

# Surgeries 7 days a week at The Veterinary Hospital, Estover



☎ Estover 01752 702646 • Plympton 01752 344188 • Plymstock 01752 492293  
• Lipson 01752 664866 • St. Budeaux 01752 361045



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Colwill Road, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 8RP  
24 Hour Emergency Service ☎ 01752 702646  
www.plymouthvets.co.uk



## SUMMER 2010

### Pets in the Park

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July our Veterinary Hospital Group is holding a **Pets in the Park** event at Saltram House in Plympton. The event, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., will include advice on how to tell if your pet is not at their ideal weight, and there will be an obstacle course for you and your pet to compete in – are you as fit as your dog!? The veterinary nurses from our veterinary group will also be conducting free health checks on the day, and there will be lots of freebies and other competitions to enter, as well as advice on Responsible Pet Ownership. There is of course no charge for this, and no need to book your place so why not come along, bring your dog(s), and friends and join in on this family fun day.

### Topics in this issue:

- *Wriggle your way out of this one!*
- *Your pet could be a life saver!*
- *Beat the heat this summer!*
- *Thyroid disease – is your pet affected?*
- *Help me – I'm lost....*

## 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.

## Your pet could be a life saver!

Blood transfusions are an emergency life-saving procedure for pets with bleeding disorders or pets that have haemorrhaged after major road traffic accidents or other trauma. We are able to give them blood transfusions using blood which has been donated by young healthy dogs.



Ebony is a recent case in hand. She is a lovely Cocker Spaniel who has a problem called Auto-immune Haemolytic Anaemia. This is a serious disorder where her body's own immune system started attacking her red blood cells and she became very anaemic and poorly. We gave her a blood transfusion using blood donated by a client's large dog and started her

on remedial treatment immediately. This blood transfusion was necessary to save her life and enable the treatment for the disease to take effect. Luckily Ebony responded well to treatment and is doing well now, but would have died without the blood transfusion.

We are appealing for volunteer dog blood donors. However donor dogs need to be over 25 Kg in weight, healthy, adult and between 1 and 8 years old. Blood is a living tissue and doesn't store for long so what we actually need is your name and telephone number(s) if you would like your dog to help so that we can telephone you if such an emergency arises. Please contact Victoria Morris who is a Student Veterinary Nurse at The Veterinary Hospital on **01752 702646** if you feel you and your dog could help.



## 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 interdigital 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.

### 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.

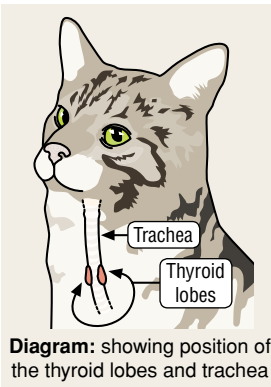
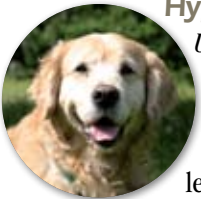


Diagram: showing position of the thyroid lobes and trachea

### 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!