

Issue 40, Winter 2008

Welcome to our winter newsletter! In this issue, we have several contributions from our staff about pet care and what's been happening at our clinic. We hope you enjoy it (hopefully with a nice hot chocolate and lazing by the fire with your pet)! And as always, we'd appreciate any comments that you have on our newsletter, and any suggestions for future issues.

- From all the staff at Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital

PUBLIC HOLIDAY HOURS

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

Monday 9th June 10am till 12noon

Phone 9829 1947 at any time for emergencies

What's New at Ingleburn Vet Hospital?

While it may not excite you very much, our new x-ray machine has excited *us* a lot! It allows us to spend less time taking x-rays (more correctly, radiographs) but get far better results. Since most radiographs of pets require anaesthesia, they will be anaesthetised for less time and so the process will be safer. Because the machine is much more powerful, we can get fantastic quality radiographs of difficult areas like lungs. The floating table top means we can release the magnetic lock and "float" the patient around under the x-ray beam to quickly position them for the best view. It comes with built in exposure guides and has a tilting head with a laser beam for good alignment. The only remaining step is to go digital but since this costs over \$100,000 it will have to wait! Importantly this machine can be easily converted from exposing x-ray film to exposing a digital sensor, when the cost comes down and the quality goes up.

Combined with our automatic film processor, we now have a highly efficient radiology department! Even if it is only one room! Feel free to ask for a look, if you think our new x-ray machine might excite you too.

- Mark



Don't make WORMS part of the family!

Just a reminder that all dogs and cats should be wormed regularly. Generally, all dogs and cats should be wormed at least once every 3 months. An intestinal allwormer should provide protection against roundworms, hookworms, whipworms and tapeworms. Your pet should be dosed according to his/her weight and should always be rounded *up* to ensure an adequate dose is given.

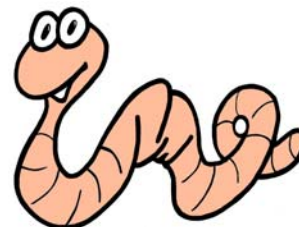
If your dog receives a monthly combination product such as Sentinel or Interceptor, *don't worry* – your pet is protected. Dogs and cats receiving Advocate or cats receiving Revolution are covered for most intestinal worms, *except* for tapeworm. In this case, your pet simply needs an additional tapewormer tablet given every 3-6 months.

Dogs which receive monthly Revolution or the yearly Proheart heartworm injection are NOT covered for intestinal worms. They will need an additional intestinal allwormer every 3 months.

Puppies and kittens have different worming requirements. Puppies and kittens should be wormed weekly until 4 weeks of age, then every 2 weeks from 6 weeks, monthly from 12 weeks of age and then every 3 months for the rest of their life.

Not only can intestinal worms cause serious health problems for your pet, but they can cause serious health problems in humans! In addition to regular worming, make sure children wash their hands after handling the family pet. If you are unsure about your pet's worming status, please call us and speak with one of our friendly staff.

- Connie



Staff News

- In May, we farewelled one of our nurses, **Mandy**. She has left to pursue another direction in her veterinary nursing career. We wish her all the best and she will be sadly missed.

Puppy Preschool

Congratulations to our recent graduates: *Bella Murphy, Mocha Palmer, Blaze Borg, Beau Swain, Brandy Brown, Polly Stares, Molly Smith & Princess Segulin/Grace.*



Puppy Preschool is an early socialisation and basic training program for young puppies (under 12 weeks of age) and their owners. We recommend it for all pups.

Staff Training

The staff at Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital have been busy this season with continuing education!

- **Ros** completed her Veterinary Technician's Diploma. Well done Ros! (see below)
- **Ros** also attended the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia annual conference in Queensland where she learnt the very latest techniques in veterinary nursing taught by leading veterinary specialists
- **Libby** attended the Illawarra branch meeting of the Australian Veterinary Association. She learned from a leading specialist veterinary surgeon about the latest techniques in total knee replacement, fracture management in small breed dogs and elbow dysplasia
- **Connie** has been busy attending several seminars this season, including juvenile orthopaedic disease & arthroscopic surgery, feline lower urinary tract disease, treating canine hyperadrenocorticism and disseminated intravascular coagulation

INTERCEPTOR SPECIAL!

Get a **FREE** retractable lead with in-built torch and doggie bag for your pooch when you buy 2 or more packs of Interceptor Spectrum!

Hurry! Only while stocks last!

Ros Completes her Veterinary Technician's Diploma

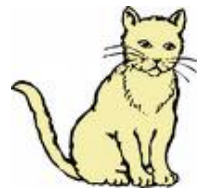
After many months of hard work, Ros has completed advanced training in veterinary nursing on top of her existing nursing qualifications, completing the veterinary technician's diploma from the Animal Industries Resource Centre and passing with distinction!

The year long course involved intensive study in many areas of veterinary nursing including surgical and medical nursing, emergency nursing and diagnostic imaging. She looks forward to putting all her knowledge into action, particularly in her areas of interest: surgical and medical nursing and anaesthesia. Congratulations Ros!



Pet Myth Busters!

There are many myths about pets out there so it's time to set the record straight on some of the common ones!



Pet Myth #1 *Cats only purr when they are happy*

Yes, cats can purr when they are happy but what a lot of people don't know is that cats can also purr when they are in pain.

Pet Myth #2 *Maltese dogs are Terriers*

Maltese dogs are often called Maltese terriers but this is incorrect, they are not true terriers.

Pet Myth #3 *ALL tortoiseshell cats are female*

Most tortoiseshell cats are female but they *CAN* be male – approximately 1 in 3000 tortoiseshell cats are male!

Pet Myth #4 *All cats hate water!*

This may be true for most cats (speaking from personal experience!), but this is *untrue* for some cats, especially the Turkish Van cat. They have been known to **LOVE** water and even enjoy swimming!

Pet Myth #5 *Garlic gets rid of fleas*

We hear this one quite commonly! But this is totally false! There is **NO** scientific evidence that garlic gets rid of fleas!



- Connie

Mel's Orang Utan Encounter: An Update from Borneo

As you may remember from our Summer newsletter, my husband and I adopted two children to add to our clan when we visited the Island of Borneo last year. Master Juwi (Joey) has successfully passed stage 1 of his rehabilitation. He has now been transferred to the main sanctuary at Sepilok for stage 2 of his rehabilitation back into the wild. His new home is located at the Sepilok Orang Utan Research Centre and was transferred there on 4 April 2008. Fingers crossed, we hope all goes well with Juwi in his new home!

As for our baby, Yoda is still very young and has lots more learning ahead of him to be able to graduate to Sepilok. He will continue to enjoy twice daily feeds with the tourists and playing up for the cameras. As time goes on we will continue to bring you more updates on our foster children in Sabah.

- Mel



Saving Lives: Blood Transfusions in Dogs & Cats

Many people are surprised when I mention blood transfusions in pets so my aim is to shed some light on this interesting and important life-saving procedure!

- ***When does an animal need a blood transfusion?***

Blood transfusions are needed in animals which have lost a lot of blood, such as through severe trauma or during complicated surgeries. Unfortunately there are other reasons your pet may need a blood transfusion such as in dogs (and cats) which have eaten rat bait or have been bitten by a snake. Some animals can also develop a disorder of their immune system which causes an anaemia (meaning lack of blood cells). In these animals, their own immune system becomes deranged and starts attacking its own blood cells, often causing life-threatening blood loss. Other situations where a blood transfusion is needed include inherited blood clotting disorders, infectious blood disorders, sepsis and chronic illness in geriatric animals. Without an emergency transfusion, many of these animals will die.

- ***Where do you get blood from?***

When we have needed to perform one, we have called upon our staff to kindly volunteer their pets to become donors. However, not all our staff members have pets which fit the donor criteria (for example, my crazy 5kg Jack Russell Terrier would not fit the bill!) or have pets that are available in an emergency situation. In this case, we have asked the owners if they know anyone with an animal which may be a suitable donor for their sick pet (usually from friends or family). Indeed there are specialist canine blood banks where dog blood products can be purchased by veterinarians. However, since we don't perform many blood transfusions and due to the short expiry of these products, we are not able to stock bags of blood to have on hand in such situations.

In instances where a donor cannot be found, or where your pet is seriously ill and needs 24-hour monitoring, we would refer you and your pet to a specialist referral hospital so that a blood transfusion can be given without delay.

- ***How do you collect blood from donors?***

Similar to people, blood is collected from donor animals in a strict and sterile manner. Blood is generally collected from the jugular vein in the neck. In most cases, donors are given a light sedative or short anaesthetic to relax them a little and to keep them nice and quiet.

- ***What makes a good blood donor?***

The ideal dog blood donor is a healthy dog weighing more than 25kg, less than 7 years of age, fully vaccinated and should be on current heartworm and intestinal worming prevention. The ideal cat blood donor is a healthy cat weighing more than 5kg, less than 7 years of age, fully vaccinated, kept strictly indoors, negative for infectious diseases, blood typed and receiving current heartworm and intestinal worming prevention. They would be even better donors if they had a good temperament, easily handled and not afraid of vets!

Greyhounds have been seen as the ideal dog blood donor because not only do they have a gentle disposition but they have a naturally high blood count compared to other breeds.

- ***How much blood can they donate?***

Dogs weighing more than 25kg can safely donate 450mls of blood whilst cats weighing more than 5kg can donate 50mls. Within several days, the body is able to compensate for this loss by producing more blood cells from the body's bone marrow. We generally restrict donors to give blood once every 2 to 3 months. Although they cope really well after their donation, we ask all donor animals to be well rested for a few days, and ideally pampered with lots of love and yummy treats!

- ***How do you give blood to sick animals?***

A blood transfusion is given via an intravenous catheter, usually placed in a vein of the foreleg. Blood is first filtered with a special blood filter. Patients are closely monitored throughout the transfusion but particularly in the first 15 minutes to look for signs of transfusion reaction. The blood transfusion is completed over 4 hours.

- ***What about blood typing?***

Dogs and cats have blood types just as humans have blood types.

Dogs have many different blood types. However, dogs rarely have antibodies against other blood types, so in *most* cases, it is safe to give a dog one blood transfusion without blood typing or crossmatching prior to transfusion. However, dogs that have had a transfusion in the past have an increased risk of transfusion reaction and will need to be cross matched before receiving another blood transfusion.

Cats have 3 blood types: Types A, B and AB. Type A is more common than Type B and Type AB is rare. Cats **must** be typed and cross matched before a blood transfusion takes place. If a Type B cat is given even a small amount of Type A blood, a fatal transfusion reaction can occur. Conversely, if a Type A cat is given Type B blood, a less severe reaction occurs and although the reaction isn't generally life-threatening, the donated blood cells don't last long within the circulation making the transfusion ineffective. Blood typing can be done at the clinic with blood typing cards or sent off to an external laboratory to make blood transfusions in cats as safe as possible.

- ***What happens after the blood transfusion?***

Often in most cases, there is a serious underlying problem to why animals need a blood transfusion in the first place. We hope that after receiving a blood transfusion, animals are at least stable enough to battle the cause of why they have lost blood. In some cases, animals bounce right back as if they have had life injected back into them. Some animals need multiple transfusions to get through their disease. Unfortunately, there are some animals which don't make it despite the very best efforts because they were so severely ill to begin with but without a doubt, a blood transfusion can save your pets life.



TIMEOUT: A short ‘tail’ about stingrays and their barbs

The ocean is swarming with animals that have the potential to harm us. Things with tentacles, teeth, and toxins... but the ocean is also home to animals which are the epitome of grace and beauty, and as long as we respect them, we have no reason to fear them. Such animals include the stingray.

Stingrays have recently developed a dangerous reputation, despite their peaceful nature. They will only ever attack if they are provoked, or feel threatened. If you ever find yourself walking in shallow, murky water and suspect there may be stingrays hidden in the sand, do the ‘stingray shuffle’, by shuffling your feet! Stingrays will often swim away at the slightest movement. Disturb them further, and the barb comes into play. However, don’t forget that NOT all rays are stingrays! The largest living ray in the world is the manta ray, which can have a wingspan of 6m, yet it does not have a barb. It is a gentle, plankton-consuming giant!



For the true stingrays of our world, the barb is a remarkable defence mechanism. It is a hard, flat, serrated structure which tapers to a sharp point, so that it slices through tissue on the ‘ray’ in, and tears flesh on the ‘ray’ out. There may be one or more barbs along the tail. A barb that lies closer to the tip of the tail is considered more dangerous than one at the base of the tail, because it can strike well forward of the head. Stingrays are like underwater scorpions, lifting their barbed tails up over their heads and thrusting it powerfully into their victims. The barb often disconnects from the tail because it is anchored to it by loose connective tissue, but unlike bees, they do not die... it may even sting you to know that they will eventually grow it back!

If that’s not bad enough, the barb is equipped with a venom gland near the base, covered by a thin sheath. When the barb penetrates tissue, the thin membrane is ruptured, releasing a painful toxin in two grooves running lengthwise along the sting. It is life-threatening if it involves the cardio-respiratory system, but not always fatal. Secondary bacterial infections are the main complication if foreign bodies are embedded in the wound, which need to be surgically removed.

Now you may not barb-lieve me after this, but stingrays are indeed magnificent and graceful animals! Whenever I encounter a stingray on my dives, I freeze, not from fear, but from admiration. On a dive in the warmer waters of Queensland, I was one of the lucky divers to look up and see a school of eagle rays flying above our heads, flapping their pectoral fins like birds of prey soaring across the sky. For a diver, the sight of a school of 30 or more of these rays cruising through crystal clear waters is an unforgettable experience. During one of my night dives, I spotted lots of numbfish, a type of electric ray, in the beam of my torch, filling me with a sense of

exhilaration. In a world that can sometimes be dark and cold, where the salt water might sting our eyes, stingrays light up our oceans like a ray of sunshine! - Leanne

All About Cat Vaccines

As many of you already know, ensuring your pet is fully vaccinated is vital to maintain immunity against easily transmissible and potentially life threatening diseases. In cats, there are a number of diseases which we can vaccinate against.



Feline herpes virus and calicivirus, together, cause what is commonly known as ‘cat flu’. ‘Cat flu’ is extremely contagious. Cats that are vaccinated against ‘cat flu’ may still develop the infection but tend to be affected much less severely than unvaccinated cats. Feline panleucopaenia is similar to parvovirus in dogs. Affected cats develop a severe gastroenteritis, which can often be fatal. **ALL** cats should be vaccinated against Feline Herpes Virus, Feline Calicivirus and Feline Panleucopaenia. This vaccination is provided as a 3 in 1 vaccine and is referred to as the F3 vaccine.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, also known as Cat AIDS, is becoming more and more common. Like in humans, FIV in cats causes gradual destruction of the immune system and there is no cure. If your cat has ever been in a fight with another cat, they are at risk of infection. For this reason, we recommend that cats with *any* outdoor access should be vaccinated against FIV. Cats need a FIV blood test before they are vaccinated.

Feline leukaemia virus causes suppression of the immune system and can lead to cancer of the white blood cells as well as causing solid tumours in vital organs. Cats can be exposed to the virus through contacting saliva from infected cats such as through fighting, mutual grooming, sharing food bowls and coming into contact with urine from infected cats. Fortunately it is not very common in Australia. Cats that are predominantly outdoors or those that visit places with a lot of cats (like catteries, animal shelters, breeding colonies) are at risk. We do not use this vaccine in our routine vaccination but we DO recommend it for “at-risk” cats.

Feline Chlamydia causes conjunctivitis in cats. It is most common in young cats and in multi-cat environments where there is a lot of cat to cat contact such as in catteries, breeding colonies and animal shelters. Feline Chlamydia can be successfully treated with antibiotics. There are reports that the vaccine itself can cause quite frequent side effects. Also, since Feline Chlamydia is not that common and can be treated with antibiotics, we currently do not stock this vaccine.

If you are unsure which vaccine your cat needs, don’t hesitate to speak to one of our staff. Alternatively, you may wish to discuss this with one of our vets at the time of your cat’s next vaccination or health check.

- Connie