutes, so pets should never be left unattended in cars.

LATE, light nights and warm weather make summer particularly fun for many pets, but there are a number of potential hazards associated with the season that should be borne in mind – here are a few tips:

Visibility in the evenings can fade rapidly, so don't forget to use reflective collars to keep safe. Also, during the day it is important to remember that the sun itself can cause damage. Cats with white ear tips and noses are particularly at risk from **sunburn** which often leads to localised skin cancer of these areas. This risk can be reduced by applying high factor waterproof sunblock, applied daily, to reduce sunburn and the development of skin cancer (see photo above right).

When out on **walks** it is important to avoid ponds that may contain dangerous algae,



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes



Paw of a dog with an interdigital cyst caused by a grass seed