

Firework Fear!



As the darker nights roll in and with bonfire night just around the corner, fireworks inevitably become a concern for a lot of owners. So what can be done to minimise their effects? Plan a good dog walk earlier in the day and a big meal early evening, both of which will make them sleepy. Also, make sure you keep the cat flap locked and that all your pets are microchipped, just in case they take fright and escape. It's also a good idea to bring rabbits and guinea pigs inside and give them extra bedding to hide in.



Offer an anxious pet a place of safety such as a makeshift den. Pets feel much more secure in small spaces and it will help

to muffle the noises – as does keeping the curtains closed and the TV on. Offer them fuss if they require it but stay calm and try not to overly reassure them as this may worsen anxious behaviour. The best time to praise them is when they are being calm. Many stressed pets will also benefit from calming pheromone diffusers (Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats). These can help pets feel calmer and safer in their environment. They should be plugged in at least 48 hours before fireworks are due to start.

As you can see there are a variety of things you can do to make the "firework season" less stressful for your pets. Please get in touch for more information on how to best manage this difficult time of year.

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.

Autumn parasite alert!



As the Summer weather cools and Autumn sets in, now is definitely not the time to relax your guard against a range of pesky parasites. Here we take a look at two of the biggest offenders:

Ticks are most active from March to October with a good few frosts helping to reduce numbers heading into Winter. They tend to live in long grass and woodland. The most common tick in the UK is *Ixodes ricinus*, known as the sheep tick although this tick will feed from many animals! Ticks attach using their mouthparts and will feed on blood from their host for several days before dropping off. Unlike fleas, ticks are not itchy, but can spread a range of tick-borne diseases including Lyme Disease, Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis. These are discussed in further detail below this article. The good news is that current evidence suggests that tick-borne diseases take many hours after tick attachment to be transmitted. Using a product that rapidly kills or repels ticks will help to reduce the risk of these diseases. No tick product is 100% effective however, so pets should also be checked for ticks every 12-24 hours and, any found, removed with a special tick remover.

Fleas: Central heating in most homes has made fleas a year-round problem. Adult fleas lay eggs which can live in carpets and bedding. These eggs then hatch and develop through larvae and pupal stages before becoming adult fleas. Only 5% of fleas live on the animal with the rest in the environment. Eggs will often hatch as temperatures warm up which can happen naturally in spring or if people increase the thermostat in the house as the Autumn weather kicks in. Flea bites can be irritating for both animals and humans; additionally, some pets are very allergic to flea bites.

The best way to prevent fleas is year-round treatment for all your pets with veterinary-licensed flea products. These are extremely effective at killing fleas and they kill them *before* they lay their eggs, thus preventing house infestations. Many veterinary spot-ons are multipurpose and will kill other parasites including scabies, ear mites, ticks and worms.

If you would like further information on flea and tick prevention, or parasite prevention more generally, please ask a member of our practice team – we are happy to help.



Attached ticks with buried mouthparts are often found whilst grooming your pets



Tick removal – what to do!

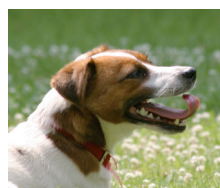
A simple twisting and pulling action is all that is required to remove the tick while minimising disease risk. Specially designed v-shaped tick removers that remove ticks by rotation are very effective at removing ticks



Close up of removed tick complete with mouthparts



More about tick-borne diseases...



As mentioned above, ticks can spread a range of deadly diseases which pose serious health risks to both pets *and* humans. The major ones are:

Lyme disease, also called borreliosis, is spread by ticks; affected pets (and humans) can develop a range of symptoms including swollen joints, stiffness, fever, anorexia, lethargy and kidney problems.

Babesiosis (caused by *Babesia canis*) is an emerging tick-borne disease, destroying red blood cells and causing rapid signs of anaemia in affected dogs. It is mainly found in mainland Europe. **Ehrlichiosis** also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal.

Both Babesiosis and Ehrlichiosis are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

We are here to help – our team are here to advise you on the best products to kill or repel ticks and also reduce the risk of tick-borne diseases. Please don't hesitate to get in touch!



Alabama Rot – update...



Alabama rot is sadly a disease most owners have now heard about. Despite being around for a few years we still don't know the causative agent for it, which makes specific avoidance advice difficult. It was originally

found in the New Forest, but it is now more wide spread. There is a live map of cases available at www.alabama-rot.co.uk. All breeds and sizes of dogs can be affected.

The condition typically presents with skin ulcers on their pads, digits, paws and feet although some dogs have shown them on their head, muzzle, tongue, flank and belly. In rare cases, blood clots may form in the kidneys, which can lead to kidney failure, which is of course very serious, but thankfully uncommon.

Fortunately, it is still very rare and additionally, most skin lesions will not be related to Alabama Rot; however, if you notice any unusual skin patterns on your dog's skin and need any advice please contact us straight away at the surgery.



Typical photo of a suspected case of Alabama Rot with skin lesions

Getting to the root of the problem!



Did you know that dental problems are probably the most common issue our pets suffer from, and yet they are also one of the most underdiagnosed, mainly because it is difficult to look properly in their mouths and also bad breath is often considered 'normal'?!

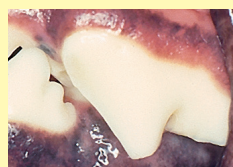
However, it most certainly is not! Poor dental health is often very painful, can lead to tooth loss, and infections can spread throughout the body. The sad thing is that most pets will start life with a healthy set of teeth and gums, but – over time – painful dental problems can easily become an issue for them.

A healthy mouth typically has bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums. However, gradual accumulation of plaque bacteria on the surface of the teeth leads to **inflammation** of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis** (also called gum disease). At this stage you might notice reddened gums, bad breath and some accumulation of calculus on the tooth surface – see second image down.

If the condition is allowed to continue unchecked, bacteria will penetrate *below* the gum line, destroying the tooth supporting structures – a painful condition called **periodontitis** (see third image down). If left untreated, this leads to tooth loosening and eventual tooth loss.

Cats may also be affected by gingivitis, but as well as this, they may also suffer from one or more **tooth resorptive lesions**. Here the tooth is progressively destroyed, leading to exposure of the nerve. These often appear as little pink spots on the teeth themselves and usually hide painful cavities in the underlying tooth, although cats will frequently show no obvious outward signs of tooth ache.

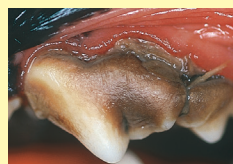
So what can be done? The good news is that if gum problems are identified at an *early* stage, a combination of a scale and polish and ongoing home care can make a real difference to your pet's oral health (and also their breath!). Please contact us today for a dental check-up for your pet and also further information on caring for your pet's teeth.



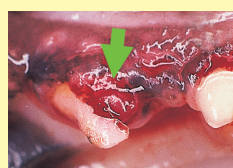
Healthy mouth



Gingivitis with reddened gums



Periodontitis



Tooth resorptive lesions

Typical lesion (arrowed). The tooth is progressively destroyed and is usually very painful.



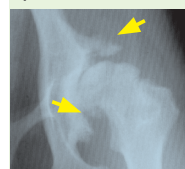
Scale and Polish: Removing the calculus using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing, is a very effective treatment.



Autumn Hazards!

Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year – the trees are turning to glorious golds and the weather is crisp. However, here are some things we need to be aware of to ensure our pets stay happy and healthy.

Autumn joint alert! The cooler and damper Autumn weather often brings out signs of joint problems in older pets. Affected pets typically

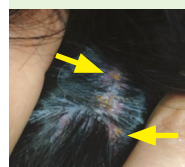


Arthritic hip joint in a dog. You can see fluffy new bone (arrowed) typical of arthritis

show signs of lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising, and problems negotiating steps. Don't ignore these signs, since arthritis is generally the underlying problem. There are many ways we can help them, so if your pet starts slowing

down in the Autumn, speak to us about how we can put the spring back in their step!

Harvest mites are a problem in late-summer and Autumn. They can be found in woodland



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes

and long grasses and swarm onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and the underside of the abdomen. They are identified as tiny bright orange dots and are usually a cause of great irritation

with itchy, crusting lesions. So – make sure you regularly check your pet's coat for any signs of parasites and let us advise you on the best treatments for your pet.

Poisonings are also a concern at this time of year, so keep an eye on what your pet is trying to eat! **Conkers**, **acorns** and **rotting fruit** are plentiful on the ground but can cause upset tummies. Also be vigilant for **anti-freeze**, it is highly toxic but tastes very sweet, so cats in particular will readily lick it up.

Wasps and bees are coming to the end of their summer lives and are often pretty slow, which makes them irresistible playthings for dogs and cats but they can still sting, which is painful and causes nasty swellings.

Enjoy the Autumn weather, keep a watchful eye out for parasites and other Autumn hazards and contact us if you have any problems!



Harvest mite down the microscope

