

**Parasite alert!**



As we approach warmer Spring weather it's a good idea to keep up your guard against pesky parasites. Here we look at two of the main offenders – fleas and ticks.



**Fleas** thrive very well, both in your home and outside in parks and gardens. Here, any flea eggs laying dormant will rapidly hatch into adult fleas, hopping onto passing pets. Flea bites can be itchy for both animals and humans, often causing skin rashes and hair loss. The best way to prevent fleas is year-round treatment for all your pets with veterinary licensed flea products. Spot-on treatments and tablets are ideal for treating your pets, whilst household sprays are great for treating your home.



**Ticks** are most active through March to October; they live in long grass and woodland and attach themselves to passing pets and also humans. Unlike fleas, ticks are not itchy, but can spread a range of serious tick-borne diseases including Lyme disease, Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis. We recommend checking your pets every day (especially after walks) to remove any ticks before they can attach. Ticks that have attached can be removed with a special tick removal tool. For added protection, we recommend using veterinary licensed products that work either by repelling the tick from attaching or killing them when they bite. We are happy to help and advise you on the best form of on flea and tick prevention for your pets!

**Opening Hours**

**Monday to Friday:** 8am to 6pm  
**Saturday:** 8am to 12pm  
**Sunday:** Closed

Please contact us to book an appointment or visit our website to book an appointment online. In the event of an emergency out of hours, please call Eastcott Vets in Swindon on 01793 401874.



**Looking after your new pet**

Thinking of adding a new pet to your family this Spring? There are lots of things to consider alongside leads, collars, bedding and toys so we've put together a short check-list of essential things to do:

**Vaccinations:** Dogs, cats and rabbits all require vaccinations, protecting them against potentially fatal infectious diseases. Our team will be able to talk you through the exact schedule of vaccines required. Regular booster vaccinations, combined with a health check, are the best way of protecting your pet, plus at the same time we can keep a watchful eye out for any emerging problems.



**Worming:** It is very important to treat puppies and kittens for **roundworms** since they can acquire these from their mothers early in life. As they grow up, they are susceptible to infection with both **roundworms** and **tapeworms** and will require regular worming. Additionally, **lungworm** is a problem for many dogs.

**Fleas:** Most puppies and kittens will arrive with a fair number of fleas, so it is a good idea for us to give them a check over on arrival! See our article (left) on treating your pets for fleas.

**Pet insurance** is also highly recommended, giving you *peace of mind* should unplanned visits for veterinary treatment be required.

**Early dental care:** Pets have two sets of teeth, and their "milk" teeth progressively fall out from about 12 weeks of age to make way for their adult teeth. If this doesn't happen the corresponding adult tooth may erupt in the wrong direction. This is usually only a problem in dogs and is treated by extracting the retained teeth.



**Socialisation** is another very important topic. The early experiences a puppy or kitten has of people and their surroundings has a huge impact on their behaviour and personality for the rest of their life. Please ask us for further information on socialising your pets. We can also advise you on other topics such as **diets and feeding, microchipping** (a legal requirement in puppies and kittens), **neutering**, and much more! We are here to help, so please ask a member of our team for further information on any aspect of caring for your new pet.

**Annual Vaccinations**

We recommend you regularly vaccinate your pets against the following, infectious diseases:

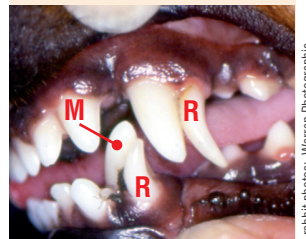
**Dogs** are routinely vaccinated against: parvovirus, leptospirosis, hepatitis and distemper.

**Cats** are usually vaccinated against cat flu, panleukopenia, and feline leukemia virus.

**Rabbits** should be vaccinated against: Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease. Both diseases are rapidly fatal in rabbits.



**Early dental care**



R = retained "milk" canine teeth  
 M = mal-aligned adult canine tooth

Kitten and rabbit photos: Warren Photographic

**Kennel Cough – is your dog vaccinated?**



Kennel cough is a very infectious, but rarely life-threatening, respiratory infection that spreads from dog to dog wherever they meet – out on walks, training classes and of course kennels. The condition can involve several viral components, plus a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*.

It causes a harsh cough, an inflamed throat and sometimes nasal discharge. The signs can be dramatic, and it is not uncommon for owners to become concerned their pets have something stuck in their throats. The cough is often self-limiting, but can still persist for 2-3 weeks.

Only an annual vaccination with a specific kennel cough vaccine can offer protection against *Bordetella*. So – don't take any chances with this distressing cough – make sure your pet is vaccinated. Kennel cough vaccination is also a key requirement of most boarding kennels. Please contact us today for further information or to book an appointment!

## Avoiding spring hazards!



Spring is here at last with longer days, longer walks and warmer weather! With this in mind, here are a few seasonal tips to keep your pet safe:

**Stick alert!** When out on walks, we strongly suggest you avoid throwing sticks for your dog to chase. Sticks are innocuous looking things, but with the right speed and trajectory, they can become a weapon. Sticks can cause very seri-

ous penetrating injuries, plus they are breakable, leaving foreign material behind in a wound some distance from the original entry point. As a result, they are truly awful wounds to deal with. A safer option is using a ball instead – being mindful of getting the right size ball for your dog. It needs to be large enough that your dog isn't at risk of it getting stuck in his throat.

**Easter Alert!** Easter will soon be upon us and although the sweet treats available for humans are lovely, they can be hazardous for our pets. Dogs are very susceptible to **chocolate** toxicity. The stronger the chocolate (plain being the strongest), the more dangerous it can be and it may cause fatal neurological signs. **Sultanas and raisins** – found in hot cross buns, fruit cakes and the like, are also toxic for your dog. Also beware of any chewing gum or cakes containing the artificial sweetener **xylitol**. This is extremely toxic to dogs. Xylitol toxicity can cause life threateningly low blood sugar levels.

**Lily alert!** Lilies are an all year round hazard for cats. All parts of the plants are toxic to **cats** and there can be a delay between cats ingesting/licking lilies and the kidney problems that follow. Out in the garden, **spring bulbs** are also toxic to dogs if dug up and eaten.

Finally – we hope you enjoy the spring with your pets. Signs of poisoning can often be quite vague so please contact us at once if you are at all worried.



This is a typical stick injury where the stick has become lodged in the dog's throat – see yellow arrow.



Beware of cakes (including many home made cakes) made with the artificial sweetener xylitol, which is extremely toxic to dogs.

## Rabbiting on!



Rabbits can be a wonderful addition to the family. However, despite their small size they do need well thought out housing, diets and companionship. Here we look at some top tips to keep your rabbit healthy.

**Housing:** Rabbits enjoy company and therefore are best housed together in neutered bonded pairs – usually a male and a female. Their housing should support their needs to hop, run and forage. A hutch isn't really enough as they like plenty of room.

**Diets and dentistry:** Rabbits have evolved to have continuously growing teeth which, if they are not fed enough fibre, can overgrow (see photo right), leading to dental problems. We suggest a diet composed of: 85% hay or grass, 10% leafy vegetables and about an egg cup full of commercial all-in-one rabbit nuggets.

**Vaccination:** Rabbits can be vaccinated against Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease. Both of these can be rapidly fatal. There are vaccines available that give good protection and are recommended for yearly use. Since myxomatosis can be spread by flies and mosquitoes, it is recommended to have indoor rabbits vaccinated as well.

If you would like further information on caring for your rabbit, feeding, dental health and vaccination, please don't hesitate to contact our helpful team.



Misaligned and overgrown incisor (front) teeth

## Ticker trouble!



The heart is a large muscular pump, continuously pumping blood around the body. Like us, animals have four heart chambers, with valves to ensure that blood flows in only the forward direction. The heart is responsible for supplying

the tissues of the body with oxygenated blood. The heart receives de-oxygenated blood from the tissues of the body and pumps it to the lungs where it is re-oxygenated. This re-oxygenated blood flows back to the heart, where it is then pumped back round the body. If the heart stops functioning properly, it can have serious consequences.

Some pets are born with heart defects.

These can include small holes in the heart wall, valve malformations and abnormalities in the vessels leaving the heart. These defects can alter blood flow through the heart and vessels, usually causing a heart murmur which can be heard on examination.

Some pets will also develop heart problems later in life – outlined below are some of the common conditions:

**Smaller dogs:** The most common condition affecting small dogs is a degenerative disease of the mitral valve (called mitral valve disease, or MVD), resulting in blood flowing backwards through the left hand side of the heart, usually causing a heart murmur.

**Larger dogs** can suffer from valve disease, but are also predisposed to a condition where the heart dilates (called dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM) and is no longer able to pump blood as effectively. Affected dogs may or may not have a heart murmur.

In dogs, signs of heart disease can include: reluctance to exercise, weakness or collapse, coughing, and laboured or rapid breathing.

**Cats** are prone to developing a condition where the heart muscle excessively thickens and results in a poorly functioning heart (called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy). This is very common, with around 1 in 7 cats of all ages affected. Older cats are at an increased risk. Signs of heart disease include reluctance to exercise, weakness or collapse and laboured or rapid breathing.

If you are concerned your pet is showing any signs of heart disease, please come and see us for a check-up. We may recommend imaging, such as chest x-rays and/or an ultrasound scan of your pet's heart. In some cases, blood tests and/or an ECG may also be helpful.

The good news is that novel medications can delay the onset of heart failure or help manage the signs. If you have any questions regarding your pet's heart health, please get in touch.

### How the heart pumps

