

smalltalk

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

WINTER 2018

Grooming your pet

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The importance of compliance



Thaddeus Clifton MA VetMB MRCVS PAWS Veterinary Health Centre

Almost all of us have heard of the idea of 'finishing the course' when it comes to antibiotic treatments, and with the media spreading the word about the risks of antibiotic resistance, the importance of this mantra has never been greater.

However, many pet owners are not aware of why medication is prescribed the way it is, or why the specific guidelines are so important to the success of the treatment. Here are a few examples of the importance of medicating as prescribed to highlight why compliance is so key:

Antibiotics:

When prescribed 'twice daily' it is important to remember this actually means every 12 hours. This is because the antibiotic needs time to kill bacteria. During this time, the antibiotic also needs to be above a threshold quantity to do its job. As time passes after a dose, medications are removed from the body by the liver and kidneys, and at a certain time point there is not enough antibiotic left to kill bacteria. At this time, the next dose should come along as a 'top-up'.

If you wait too long between doses, the bacteria are exposed

to a 'sub-lethal' dose, when the hardier bacteria can both survive and develop immunity to the drug. By dosing at the correct interval, we ensure that the bugs don't get a chance to fight back.

Pain relief:

It may seem obvious to keep pain relief going all the time to provide comfort, but it is also important because as with antibiotics, gaps between doses can cause problems.

When pain relief dips, the body becomes hypersensitive to the pain signals we have been trying to control, a phenomenon called 'wind-up'. This results in future doses of pain relief working less well. Likewise, under-dosing has the same effect, and can often contribute to owners feeling that medication is no longer working.

Hormonal medications:

Treatments such as steroids, or medications for conditions such as Cushing's or Hyperthyroidism all rely on changing the natural hormonal rhythms of the patient. By timing doses to match these cycles, as well as giving the body chances to rest and recover between doses, we achieve effective control while reducing the risk of adverse side effects.

There are many other examples of why dosing in the manner prescribed (including giving tablets with or without food) is important. However, the key thing for all owners to remember is to openly discuss their pets' medication with their practice, as understanding your medication, and using it correctly will give the drugs the best chance to work.



By David Coombs BVSc MRCVS
Rosevean Veterinary Practice

Dental care in pets

The old adage 'a stitch in time saves nine', is often true in veterinary practice, but possibly never more so than in regards to dental care. We often get pets presented for routine check ups and on clinical examination discover fairly advanced dental disease.

The reality is that without regular dental care and good diet, teeth and gums will suffer. Unfortunately it is a sad fact that dental disease is often the tip of the iceberg, and the obvious discomfort and potential infection in the mouth can lead to much more serious consequences such as heart disease and kidney problems.

The options for dental care for your pet will obviously need to be tailored for the individual animal and can be limited by their temperament. Anyone who has tried to brush their cat's teeth when they are not used to it will understand that this is not always an easy option! It should be remembered that we are not just talking about cats and dogs here. With the increasing numbers of rabbits and rodents that we see in practice today the principles of regular dental checkups apply here as well. These small furries carry their own unique issues when it comes to dental care.

Options for dental care may involve dental chews, oral gels, tooth brushing, dietary choice, additives to the drinking water, and just as with ourselves, dental treatment such as scaling and polishing teeth, and more complicated dental procedures, are all available if required. Most of our pets need to have an anaesthetic in order to have a dental scale or more serious treatment so we would always encourage pet owners to take dental care seriously and develop a plan before problems arise.

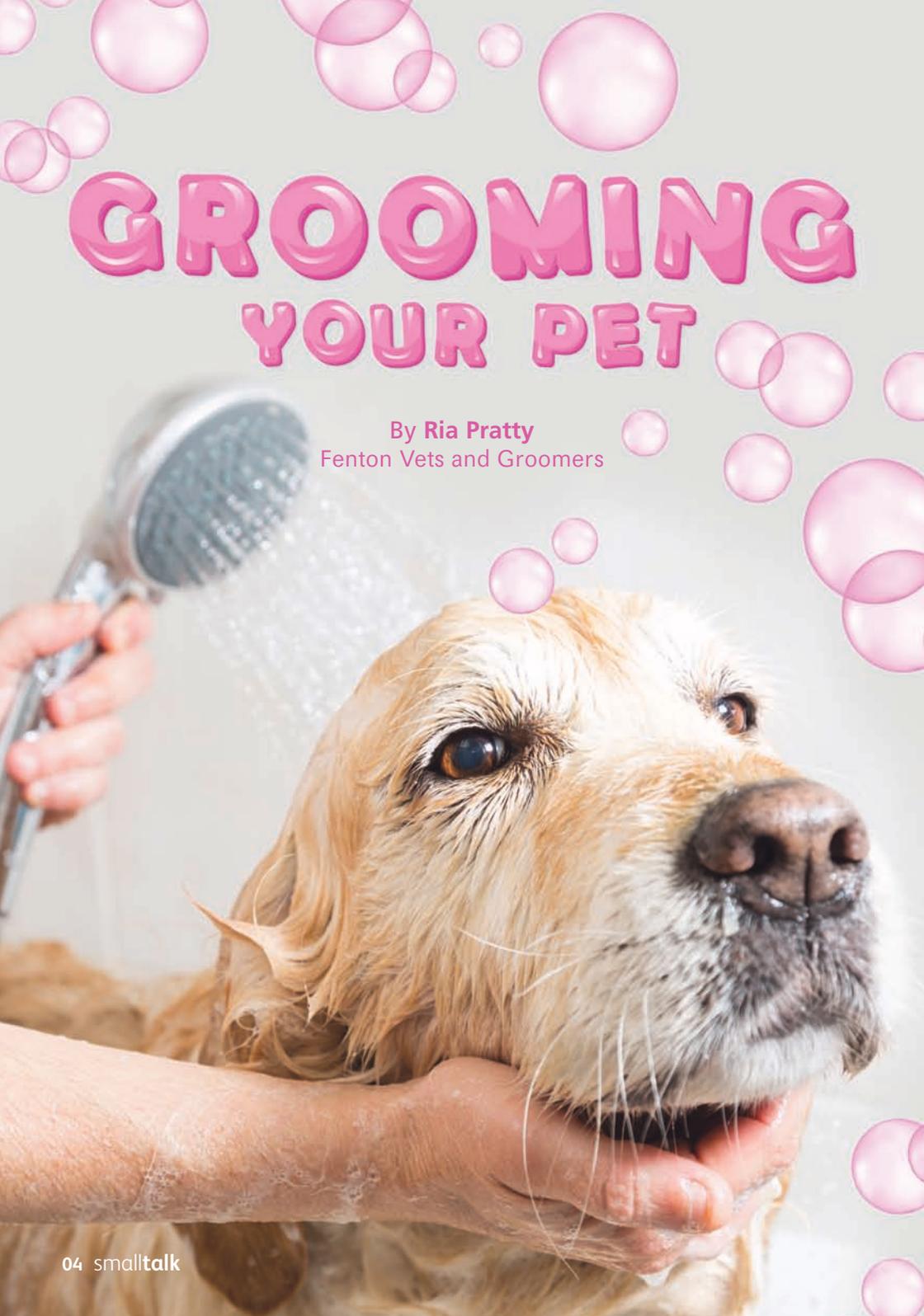
With this in mind it is always the best policy to get our pets used to having their mouths examined thoroughly from a very early age. We encourage puppy owners at puppy parties and first vaccinations to do exactly that, and to do it regularly so that when we as vets and nurses need to examine their pet it is much less stressful all round!

Even if your pet is older, it is never too late to develop a program of good dental care just as we would do for ourselves. Regular dental checks to monitor teeth and gums will hopefully prevent problems becoming advanced before we need to intervene.

The sad reality is that the more extreme cases of dental disease and its consequences are normally easily avoidable with a bit of planning and an agreed strategy for that pet.

If you have any questions about dental care for your pet please contact your practice and we will be able to sort a sensible plan together with you and your pet!



A close-up photograph of a golden retriever's head being bathed. A hand holds a silver showerhead, spraying water onto the dog's wet, light-brown fur. Another hand is visible at the bottom, gently supporting the dog's chin. The background is a plain, light-colored wall, and the entire scene is framed by numerous translucent pink bubbles of various sizes.

GROOMING YOUR PET

By Ria Pratty
Fenton Vets and Groomers

Whether you have a nervous pet or it is their first time visiting a groomer, here are some tips to prepare your pet for their first visit:

- **Grooming starts at home** - get them used to the experience by bathing them at home, go through the process of brushing and combing. Also get your pet used to contact by touching their feet, holding their paws, and full body petting. All these areas will need to be touched by the groomer and getting your pet used to being handled is always a good idea. You can use treats or toys as a reward.
- **Research local pet groomers** - There are many groomers about, however a good salon will always allow you and your pet a pre-consultation visit and tour. This will allow you to see the working environment and find one equipped for your pet's needs. Be upfront if your dog is fearful or aggressive. A reputable dog groomer will always be able to help and provide you with any information you may need.

- **Dropping your dog off** - A quick fuss and 'see you soon' will suffice. Drawing it out or acting hesitant will allow your dog to sense something is wrong. Groomers are professionals and will know what they are doing. Always reward your dog after a trip to the groomers with lots of praise.

Why get your pet groomed?

Regular grooming aerates the coat enabling healthy growth, as well as keeping grease levels to a minimum (grease can block pores and cause cysts). All of this can prevent matting in longer haired animals, which can be sore and lead to skin irritation.

Dogs cool off by panting, and sweating through the pads on their paws. A good groomer will remove the hair from between their pads, keeping it trimmed allows more efficient cooling off.

Grooming can enable you to detect health problems, such as hidden issues found under a dog or cat's coat including ticks, fleas, hot spots, dry patches, skin conditions, cuts, grazes and more. A groomer gets a close look at areas of your pet and can identify

any problems early and advise on vet visits if necessary. Removing matted or thick coats can also allow these problems to be uncovered.

Keeping nails trimmed helps avoid overgrowth in to the pad. Cleaning ears and plucking ear hair, allows for a good insight into ear health. Some groomers have hydrotherapy bathing systems which relax your pet, providing a thorough shampoo and massage experience and a clip and trim to your requirements.



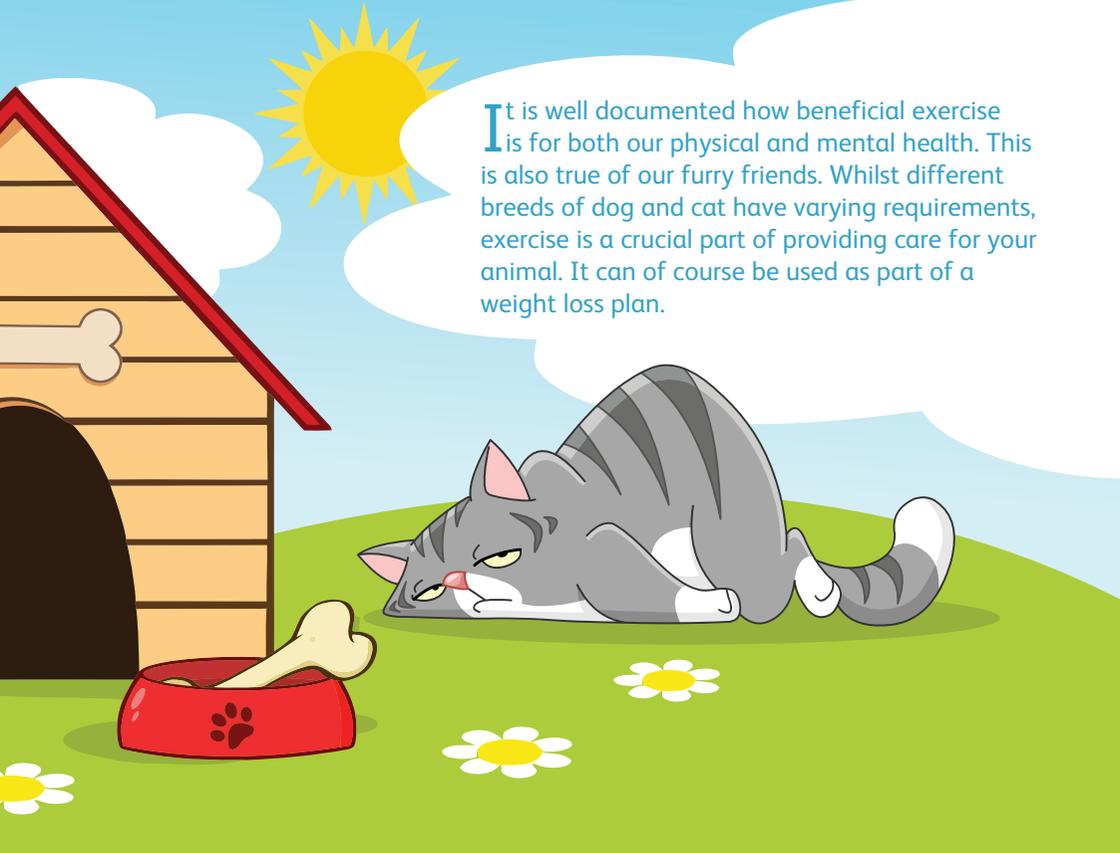
by Sophie Dolbear MRCVS BVSc Seadown Veterinary Hospital

WEIGHT CONTROL



and the importance of *exercise*

It is well documented how beneficial exercise is for both our physical and mental health. This is also true of our furry friends. Whilst different breeds of dog and cat have varying requirements, exercise is a crucial part of providing care for your animal. It can of course be used as part of a weight loss plan.



Being overweight puts your pet at increased risk of conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and arthritis, to name a few. Until recently, fat was thought to be a fairly inactive substance, but actually it does play a role in how the body functions. So as cute and cuddly as the extra pounds look on your pet; it is reducing their lifespan if they are overweight for a prolonged period of time.

Here are a few tips and tricks.

How to increase exercise

- All dogs should get daily exercise, ideally at least two walks a day. If this is a struggle; consider a dog walker, or sending your pup to doggy day care.
- **Work for treats.** Put treats (or some of their daily food allowance) into a treat ball to encourage reward based play and exercise.
- **Play fetch.** Whatever doggy toy you choose (no sticks please), retrieving a toy is a great way to encourage more exercise. Encourage your cat to play in the house or outside.
- **Hydrotherapy.** Whilst this is used to help rehabilitate dogs after surgery, its fantastic

exercise for a healthy dog. Take them to the sea or a safe river, or find a local hydrotherapy pool near you for a fun swim.

Top tips for keeping your pet slim

- Regular weight checks are very important; pop into your vets or weigh your pet at home.
- Neutering your pet is very much recommended for a number of reasons. However it does cause our pets to metabolise food differently and they could gain weight after neutering so you may need to reduce the amount you are feeding.
- Manufacturers' feeding guidelines often overestimate so don't be

afraid to feed less than recommended. Weighing out the food daily is much more accurate than 'a handful' or 'a bowl full'.

- Do not feed human food scraps to your pet. Don't forget about the extra calories in treats such as dental chews/ treats.
- If your pet has to rest following an injury, make sure you cut the food down as they won't be as active.
- If family members like to feed your pet and this is packing on the pounds, reduce the amount of food you feed them. Whilst it would be better not to have all the tidbits, control the bits you can control by reducing overall calorie intake.
- As your beloved pet ages; they are likely to be less active, so make sure you reduce the amount of food you are feeding.



We all want to spoil our pets. How about treating them to a new toy or a lovely long walk, not with the food you are eating. A slim pet is a happy pet!



Keeping your
pet warm this

Winter

By **Hannah McFall BSc MVDr MRCVS**
Rutland Veterinary Centre

As winter approaches and we start turning the heating on inside, we should consider our furry friends that live outdoors. Many households will be responsible for the care of rabbits and guinea pigs this winter, as they both rank within the top five UK pets.

In the wild, rabbits rely on their burrows to stay warm. By housing them above ground, we subject rabbits to extremes of weather including low temperatures, wind and rain. Guinea pigs are also strangers to our cold British weather, as they originate from warmer South American climates.

During the winter months, people tend to spend less time in the garden so it is important to regularly check on our rabbits

and guinea pigs. A hutch is only capable of providing protection if it is in good repair. Drafts can be reduced by turning the hutch away from the wind, and by partially covering mesh doors with clear plastic which will allow the sunshine in and also allow our small furrries to see out. It is still important to ensure the hutch is well ventilated and raised off the ground to prevent rising damp and wood rot. Hutches can be insulated by covering with an

old blanket or carpet, and then placing a tarpaulin as the outermost layer. Providing extra bedding such as hay and straw is also important, and well-covered heat pads can provide warmth overnight. However one of the easiest ways to stay warm is keeping animals in pairs, which is also great for companionship!

Small furrries still require daily exercise throughout the winter. A well-covered run can be attached to the hutch, providing they can retreat to a warm, sheltered area. A good diet is also essential during the colder weather, as extra calories are needed to keep warm. The pet's weight should be

Creature Comforts

monitored by regular weighing, and their faecal output checked daily. Water bottles should be checked regularly and covered to prevent freezing, using a bottle cover or a DIY cover made of bubble wrap and a sock. Health checks should be done daily, and include checking the hocks of arthritic rabbits which can be made worse by the cold; checking the hindquarters for signs of fly strike, as flies may seek the warmth of a hutch and lay eggs; and to also check guinea pigs' nails, which may need more regular clipping if they are less active. It may be necessary to bring older

animals inside, and this needs to be a slow process to acclimatise them to life indoors. Their winter coat will moult once inside, so they cannot return outdoors until the return of warmer weather.

The most important thing is that our small furrries are dry and warm during the winter months. They do not hibernate, and any signs of being unwell should be checked by a vet immediately.

Keeping your pet up to date with their preventative healthcare will also help to safeguard their health and allow them to enjoy the wintertime!



by Guy Gordon BVM&S MRCVS
Donald S McGregor and Partners Ltd

Neutering



The general word for surgical removal of a pet's reproductive organs is neutering. More specifically we **castrate** males and **spay** females.



Traditional reasons for neutering:

- To prevent unwanted pregnancies
- To stop bitches spotting blood
- Reduce the risk of some diseases such as womb infection, certain cancers and transfer of communicable diseases
- Hopes of reduced canine antisocial behaviour such as roaming, same sex aggression and 'mating cushions'
- Hopes of reducing feline antisocial behaviour such as calling, urine spraying and fighting.

For cats this situation is little changed in our modern age but with dogs other considerations are also best taken into account. (Other species such as rabbits and ferrets will not be considered in this article.)

Although the reduced risk of some diseases, such as tumours of the reproductive tract and breast tissue, is well recognised in dogs after neutering, some studies indicate that certain other tumours and cruciate disease may be more likely after neutering in certain breeds. These factors can complicate the decision to neuter or not, but it has to be remembered that the evidence in these studies are often not substantial enough to be definitive. The level of risk reported also represents a very small statistical chance of a problem in any one individual animal - it must be remembered that 'increased risk' does not mean 'this will happen to my dog'. Usually other health and behavioural advantages of neutering, such as those mentioned above, are deemed more important in any individual case.

If neutering has been decided upon, another consideration is the age at which it should occur, with evidence that neutering dogs early could increase the risk of certain conditions in some larger breeds. Thus, unless other factors are overriding, a sensible recommendation would be to delay neutering, certainly in large breeds, until over a year of age, pushing this out to 18 months for giant breeds. Surgical neutering is normally performed on healthy, young animals and so risk is minimal, although one must

understand that there is always a small risk with any anaesthetic or surgical procedure.

Animal behaviour is coming to the fore as a topic that must be considered before neutering is performed. Neutering in an attempt to solve behavioural problems should only be done after professional advice. It could be detrimental in some cases. For example, hormones can help with confidence levels; fearful, unconfident dogs could worsen after neutering, thereby compounding their problems. A vet may wish to refer you to a colleague registered to advise on behavioural issues before neutering is contemplated. For other behaviours temporary neutering using medication may be considered for a test period.

In summary...

Current thought prevails that more often than not, particularly for bitches, the benefits of neutering outweigh the risks but this may not be the case for every individual pet. The days of broad-brush canine neutering policies are drawing to a close. Speak to your vet about your pet. Factors relating to breed and behavioural disposition can all be assessed properly so that an informed decision can be made as to whether neutering is in the best interests of your dog and if so, when it is best done.

“ Factors can complicate the decision to neuter or not, but it has to be remembered that the evidence in these studies are often not substantial enough to be definitive. ”



New-look resource empowers pet owners to buy a healthy puppy from a responsible breeder

From an article in the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Newsroom 1st October 2018

A puppy should never be bought on an impulse or without proper research, the Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) are reminding prospective dog owners, as stronger animal licensing and breeding regulations came into effect in England from 1st October.

To empower prospective buyers with all the information they need to avoid puppy farms and get a happy, healthy puppy

from a responsible breeder, The Puppy Contract has relaunched with a new-look website and a step-by-step guide to the dos and don'ts of buying a puppy. The Puppy Contract is a one-stop guide that aims to offer prospective puppy owners all the information they need at their fingertips. The free, downloadable tool-kit has been developed by AWF and the RSPCA and is supported by leading UK animal welfare charities and professional bodies - BVA, Dogs Trust, PDSA,

Universities Federation for Animal Welfare and Dog Breeding Reform Group - to help anyone buying or breeding puppies to do so responsibly. It consists of two parts: an information section about the puppy and its parents, to be filled out by the breeder, and a legally binding contract for sale between the buyer and the breeder. It can be used by any breeder and is not restricted to pedigree dogs or professional breeders. <https://puppycontract.org.uk>

