

Surgeries 7 days a week at The Veterinary Hospital, Estover



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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NEWS

SPRING 2010

GOOD NEWS for proud puppy owners!

For many years we have been running puppy socialisation classes in our practice for young pups, because we really care about the behavioural development of our patients as well as their physical health. Comprehensive early socialisation, particularly with people and other dogs, is very important. The classes not only help your puppy to develop a friendly attitude to other dogs, but also help you to prevent behaviour problems from developing and to learn about early training, first aid, feeding, exercise and so on. Your pup should attend these classes seven days or more after their first vaccination, and the four week course costs £12 (free to Healthy Pet Club members).

By popular demand Sarah, one of our Veterinary Nurses who has a particular interest and talent in education of puppies, is now running a training course for slightly older pups when they are between and 3 and 6 months of age. Ideally they would have attended socialisation classes first, but this is not compulsory. Sarah will help you to mould your pup into a well behaved and obedient adult, using positive, reward-based methods.

Full information about both socialisation and training for puppies is available in your puppy pack, or simply ask one of our receptionists for more information.

Meal deal – choosing the ideal diet!



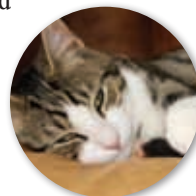
CHOOSING a diet for your pet can sometimes seem a daunting task with such a huge range to select from! To make matters more complicated – and just as with ourselves – our pet's dietary requirements *alter* as they grow from tiny kittens and puppies, into adulthood and eventually old age. However, the good news is that with *life-stage diets*, we are able to feed our pets a correctly balanced diet for every stage of their lives.

Puppies and kittens, because of their rapid rate of growth, need *higher* levels of energy, protein, fatty acids and other nutrients. Specifically formulated junior/growth diets ensure controlled growth (avoiding obesity) and healthy joint development. Puppies of large and giant breeds also have different dietary requirements and require their own specially formulated diets.

Adult pets, with their major growth phase now complete, require a balanced diet to keep them fit and healthy, but with *lower* levels of many of the nutrients mentioned above. To achieve this, adult pets require carefully balanced adult/maintenance diets.

Older pets also benefit from specifically formulated geriatric/senior diets. These have a reduced calorie content to help prevent weight gain in older age, higher fibre content to reduce constipation and changes in protein and mineral levels to reduce the workload of internal organs such as the kidney, liver and heart.

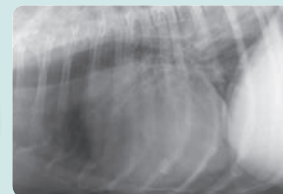
Whether healthy or poorly, your pet will benefit most from a high quality diet that suits their needs. If you have any queries on the most suitable diet for your pet – we would be delighted to help you.



Prescription Diets

Pets with particular disease problems may also benefit from specific "*prescription diets*". These are specifically formulated diets that can help greatly in the treatment of a variety of conditions including diseases of the kidneys, heart, joints, skin and teeth.

The heart of the matter!



Chest x-ray of a dog with an enlarged heart and heart failure. Specifically formulated cardiac diets are a key part of treatment.



Photo: Jane Burton

Don't get caught out by the cough!

KENNEL COUGH, otherwise known as infectious bronchitis, is a highly contagious disease of the dog's respiratory tract. The cough is passed from dog to dog wherever they meet – out on walks, on the beach in the summer, at training classes, dog shows and of course boarding kennels! Dogs of all ages can be affected and signs include a harsh, dry, whooping-type cough. Whilst some dogs recover relatively rapidly, others may cough for weeks and some may get more serious complications such as pneumonia.

Prevention is much better than cure, because without vaccination, treatment of kennel cough can be a costly and lengthy process involving isolation and antibiotic therapy. Kennel cough is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. We strongly recommend that dogs are vaccinated before staying in a boarding kennels and at any other time when the disease is rife. Please contact us for an appointment today!



Cat photo: Jane Burton

We are delighted to announce that in the New Year's Honours List, our former partner John Bower was awarded the MBE for services to the British Veterinary Association's Animal Welfare Foundation

Rabbits – keeping one jump ahead!



LIKE other pets, your rabbit needs to visit us from time to time for a routine health examination and vaccinations. Here we look at some of the health issues facing pet rabbits.

Vaccination With the onset of warmer weather, now is the time to ensure your rabbit is vaccinated. Vaccination primes your rabbit's immune system to recognise and defend against incurable and life threatening infectious diseases – specifically Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic disease.

- **Myxomatosis** is a distressing viral disease spread by rabbit fleas, mosquitoes and other blood sucking insects. Affected rabbits typically suffer from swollen eyes, leading to blindness and death in most cases.



- **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)** is another very serious viral infection. It spreads easily between rabbits or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. Infected rabbits may show a variety of signs including nose bleeds, loss of appetite and lethargy. Sadly most will die despite treatment.

Happily we are now able to offer you protection against both of these deadly infectious diseases – please contact us now to arrange a health check and vaccination.

Flystrike is a really big problem in rabbits during the warmer months. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots, which are capable of burrowing through the rabbit's skin and into the underlying flesh. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected **daily** for fly eggs and maggots. Soiled bedding should also be removed on a daily basis to minimise flies being attracted to the hutch.

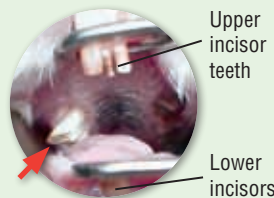
Please don't hesitate to ask us for further information on these or any other health issues affecting your rabbit.

Tooth problems

You may be surprised to learn that dental disease is a very common health problem in rabbits. Rabbits have *continuously growing* teeth, with both the cheek teeth and the incisor (front) teeth growing by as much as 1-2 mm per week!

This enables wild rabbits to graze *all day* on grass and other abrasive foods without wearing out their teeth!

Equally, feeding your pet rabbit the correct diet is very important. Their ideal diet includes plenty of hay (high in fibre), together with a selection of fresh food and a small amount of commercial rabbit food.



Feeding a high fibre diet will help to reduce the incidence of *overgrown* cheek teeth (arrowed) These are sharp and lacerate the gums.

High fibre diets promote dental health, reduce obesity and keep them occupied for several hours each day! Commercial rabbit foods are now available as extruded pellets and this helps to avoid the problem of rabbits selectively feeding – leaving vitamins and minerals uneaten.

Kidney disease Is my pet affected?

THANKFULLY most of our pets lead healthy active lives. However for some, kidney disease can be a problem and it is particularly prevalent in older pets (especially cats).

Dogs and cats have two kidneys and each kidney has several hundred thousand tiny filters called **nephrons**. These filter the blood, removing toxic waste products, salts and water which are then concentrated to form urine.

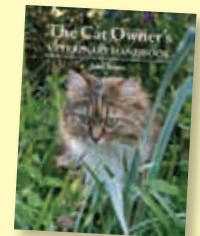
Over time a proportion of the nephrons will disappear with age and not be replaced. Other factors such as toxins, infections or cancer may also destroy nephrons.

However, the kidneys have *excess* filtering capacity with the result that *visible* symptoms of kidney disease are not usually seen until roughly two thirds of the nephrons have been lost. If this stage is reached the filtering capacity falls and toxic wastes begin to accumulate in the blood. Common symptoms include **increased drinking and increased urination, weight loss, muscle wastage, lack of appetite and lethargy**.

With regular veterinary check-ups the symptoms of kidney disease can often be detected at an earlier stage – *before* they become outwardly noticeable. So don't delay – if your pet is showing *any* symptoms of kidney problems, please see us for a check-up. Whilst kidney disease cannot be cured, a combination of specially formulated diets that reduce the workload of the kidneys, together with novel forms of medication, can often significantly improve the quality of life for affected pets.

The Cat Owners Veterinary Handbook £19.95

WRITTEN BY JOHN BOWER, our recently retired partner who has obviously not been idle since, **The Cat Owner's Veterinary Handbook** covers all aspects of the cat in sickness and in health. It does not replace the vet but presents helpful advice on home treatments, where this is applicable, and informs the owner when to seek professional advice. Packed full of information, it will be invaluable to caring owners who regard their cat as 'one of the family'. It is written in plain, everyday language by John, an experienced veterinary surgeon who has been involved in the medical and surgical problems of the cat for over thirty-five years. The book includes two chapters concerning normal cat behaviour and behavioural problems which have been written by John's wife, Caroline, one of the partners in our practice who is also a veterinary behaviourist. The book features many photos of the Veterinary Hospital Group staff and patients, and several of our vets have contributed clinical expertise to the chapters on systems and diseases.



The book is available from major book shops, online, or signed copies are available to purchase from any branch of the Veterinary Hospital Group.



Topics include: *The healthy cat in its wild and domesticated state • Choosing a suitable kitten, how to care for it properly and how to avoid behavioural problems • Common infectious diseases and parasites that affect cats, including problems that can arise when a cat is taken overseas • All parts of the cat are examined from the digestive system through to the complicated endocrine [hormone] system • Normal structure and function of each system is examined including the diseases and problems that can occur, and their symptoms and treatment • Behavioural problems, first aid, accidents and emergencies, and the special feline ailments that can emerge in old age.*

Rabbit picture: Jane Burton