

Welcome to our Spring 2018 newsletter. This issue brings news of many exciting changes at the practice, including the 'Outstanding Client Care Award' that we received from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and information about our new Pet Healthcare Plans aimed at making preventative healthcare simple and affordable. It's also packed with informative articles to help you care for your pet, such as: 'lumps and bumps', 'new diseases' and 'common eye problems'. If you've been into the practice recently, you will have seen that we've teamed up with Hills life-stage foods to bring you a 6-for-5 offer. As well as all of this, there is the usual 'Court Circular', with up to date news on what the staff have been getting up to. We love to hear your feedback about the Newsletter, and I always welcome your thoughts and ideas for further articles. We hope you enjoy it!

Sonya

"Outstanding" Award

We're extremely proud to announce that Darwin Veterinary Centre has been awarded a top accolade by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in recognition of our 'Outstanding Client Service' – we are only the 38th practice in the UK to hold the title! As part of the inspection, we had an RCVS inspector visit the practice for several hours, to interview staff and appraise every aspect of the practice. The RCVS also asked several hundred of our clients to complete an anonymous, online survey about the practice. We want to listen to your feedback, and as a direct response to this survey, we launched our Pet Healthcare Plan – you spoke, and we listened!

We are all so proud to hold this award, and hugely touched and appreciative of the kind and complimentary comments our clients had submitted. We always go out of our way to give the highest standard of care to both our clients and their pets, and having this care recognised publicly is very special to us.

OUTSTANDING
-CLIENT SERVICE-



RCVS



New and Emerging Diseases

With a warming climate and international pet travel being at an all time high (we've definitely seen several dogs in the practice who have more stamps on their passports than our staff do!), we are seeing the emergence of new diseases in this area. Here are our top 5 new diseases to watch out for:

Alabama Rot – More correctly termed 'Cutaneous and renal glomerular vasculopathy' or CRGV, there have been 112 confirmed cases in the



UK since it was first detected in 2012. Whilst the disease is now recognised in more than 30 UK counties, we are **not** currently aware of any cases in this area, but suspect that it won't be long before it is seen locally. Symptoms include skin ulcers followed by kidney failure within 3 to 10 days, and tragically, an 80% mortality rate. It can affect any dog of any breed, age or

size, and a seasonal link is suspected, with most cases reported between November and April, and especially with dogs walked in muddy woodland areas or terrain with cold running or standing water. Recent research has suggested a possible link with a freshwater fish and amphibian bacterium, but to date, the cause is unknown.

Babesia – This disease has traditionally been considered as endemic throughout much of the world, but the UK enjoyed a Babesia-free status until 2015 when an outbreak was reported in dogs in Essex. Because it is spread by ticks, Babesia is most common in warmer weather when ticks are most numerous. However, infection is also possible through blood transfusions, and in one case, dog-to-dog transmission via a bite wound. UK cases are usually seen in pets who have travelled or been imported, especially in cats imported from South Africa, with Greyhounds, Terriers and American Staffies thought to be most susceptible. The Babesia organism is transmitted from the tick to pets approximately 24-48 hours after tick attachment, and causes severe anaemia as the immune system destroys infected red blood cells. Symptoms include: fever, weakness, lethargy, pale gums and tongue, red or orange urine, and jaundice (yellow skin, gums or whites of eyes etc). Whilst our understanding of Babesia is improving, diagnosis and treatment remain challenging, and good tick prevention remains key.



continued on back page...

Healthy Eyes

Ocular health and good vision are important for our general well-being, and that's especially true for our pets. We're asked to examine several eye cases every day, so we thought we'd outline the most common issues.

Healthy Eyes

These are open and comfortable, free from discharge, and have a moist, healthy appearance, that sharply reflects light.

Corneal Ulcers

Ulcers and abrasions on the surface of the eye or 'cornea', are commonly seen in pets and can be a source of great pain. In cats, they are often caused by claw injuries whilst fighting rival cats, whilst in dogs, foreign bodies such as grass seeds, thorns and other organic matter are frequently the cause. Often, the first thing you'll notice is your pet holding their eyelids partially or completely closed due to pain – always an indication to see your vet urgently. Fluorescein dye is used to show-up any areas of damaged cornea, so that the appropriate treatment can be started as soon as possible.

Cataracts

A cataract occurs when the transparent lens inside the eye becomes opaque, causing a loss of vision or, if throughout the whole lens, blindness. Cataracts can develop in any cat or dog as they age, but some breeds are more prone to developing cataracts earlier in life:

Dogs:

- Cocker Spaniel
- West Highland White Terrier
- Miniature Schnauzer
- Golden Retriever

Cats:

- Persian
- British Short-Hair

However, cataracts can also develop secondary to other diseases, such as Diabetes, inappropriate milk replacers, trauma or glaucoma. Any eye with a cataract should be monitored regularly to avoid inflammation inside the eye leading to problems such as glaucoma (high pressure inside the eye). Cataract surgery to restore vision is possible in many cases, but will require referral to a specialist ophthalmologist.

Nuclear Sclerosis

Nuclear sclerosis is frequently mistaken for a cataract as it can give the eye a similar blue-white appearance. However, this condition is due to hardening of the lens in older dogs, and the good news is that it doesn't affect your pets' vision nor require treatment.

Eyelid Tumours

Tumours around the eye are also commonly seen in middle-aged or older animals. They occur in the margin of the eyelid, and have potential to cause marked corneal irritation.

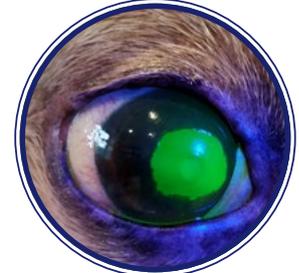
Dry Eye

Also known as Kerato-conjunctivitis Sicca (KCS), dry eye is a condition that can easily go unnoticed. It is caused by a reduction or lack of tear production, and results in a dull and lustreless eye, often with inflamed conjunctivas and a grey-green discharge. The condition has many causes, but happily there is a simple test that we can perform to rapidly diagnose it. Medication for dry eye, usually in the form of an ointment, can really improve tear production and reverse many of the signs of dry eye.

The Golden Rule: Early diagnosis of eye problems can make a real difference to your pet's comfort and vision. Don't delay! If your pet is showing any symptoms of eye problems, come and see us for a thorough health examination.



Healthy Eye

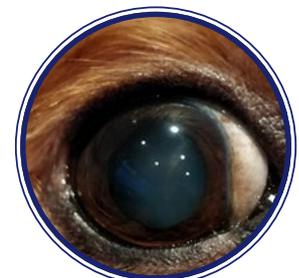


Corneal Ulcer

highlighted with Fluorescein



Cataract



Nuclear Sclerosis



Eyelid Tumour



Dry Eye

Court Circular



Katy is currently undertaking a course on Emergency and Critical Care over an 8-week period. "It's an interesting and demanding course, but I'm really enjoying it." As much as she is keen to put new skills into practice, she hopes that none of our patients need them!

In early July, nurse Louise will be flying out to Mexico to spend 10 weeks travelling through Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. She is joining an ethical adventure trail, so



not only will she be having fun scuba diving, volcano surfing, zip-lining through the canopies and exploring ancient Mayan ruins, but she will also be giving back to the local community by helping in a school and working on Frontier Big Cats, primate and turtle conservation projects. It is a once in a lifetime trip which Louise is thoroughly looking forward to: "I am lucky to have the opportunity to get up close to and work with turtles, which is something I have always wanted to do". We're all looking forward to seeing her trip photos and will hopefully be able to share some of them via the practice Facebook page.

Sonya will be sitting her Cardiology certificate exam on 9th May, after having completed 14 days of lectures, 6 essays, case reports and several hundred hours of study. If she passes she will then hold certificates in both Ophthalmology and Cardiology, and gain G.P.Cert(Cardio) professional qualifications. She's put in a lot of time and effort into this course and undoubtedly many of our clients' pets have benefited from it already. We wish Sonya every success for the 9th.



We're delighted to announce that nurse Terri and husband Paul are expecting their second child in August this year. Isla, who will be 20 months when BabyBiddle2 is born, is looking forward to the arrival of a sibling. Terri will be going on maternity leave in the Summer and rejoining us again in early 2019. We're sure all our clients would like to join us in congratulating Terri and Paul.



Instagram

We're now on Instagram, so come and say hello at [@DarwinVets](https://www.instagram.com/DarwinVets).

Pet Healthcare Plans

As a direct response to client surveys and feedback, we are happy to announce that in 2017 we launched our Pet Healthcare Plan. You asked, we listened!

They have been hugely popular, and many of you may have already been in to sign up your pets, but for those of you that are not familiar with them, here is a little bit about how they work:

At Darwin Veterinary Centre we believe that a preventative approach to your pet's healthcare is not only best for your pet, but also gives you great peace of mind. The Darwin Pet Healthcare Plan has been designed by us, to make responsible pet ownership simple and affordable. Pets enrolled on the plan receive all their preventative healthcare needs, including veterinary check-ups, vaccinations (including kennel cough for dogs), and all recommended flea and worming treatments for a monthly fixed fee, as well as receiving discounts on other services such as blood tests, dental treatments, neutering, identichipping, nail clipping, Hill's food range and Seresto Tick collars.

The cost is just £11/month for cats, and £13-15/month for dogs weighing up to 40kg. For cats, and dogs weighing up to 40kg, by paying by direct debit you save a minimum of £34-52 per year.

To register, either call us on 01959 541153, or come into the practice to register at reception.



 01959 541153

What is that lump?

Don't ignore lumps and bumps!

It is not uncommon to find lumps or bumps on your pet, and they can range from the benign, that require no further action to the sinister, that require rapid treatment. Because of the very varied prognosis, we advise that any lumps found (also called masses, growths or swellings) are examined as soon as possible by your vet.

There can be several underlying causes of masses, from inflammatory lesions e.g. insect bites or abscesses, both of which can often be treated with medications, to hernias or tumours which often require more extensive and sometimes surgical treatment.

Tumours are what we worry about most, as these are the abnormal and often uncontrolled growth or proliferation of tissue which serves no purpose. If a tumour is suspected, your vet may advise that diagnostic samples are taken, or even surgical excision. Tumours can come in all shapes and sizes, and can vary hugely in how sinister they are. Benign masses tend to be slow growing and remain in a single location, whereas malignant masses are often more fast growing, can invade surrounding tissue, and also have the potential to spread to other areas of the body.

Routine grooming of your pet can be a great way to bond, but also to monitor for lumps and bumps, and if you do come across anything that looks unusual, book an appointment with a vet.



New and emerging diseases (continued)

Borreliosis – Also known as Lyme Disease, Borreliosis is also spread by ticks in the UK. It affects both people and dogs and the symptoms can be subtle and easily overlooked. In dogs, symptoms include fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, swollen joints and intermittent lameness, whilst people tend to develop a characteristic bulls-eye rash and flu-like symptoms.

Mycobacterium – Mycobacterium infections are rare in cats and dogs, but something which sadly we do see locally. Because these diseases can be passed to humans, infected pets can pose a potential public health risk, especially to the very young, very elderly or anyone who is immunosuppressed. Mycobacterium organisms are believed to be ubiquitous, and enter the body through breaks in the skin. At our practice, we most commonly see them as raised, circular skin lesions at fight or trauma sites in cats, typically just above the tail base or around the face and neck. Lesions definitely have a characteristic appearance, but a biopsy and culture are required for a definitive diagnosis.



Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Type 2 – RHD-2 is a devastating disease that has killed many rabbits in the past 2 years, and has now become endemic in the UK. Sadly, at the beginning of the outbreak, vaccines were not available to prevent it, but they are now, and we would strongly urge all rabbit owners, especially those of outdoor rabbits, to have their pets vaccinated routinely each year. Frustratingly, it can't be given at the same time as the myxomatosis – RHD-1 combined vaccine, but if it saves an unpleasant death, it's certainly worth a little bit of extra travel.

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Hills Pet Food Offer

We are always happy to advise on diets for individual pets, and are very aware that there isn't one food that fits all! However, because we consider it imperative to feed a life-staged diet, we are now stocking Hill's Vet Essentials range at the practice, which you can just pop in to buy. It is a high quality, veterinary-formulated diet with variations that are specifically designed for different sized pets, as well as different life stages. If this food is new to you, then there is also £5 off the first bag that you buy, as well as buy 5 and get the 6th bag free, and an extra 10% off for pets signed up to the Pet Healthcare Plan. If you would like to discuss your pet's diet, call to make an appointment with a vet or a nurse.



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