



Aches And Pains

Our pets, like us, suffer from aches and pains as they get older. Arthritis is common in dogs and cats, and can have a major impact on our pets' quality of life. The good news is that there are several ways in which we can ease this discomfort.



September is ARTHRITIS AWARENESS MONTH, and Alnorthumbria Veterinary Practice will be running FREE ARTHRITIS CHECKS. Please contact your local branch to make an appointment:

Belvedere Terrace,
ALNWICK

Tel: 01665 602516

1-3 Bede Street
AMBLE

Tel: 01665 713111

Fairmoor
MORPETH

Tel: 01670 505321

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

Wriggle your way out of this one!



ALTHOUGH it's not a pleasant thought, our pets are constantly at risk of acquiring worms. Until recently, our main concerns regarding worms have been to ensure dogs and cats are protected against **roundworms** and **tapeworms** –

both of which live in the **intestines**. In addition, an increasing problem in dogs (but not cats) is **lungworm** infestation with *Angiostrongylus vasorum* – see panel right for information.



Roundworms can grow up to 20cm in length and live in the intestines of dogs and cats. They shed thousands of tiny eggs which pass out in the faeces and contaminate the environment, where the eggs can survive for years. Dogs and cats are reinfected by inadvertently eating the eggs. The eggs also pose some risk to children if they are unwittingly swallowed.



Tapeworms also live in the intestines and can grow up to 5m in length. They shed small segments containing eggs which pass out in the faeces, or which may be found around the tail area. As the segments break down, the eggs may be eaten by an *intermediate host*; these include small rodents (e.g. mice) and fleas. Cats commonly catch and eat small rodents and both cats and dogs swallow fleas as they groom themselves, thus reinfesting themselves with tapeworms.

The good news is that worms can be prevented by following a few simple rules: worm your pets regularly, use regular flea control, try to avoid dogs eating snails, slugs and frogs and keep gardens clear of faeces. Please let us advise you on the most suitable worm and flea regime for your pets!

Lungworm in dogs

Lungworm infestation, caused by the parasite *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is something that all dog owners should be aware of.

Angiostrongylus vasorum can cause a wide range of symptoms – some severe, including coughing, lethargy, fits and blood clotting problems. However other pets may show no obvious signs of problems.



Adult *A. vasorum* lungworm

These live in the heart and pulmonary arteries

So what is the life-cycle?

In infected dogs, *A. vasorum* lungworms live in the pulmonary arteries and right ventricle of the heart. Here they lay eggs, which hatch into larvae and in turn migrate into the airways of the lung. Larvae are then coughed up, swallowed and passed in the dog's faeces.

Slugs, snails and frogs act as *intermediate hosts*, ingesting the larvae. The intermediate hosts are in turn eaten by dogs (often unwittingly) and the larvae then migrate to the heart and develop into adult worms.

Teeth – time for a check-up?



HAVE YOU flipped up your pet's lip recently and had a look at his teeth? Did you know that gum disease is probably the single most common long term disease that our pets will suffer from in their lives?

A healthy mouth usually has pale pink gums, and bright white teeth. However, over time, accumulation of plaque bacteria on the surface of the teeth can lead to *inflammation* of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis**. This is frequently accompanied by the accumulation of calculus (tartar) on the surface of the teeth, and also very bad breath!

If you would like any further information, or a dental check-up for your pet, please contact us to arrange a suitable time.

Progression of dental disease



Healthy mouth with white teeth and healthy pink gums



Unhealthy mouth with gingivitis and calculus



Beat the heat this summer!

AS WE enjoy the warm sunny summer weather it's worth sparing a thought for our four legged friends. Here we look at a few steps you can take to keep them fit and well!

- Make sure fresh clean water is always available to all pets – you may even need to take some on walks and avoid exercise in the heat of the day – particularly with old, overweight dogs with heart problems; stick to early mornings and evenings.
- 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.
- Watch out also for grass seeds (awns) of the meadow grasses. They commonly become trapped in dogs ears – causing violent head shaking, or may become embedded in the feet or other areas.
- Bee and wasp stings are another seasonal problem. Some pets are allergic to their stings and may need prompt veterinary attention.
- If your pet is going into kennels this summer, don't forget to make sure they are up to date with their vaccinations!
- Don't forget to keep treating your pets regularly against fleas, ticks and worms and **never ever leave a pet in a car on a hot day.**



Ear tip of a cat showing cancerous changes



Grass awns of the summer grasses



Paw of a dog with an inter-digital cyst caused by a grass seed



Bees and wasps can be a summer hazard for inquisitive pets



Help me – I'm lost....

HAVE YOU ever wondered how you would cope if your pet went missing? Regardless of how much you care for them you can't be in control all the time; cats roam very widely and dogs may stray. If your pet does become lost or is injured, it is essential that he or she can be reliably identified. Sadly, many pets are never reunited with their owners due to lack of identification.

The good news is that in addition to the traditional collar and tag (which can unfortunately become detached and lost), modern technology has come to our aid – giving us a far more reliable form of pet identification – the microchip implant.

A tiny microchip (about the size of a grain of rice) is quickly and easily implanted under the skin, permanently identifying your pet. Each microchip contains a unique code which identifies your pet and these details are stored on a central computer database. Should your pet go missing, when found, the chip can be read using special hand held scanners (see photo right). Veterinary practices, the police and animal welfare organisations routinely scan strays, hopefully ensuring that if the unthinkable happens, you can be speedily reunited. For further information or to have your pet microchipped, please contact us today!



Microchip implant



Thyroid disease – is your pet affected?

MOST of us have heard of the thyroid gland, but did you know that thyroid problems are surprisingly common in pets?

The thyroid gland consists of two lobes, located on either side of the trachea (windpipe) in the neck – see diagram. The thyroid gland produces thyroid hormone which regulates your pet's metabolic rate. Too much thyroid hormone speeds up the body's metabolism, whilst too little slows it down.

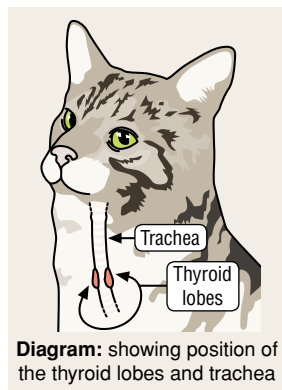
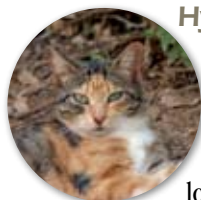


Diagram: showing position of the thyroid lobes and trachea

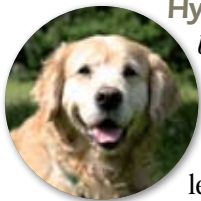
Hyperthyroidism in cats

Over production of thyroid hormone is called *hyper*-thyroidism and is a relatively common condition in cats over eight years of age. In the majority of cases this is caused by benign (non-cancerous) enlargement of one or both thyroid lobes. Hyperthyroid cats typically have an increased appetite, but *despite* this show signs of weight loss, and often become quite unkempt in appearance. In addition, excess thyroid hormone usually increases the heart rate, frequently causing cardiac problems. As well as the above, a variety of other signs may be seen including hyperactivity, vomiting and diarrhoea. However the good news is that in the majority of cases, hyperthyroidism can be successfully treated. If you are concerned your cat may be hyperthyroid, come and see us for a check-up.



Hypothyroidism in dogs

Under production of thyroid hormone is called *hypo*thyroidism, and is a relatively common condition in the older dog. Lowered production of thyroid hormone leads to a decrease in the metabolic rate, usually leading to weight gain (with no increased appetite) and generalised lethargy. Other signs often include coat problems, and recurrent skin and ear infections.



Diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be more tricky, but in confirmed cases, daily treatment with oral thyroid supplements can be very successful in treating this condition.

As you can see, thyroid conditions are relatively common in pets, but the really good news is that with an appropriate diagnosis, *both* conditions are very treatable. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you are concerned that your pet is showing any of the signs described above!