

## Time for the snip? ...An update on neutering



Neutering has long been an important part of keeping domestic pets, as it helps to prevent roaming males and unwanted pregnancies in females. However, there are many myths surrounding the neutering phenomenon, so we thought perhaps we should set the record straight. Here is some information on neutering cats, and in the next issue we will tackle neutering of dogs.

We recommend castrating male cats and spaying female cats at 6 months of age, when they become sexually mature. Queens will "call" or come into season in response to lengthening days, so can start as early as January! Instead of completing a full hormone cycle like dogs, they keep coming back into season every three weeks. Only when they are mated do they actually ovulate, which makes it a very efficient system for becoming pregnant!

Calling can be mistaken for a painful injury, as queens will often become extremely vocal and adopt some unusual positions! Contrary to common belief, there is no proven benefit to females "having a litter" before spaying, and the whole process places a huge strain on the queen, especially if she is still growing herself. Therefore if you do wish to breed from your cat, you must ensure she is kept away from tom cats until she is at least a year of age.

Entire male cats tend to roam further afield in looking for females, which not only increases the risk of road accidents but encourages fighting with other males they meet. Fights are not only unpleasant (and costly in antibiotics!), but also encourage transmission of viral diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (feline aids) and FeLV (feline leukaemia). These viruses are invariably fatal, so reducing roaming and fighting is important for prevention, especially as there is no vaccine available for FIV. Of course unwanted kittens are another consequence of roaming toms, and the number of cats needing homes is already exceeding the available space in rescue shelters.

All kittens registered at Cedar are entitled to a free health check at 6 months of age, where we can discuss the neutering procedure and ensure they are healthy and ready for the operation. For both male and female cats it is a quick procedure which they soon bounce back from. If you have any questions about neutering feel free to pop in and see one of the consulting nurses at any of the branches.

We're on the web  
[www.cedarvets.co.uk](http://www.cedarvets.co.uk)

## The Adders are out!

Remember that summer-time is the season for snakes. Adder snakes are common in the New Forest and although not naturally aggressive, they will bite if provoked by an inquisitive dog.

If you suspect your dog has been bitten you must come to the vets immediately, this is a genuine emergency. Symptoms develop within minutes, with pain and significant swelling at the site of the bite, where 2 puncture wounds can often be seen. The swelling tends to advance very quickly so can be very dangerous if it is around the face or neck. In addition the venom can cause other effects such as an irregular heart beat, vomiting and

collapse. It is a commonly held belief that giving a piriton tablet following a snake bite can prevent the signs from developing. However, this is simply not true and aggressive treatment is always needed.

At Cedar Veterinary Group we are well equipped to deal with snake bites and hold the anti-venom which is given intravenously in many cases, along with anti-inflammatories and antibiotics. Affected animals are hospitalised so we can put them on a drip and monitor them closely. It is very rare for snake bites to be fatal, and following appropriate treatment the vast majority of cases make a speedy recovery.



*This adder was spotted by one of our vets when out on a walk in the forest recently!*



### SURGERY OPENING TIMES

All surgeries run by  
appointment only

#### RINGWOOD

01425 473683

Mon-Fri 8am to 6.30pm

Sat 8am to 5pm

#### VERWOOD

01202 825217

Mon-Tues 8.30 to 7pm

Wed-Thurs 8.30 to 6pm

Fri 8.30 to 6.30pm

Sat 8.30 to 12.30

#### FERNDOWN

01202 861622

Mon-Fri 8.30 to 6pm

(closed 1 to 2pm)

Sat 8.30 to 10.30am

#### CANINE CARE CENTRE

01425 480721

Tues-Fri 9am to 4pm

Sat 9am to 1pm

Mon & Sun Closed

#### EMERGENCIES OUT OF HOURS

01425 473683

Out of hours emergencies will  
usually be seen at our Ringwood  
Hospital. Please phone first.

It's summer-time again in the New Forest, and the warmer weather brings the usual mix of seasonal hazards.

Hopefully you will find plenty of useful tips in this issue of our newsletter, as well as all the usual news updates from in and around the practice.

# Cedar Snippets

THE NEWSLETTER OF CEDAR VETERINARY GROUP

SUMMER ISSUE 2007



## Flystrike... Prevention is Better than Cure

Summertime is very welcome for most of us in the New Forest, but the warmer weather also brings some unwanted visitors... flies. Some flies will lay their eggs on other animals, especially if their coat is dirty or damp. When the eggs hatch the maggots will start eating whatever they can find, which usually involves the surrounding flesh!

Rabbits are at particularly high risk as they can be prone to mucky bottoms, which can be due to their unusual digestive system. Some of the droppings they produce, called caecotrophs, are soft and sticky and will be eaten again to allow full digestion of the grassy material they eat. If the bunny is arthritic, overweight, has a large dewlap, or has bad teeth, they may not be able to take their caecotrophs from their bottoms which can quickly lead to a sticky mess.



It is important to check rabbits twice daily in the summer, especially if they have any of the above problems which may predispose them to flystrike. Also watch out for loose droppings with the richer grass at this time of year. If you suspect your bunny has flystrike, remove any obvious maggots (tweezers are useful for the faint-hearted!) then you MUST contact us quickly, this is an emergency. Many rabbits need intravenous fluids to treat shock, and pain killers and antibiotics are needed to prevent infection and further suffering. Very severe cases cannot always be saved, so it is very important to prevent this awful condition rather than to rely on a cure.

In addition to careful checking and addressing potential problems, there are effective spot-on products which repel adult flies and kill any maggots which manage to hatch. Feel free to call in to see one of our consulting nurses for advice.

## Lucy moves to Verwood and Ferndown



Many of you will already be aware that Merrill, one of our longest standing nurses, has just left to go on maternity leave. To help cover whilst she is away and to move towards extending the nurse consulting clinics at the branches, Lucy will be sharing her time between Verwood and Ferndown. As one of our capable qualified veterinary nurses, Lucy has been a valuable member of the nursing team at the Ringwood hospital. However her interests lie in preventative health care, so she is keen to pursue this side of veterinary nursing and looks forward to meeting you all in the nurse clinics!



## A Little Dog With a Big Problem!



Most of the patients we tell you about in our newsletters have acute, often life-threatening problems which need surgery to get them better. However there are many serious medical conditions which some dogs, just like people, have to cope with by taking medication for the duration of their lives.

Harry is a two year-old West Highland White Terrier who has Addison's Disease. This is an unusual problem, where the adrenal glands in the body do not produce enough steroids, which are very important in dealing with stressful situations. Stress can include a range of conditions where normal animals can adapt and cope with demands such as minor illnesses, general anaesthetics, or even stress caused by a change in daily routine.

Sometimes affected animals will have very vague signs, often with a waxing and waning illness which is difficult to really pin down. However, Addison's is a very dangerous disease as affected dogs can quickly get a severe disturbance in their electrolytes (sodium and potassium) when under any sort of stress. They become very dehydrated and the rising

potassium levels slow the heart rate which makes it even harder for the body to put things right. Before long, the circulation starts to shut down, which is known as an Addisonian crisis.

Harry presented to us at one and a half years old, approaching full crisis. He was hospitalised for several days of intensive fluid therapy and close monitoring of his sodium and potassium levels. Once we had run some further tests and diagnosed Addison's, we prescribed two different types of steroid for Harry to take daily to replace his natural steroids. Harry's owners, Mr and Mrs Morgan, have become very good at looking for the initial signs that could mean things are going wrong, so they are able to alert us as soon as they are concerned. With Harry this is usually becoming quieter, shivering, and often progresses to acute vomiting and diarrhoea. (Don't panic however if your dog shows these signs as they are very common in dogs with just a stomach upset!). Mr Morgan said "We wish to express our gratitude to the staff at Cedar for all the help they have given over the past 18 months to enable us to cope with Harry's condition."

We are all delighted to see Harry enjoying life as much as anybody else. He takes it all in his stride and thankfully is still always pleased to see us!



Harry is now back to his old tricks!

## Wild birds - Helping or hindering



These Starling fledglings are pictured being fed by their mother on a bird table in a London garden

At this time of year it is common to find fledgling birds on the ground in gardens. Unfortunately it is also extremely common that they are presented to us by well-meaning members of the public who are concerned for their well-being.

However, removing a fledgling from its habitat is a very dangerous move as many birds will leave the nest when they are unable to fly. They will live on the ground for a short time, still being looked after and provided for by the parent birds, until such time as they are able to fly and fend for themselves.

The advice we receive from Dorset Wildlife Rescue is to leave these birds alone so they can continue the natural course of events. If removed they are unlikely to survive as hand rearing is rarely successful, and rehabilitation to the wild impossible. As a general rule try to leave nature to take its course whilst gently discouraging any interference from your pets!

Remember that whilst it is great for cats to roam free, at this time of year it is responsible to try to restrict them at dawn and dusk when wild birds are feeding. Using bells on quick-release style collars is a safe and very effective way of trying to lessen the impact of domestic cats on the wild bird population.

## Hot Dog Season!



As the weather warms up it is important to remember not to leave your dog in the car where they may get too hot. Leaving the windows partly open is not enough to prevent the temperature soaring, which can be very dangerous for your pet.

Dogs need to regulate their temperature by panting as they cannot sweat due to their furry coat. Panting becomes less effective in a humid environment such as a car, which can lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke. This is always an emergency, and prompt action is needed to bring the dog's body temperature back to normal. If you think your dog has heatstroke you should contact us immediately. If possible, move the dog to a cool, shaded area and apply towels soaked in cool water. Cold water hosing is an effective alternative, or if your dog is small enough, move him/her to a tub of cool water.

Heatstroke can be avoided by ensuring you do not let your pet become confined in a sunny spot, and also take care not to over-exercise them in hot weather. Keeping weight down and keeping long-haired breeds trimmed will also be helpful. If in doubt, get the cold water out!

## Feel Like Joining the On-Line Revolution?

Some of you may have noticed that our website has seen a few changes over the winter. There are now three useful on-line forms which mean you don't need to wait to speak to somebody at busy times of the day:

1. Registration – new clients can now register on-line or existing clients can register new pets. All changes are updated on practice records within two working days.
2. Repeat Prescriptions – these can be ordered on-line and will be ready for you at your preferred branch. We do still ask for two working days as for the normal repeat prescription service.
3. Appointments – fill out a request form and we will call back or email you to confirm a convenient time. Log on to [www.cedarvets.com](http://www.cedarvets.com) to have a look around the website.



Special home still urgently needed for little Leo and Mitzi  
If you can or know anyone who can help, please contact  
Jo Thorpe Ringwood hospital reception 01425 473683.

Thank you



## Think before you throw a stick...

When you are out enjoying a summer walk with your dog, resist the temptation to pick up a stick to throw. Sadly we see a surprising number of injuries caused by dogs impaling themselves on sticks, which lodge in the ground like a javelin right in front of the dog running flat out to catch it. You can imagine the rest!

Stick injuries are very dangerous as they are usually under the tongue or in the back of the throat. Sometimes these injuries can bleed severely, but often you can't see the full extent of the damage. Many injuries we investigate appear to be only a small wound but can often extend into the delicate tissues under the tongue or in the neck, where there are many blood vessels and nerves. Sticks are also prone to crumbling, and even if the offending stick is pulled out, there is often significant debris left behind, causing ongoing infection and inflammation. Some cases will eventually require difficult and costly surgery to resolve.

There are a huge variety of toys available for your faithful friend, so make the most of them and play safe!

