

smalltalk

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

WINTER 2017

Christmas is coming...

A reminder of the potential risks and hazards to our pets at this festive time



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Exotic Pets

Advice on keeping exotic pets

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Signs of osteoarthritis and treatment options

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Hyperthyroidism in older cats





Pet Health Schemes - the benefits

Pip Elphee RVN Bsc (Hons) MHAO Cedar Veterinary Group

Veterinary Medicine is evolving; no longer are we content to patch up animals when they are already unwell, we feel it is far more effective to practice preventative medicine - treating the animal before it becomes poorly.

There is no better way to do this than to have a Pet Health Care Scheme.

For example the Lifetime Care Club. It is not pet insurance and we advise owners that insurance is still a very necessary requirement. The schemes are monthly payment plans that cover the essential aspects of responsible pet health care and may cover other services too.

The advantages of a plan is more cost effective health care with a substantial annual saving on the normal costs. The schemes include everything you need to keep your pet in tip top condition. The 6 monthly health check can pick up any issues early and the scheme also

Monthly direct debit payments in our scheme will cover:

- Routine vaccinations (additional vaccinations e.g. rabies and RHD 2 receive a discount).
- Year round flea, tick and worm control including lungworm prevention.
- A 6 month health check with a vet.
- Discounted procedures such as neutering, routine dentals and in-house lab fees.
- Discounts on merchandise such as food and toys.
- And several other advantages such as free microchipping and nail clips.
- Discount for additional pets on the scheme.

provides a handy reminder system as to when vaccination and anti-parasite treatments are needed. Money off other



products such as food ensures your pet also has optimum nutrition to keep them well at an affordable price.

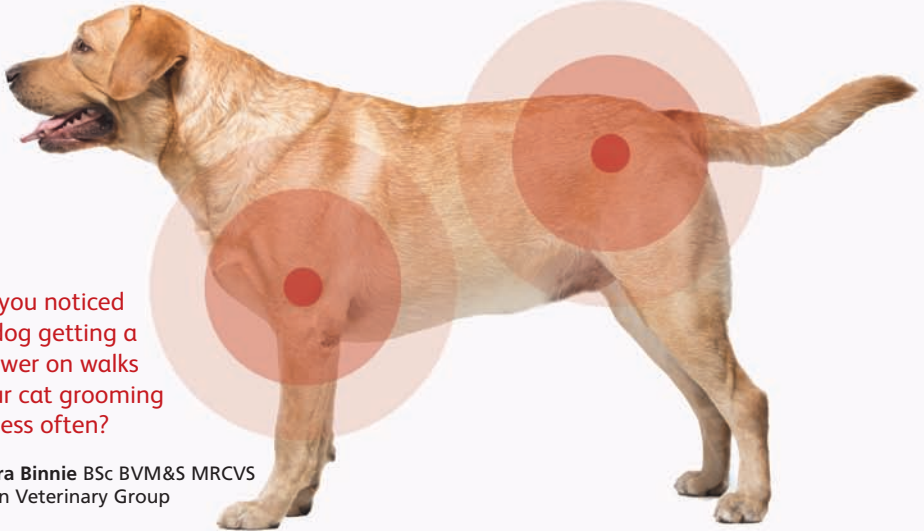
Many insurance companies now look at pets being part of these schemes as a sign of responsible pet ownership and some will even reduce the premiums as a result.

With climate change and more pets travelling to and from abroad, proper parasite control is essential all year round. Warmer weather outside and central heating means that fleas etc. can even be a problem in the winter months. The recent discovery of another tick borne disease called Babesiosis in this country, means effective tick control is also necessary.

Your vet practice will be happy to discuss the correct preventative treatments and services for your pet and inform you of the benefits of their own healthcare scheme. Contact your practice to find out more about your practice health scheme.

Have you noticed your dog getting a bit slower on walks or your cat grooming itself less often?

By **Laura Binnie** BSc BVM&S MRCVS
Paragon Veterinary Group



Osteoarthritis

This could be a sign that they are starting to develop osteoarthritis or OA as we refer to it. What is OA? Simply put, it is the inflammation (pain, heat, swelling) of a joint. More specifically OA has been described as the vicious cycle of deteriorating changes that result when the rate of damage of joint cartilage exceeds its ability to repair itself.

With our ageing (and often weight gaining) pet population we are seeing a lot more cases of OA developing. An animal with a history of trauma or skeletal surgery will be more likely to develop OA as they age. It may start with a slowing down on walks or a subtle limp and progress to an increased effort getting out of bed or

even walking with a pronounced limp or reluctance to exercise. Grumpiness, sleeping more and muscle wasting are also noticed by owners of animals with chronic OA.

The best way to diagnose the condition in general practice is to perform a full clinical examination, paying particular attention to the joints in the limbs and the spine, and by taking radiographs (x-rays) of the affected area. Radiographs can highlight signs of joint changes, e.g. degeneration of joint surfaces, bony growths, joint swellings and other abnormalities. Joint tap analysis is also useful in some situations.

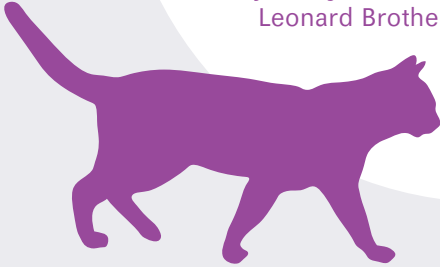
Following a diagnosis of OA, your vet will discuss the condition with you and all the treatment options that are

available. In some circumstances surgical options will be discussed along with weight management (to build muscle and lose additional fat), specifically tailored exercise regimes, medication, physiotherapy, acupuncture and hydrotherapy. We can give advice on how you can make your homes, and their environments, easier for your pet to move around and less likely to aggravate their condition and ultimately improve their quality of life.

If you would like more information or suspect your pet might be suffering from OA please ask a member of staff and we can arrange a vet and nurse OA clinic for your pet at a time that suits you.

Hyperthyroidism

By **Andy Nelson BVSc PGcertSAS MRCVS**
Leonard Brothers Veterinary Centre Ltd



Hyperthyroidism is a relatively common condition of older cats whereby they develop an over-active thyroid gland. It can affect any cat but usually only cats over 10 years old.

The thyroid gland is under the chin and produces a hormone which drives metabolism. This means that if a cat has an over-active thyroid their metabolism goes into over-drive. This leads to the common clinical signs.

Clinical signs of hyperthyroidism:

- Weight loss
- Increased appetite
- Increased thirst
- Hyper-activity
- Upset tummy (sickness and diarrhoea)


If an older cat is showing these symptoms then your vet will look for other signs on their clinical examination. Lots of these patients have a swelling in the neck around the windpipe (the enlarged thyroid) and usually have a rapid heart rate, often with a heart murmur.

If untreated the thyroid will get further and further out of control and these cats can deteriorate very quickly.

If your vet is suspicious that your cat has an over-active thyroid they will usually ask to run some tests. These will usually involve blood tests, but may include urine tests, blood pressure tests and sometimes heart scans.

The good news about hyperthyroidism is that it is readily treatable and there are 4 main treatment options:

1. The best treatment involves the cats having a radioactive injection which destroys the over-active thyroid tissue giving a cure to the condition with very little risk of adverse effects. This is a very specialised treatment and not many places in the UK offer the injection. However there are a few XLVets practices and some university vet schools who are able to offer this 'gold standard' treatment.

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2. Another option is for the cat to have an operation to remove the thyroid gland. Like the radioactive treatment, this should cure the problem, and in experienced hands the surgical complication rate is low.
 3. Medication can be used to control the over active thyroid. This can work very well but is not a cure, these cats will need medication and close monitoring for the rest of their lives.
 4. A more recent development is the option to treat these cats with a special prescription diet which is extremely low in iodine. Without iodine the thyroid gland is unable to produce hormones. This again is a control rather than a cure and if your cat eats any other food at all then this will not work.

The best advice is to make sure your elderly cat is checked at least twice a year by your vet. Any early changes will then be picked up and treatment can be started before things go too far. Most cats with hyperthyroidism can lead a full and normal life once they have been treated.





EXOTIC PETS

Owning a pet is a privilege 47% of households in the UK enjoy. Currently an amazing 13 million households have pets.

Exotic pets, such as snakes, lizards, tortoises and spiders, are becoming increasingly popular, with estimates of 1.3 to 1.7 million exotic pets in the UK today.

Keeping an exotic pet can be relatively straightforward once the animals' individual requirements are met, but the initial cost of a vivarium with specific lighting, heat, humidity, and slightly unusual food can reach hundreds of pounds before an animal is even purchased.

Your vet will be able to discuss all of these essential requirements with you, advise you on where and what to buy, and will be able to help if that animal becomes sick.



By **Emma James BVSc BSc (Hons) GPCert (SAM) PgC (SAM) MRCVS**
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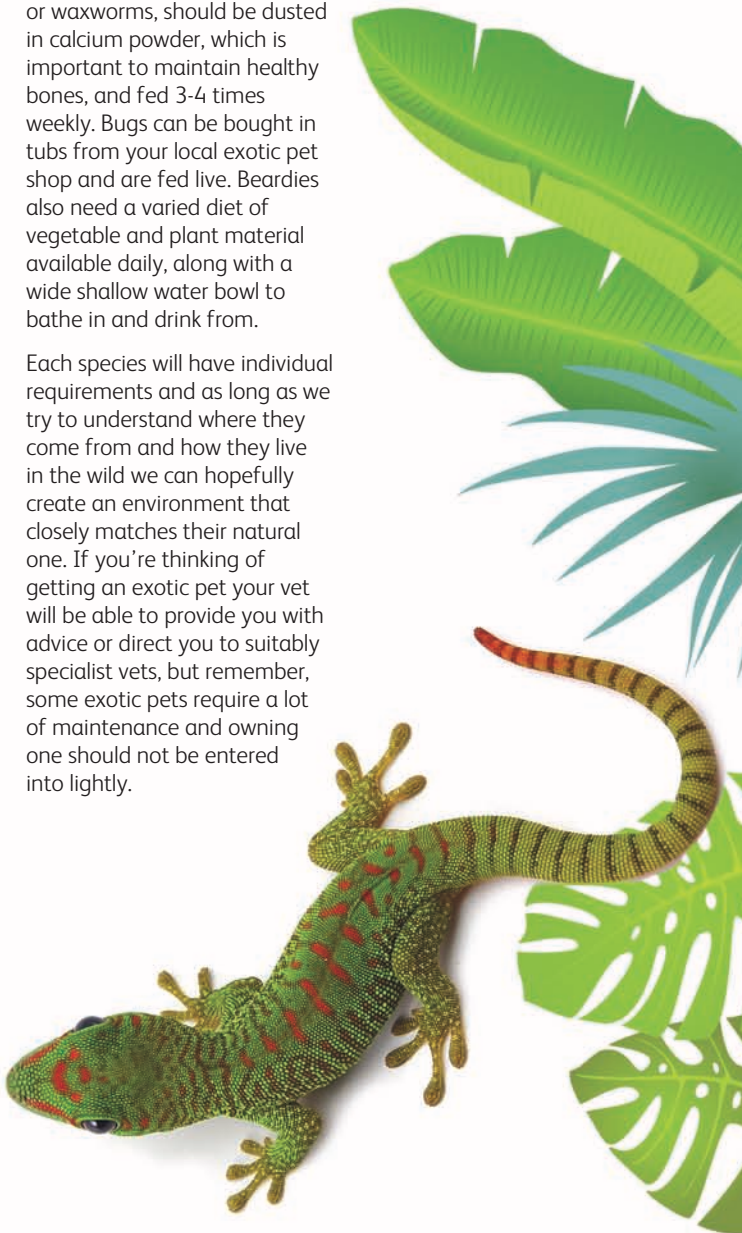
Most exotic pets, if kept in the correct environment, rarely become ill so getting their husbandry right is absolutely vital.

One example is bearded dragons or 'beardies' which originate from the Australian desert. To mimic this lizard's natural environment we need to create an artificial sun using a special mercury vapour bulb that provides a source of daylight, heat, and ultraviolet (UV) light. Alternatively a spot light and ultraviolet strip light can be used as long as the bulb emits UVA and UVB; these UV strips will need replacing every 6 months as the UV radiation deteriorates over time. All heating and lighting is usually placed at one end of the vivarium to create a temperature gradient which allows the bearded to choose where it feels comfortable. Several hides or shelters need to be included, a minimum of one at the 'hot end' and one at the 'cold end'. Thermometers at each end of the vivarium allow you to monitor the environment closely and adjust the temperature accordingly. A hygrometer, which measures humidity, should also be installed.

Beardies need to bask, or sunbathe, for up to 12 hours per day to warm their bodies, kick starting their metabolism so they will eat and function

normally. Insects such as locusts, crickets, mealworms or waxworms, should be dusted in calcium powder, which is important to maintain healthy bones, and fed 3-4 times weekly. Bugs can be bought in tubs from your local exotic pet shop and are fed live. Beardies also need a varied diet of vegetable and plant material available daily, along with a wide shallow water bowl to bathe in and drink from.

Each species will have individual requirements and as long as we try to understand where they come from and how they live in the wild we can hopefully create an environment that closely matches their natural one. If you're thinking of getting an exotic pet your vet will be able to provide you with advice or direct you to suitably specialist vets, but remember, some exotic pets require a lot of maintenance and owning one should not be entered into lightly.





Christmas

treats or poisons?



Is it me or am I just turning into Scrooge as I get older? As I write this article it is only October and already there seems to be a huge amount of excitement surrounding the build up to Christmas.



Christmas Dangers

by Verity J Griffiths BSc(Hons) MA, VetMB GPCert(SAS)
GPCert(EM & S) MRCVS Southfield Veterinary Centre

However, when you see the John Lewis or the Coca Cola advertisements on television then you know there is no getting away from it! This time of year is fraught with potential dangers to our pets so it is a time for Veterinary Practices to gently remind pet owners of the potential risks of poisoning from our festive food and of other seasonal hazards.

Chocolate always has been and always will be poisonous to dogs and cats, no matter what time of year it is. The higher the cocoa solid content, the greater the risk. Consequently, white chocolate is far less of a risk than milk chocolate with dark chocolate being the most toxic. So, if your pet scoffs the chocolate orange, gorges on Quality Street or binges on the Bendicks, please check with your vet how to deal with them. Your vet will want to know how much chocolate has potentially been

eaten and the size of your dog or cat. Then if there is a perceived risk of toxicity they may be made to vomit to reduce the amount in their stomach and if the risks are high they may be put on a drip to support organ function together with other supportive care. Avoid temptation by not putting any chocolate on or under the Christmas tree!

Other foods that are also poisonous to pets that are potentially a higher risk at Christmas time include grapes, raisins, and sultanas. These are found in abundance in Christmas cake, pudding and mince pies and these can prove lethal in even very small amounts, so don't risk it. If you know that your pet has ingested even the smallest amount please contact your vet as a matter of urgency.

Other toxins to be aware of include macadamia nuts, onions, leeks, shallots and garlic, so please watch out for all those tasty savouries. If you have a 'counter surfer' like one of my dogs, ensure that you don't leave anything out on

the units! Even alcohol is a potential hazard and I have to admit one of mine has polished off a Baileys before now when I wasn't paying attention!

Leftover foods can grow mould, which can induce convulsions, so secure that food waste bin lid or better still store it well out of harms way.

Although I have not described all the ill effects these foods cause, it is best not to find out the hard way. So let us ensure this Christmas that humans enjoy human food and pets enjoy pet food and treats and therefore no one will be making an unscheduled trip to the vets over the Christmas period. Both you and the emergency vet on duty will be very thankful.

So finally a Very Merry Christmas to you all!





By Alex Spurgeon

National Animal Welfare Trust (NAWT)

Rehoming a shelter pet



By offering a responsible loving home to a rescue pet, you could quite literally be saving a life.

The pet you take home was the lucky one - they found themselves a place in rescue, where they were given the necessary treatment, training and help to find a new family. However, for the hundreds of stray animals awaiting a place in rescue, the future isn't always so bright. Your decision to offer a home to a rescue pet has

freed a space for another lucky stray. It's given them the chance your pet was given, to be safe and loved in a happy home.

Once you take your rescue pet home, there are a few top tips that you'll need to remember to help settle them in. Firstly, agree the 'house rules' in advance and ensure everyone in the family sticks to them. For example, are they allowed on the sofa? Are they allowed upstairs? Animals understand consistency and routine. Secondly, give them time to settle in. There's no hurry for them to meet all your friends and family and all their pets. See things from your new pet's perspective and think about how much change they

are already experiencing simply by having a new home and family. Get into a routine with them, let them explore their new environment and then integrate them slowly into all other aspects of your life. Finally, it's important to remember to keep new cats inside and new dogs on a lead for the first six weeks. Give them time to understand that being around you and being in the home is rewarding and when you finally do give them a bit more freedom, do it before a meal time so they won't want to go too far.

There's no doubt that offering a rescue pet a second chance in a happy home can be a wonderfully rewarding experience as well as being far more cost effective than purchasing a pet elsewhere. At National Animal Welfare Trust we care for hundreds of companion animals, all waiting to find their perfect match and be welcomed into a loving responsible home. Every one of our cats and dogs are fully vet-checked, neutered, microchipped and vaccinated before rehoming and come with four weeks free Petplan insurance.

If you would like to welcome a rescue pet into your home, please visit www.nawt.org.uk

A more sedentary lifestyle is as bad for pets as it is for humans

Taken from an article in the Independent - 11th Sept 2017 by Karen Rodham

So it is not only the fact that we are living longer, but it's also the way we are living which is making humans more susceptible to chronic disease. The same can be said for our pets. A survey from the Kennel Club has shown that not enough dogs are getting their daily exercise, with one in five dog owners too lazy to take their pets out every day.

Recent estimates also show that almost half of all cats and dogs are now obese. And that these numbers are expected to rise in coming years - as more pets live sedentary lifestyles and eat too much food.

But if we could change our behaviour, and therefore that of our pets, just a little bit, we could do much to reduce the likelihood of them developing a chronic illness in the first place. By better managing their intake of food and giving

them more exercise you can reduce their susceptibility to chronic diseases.



wordsearch



AGILITY

CAT

GOLDFISH

FLEAS

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BUNNY

VACCINE

SNAKE

TREAT