

Welcome to our **winter** newsletter, and my first newsletter as editor! I look forward to providing you with interesting and useful articles on pet health and keeping you up to date with what is happening at Ingleburn Vet Hospital. As usual, we have contributions from several staff members in this issue. This issue includes articles on:

- **Hyperthyroidism** – a common disease in cats
- **Wild birds** – caring for injured wildlife
- **Strays** – what really happens to them

There are also a number of other short articles. As always, we'd appreciate any comments that you have on our newsletter, and any suggestions for future issues.

-Alison

Special Offer - July 2005 only

***** Desexing - 15% Off *****

Dogs and Cats only

Male & Female - Young & Old

Includes post-op pain relief

15% off Microchips

(if implanted during desexing)

You must mention this offer to receive the discount.

For a quote or more information, please give us a call or visit the desexing page on our web site:

www.ingleburnvet.com.au/desex

Secrets Revealed...

Some of you have heard a rumour that we're moving. Well, we can now announce that the rumour is true. Construction has already started on a new building for Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital on Williamson Road in Ingleburn, and we hope to be in the new premises before Christmas. The site is on the corner of Williamson Road and Noonan Road, and you will be able to see the early stages of construction when driving past.

Why? There are many reasons, but basically we have outgrown the current building. It's too small for the number of patients we get and too small for the number of staff working here. Anybody who has been to a puppy preschool will immediately understand what we mean. There is also limited parking and limited visibility, and the design of the current building is "old". For example, the new hospital will have a much bigger waiting room, more consulting rooms, a separate cat waiting and consulting room, a separate cat ward, indoor dog runs, a

staff room and more office space for writing up and researching cases.

So this is an exciting and nervous time at Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital. We will be a little sad to leave this building, as like a human hospital, it has a lot of happy and sad memories for many people. We enjoy being cosily tucked away in the middle of Ingleburn. However, to continue to provide a high standard of pet care and provide good working conditions for our staff, we have to move!

Soon we will be able to display the plans for the new hospital and hopefully put them on our website. In the meantime, if anybody has any questions or concerns about this news, don't hesitate to ask!

We hope to have an open day on Sunday October 9 to coincide with the Sydney wide "Great Big Animal Open Day" and show off our new hospital.

We have already begun some changes, such as a complete computer upgrade and an ultrasound machine, and look forward to being able to show you through the new Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital!

Staff Training

Staff training is a continual part of our aim to provide our patients with high quality health care.

Mark has attended two seminars:

- A seminar on **flea control**, including discussion of current products and techniques.
- A seminar on **arthritis** treatment and new medications that are expected to have less chance of side effects

Alison has attended two courses:

- **Best in Practice Anaesthesia** – a seminar on anaesthetic techniques in small animals. This focussed on using different combinations of drugs to achieve the safest anaesthetics for our patients.
- **Australian Veterinary Association Conference** – this is a 5-day conference held this year at the Gold Coast. Alison attended lectures that focussed on small animal surgery, small animal dentistry, treating exotic and unusual pets and small animal behaviour.

Ros has attended the 5-day **Veterinary Nurses Council Association International Conference** in Adelaide. She attended lectures in animal behaviour, surgery, critical care, skin disease, and many other interesting topics. She also enjoyed studying wines in the Barossa during her journey!

Staff News

- ❑ You may have noticed a locum vet, **Corinne James**, around the clinic through April and May. Although she has left us to work in Darwin for 2 months, she will be back in July. We thank her for all her hard work during the 6 weeks that she was with us and look forward to her return!
- ❑ We'd like to welcome **Barry Cameron**, our new locum vet, to our hospital. Barry is from the UK and will be working with us from May to July. His special interests are in small animal cardiology and orthopaedics.
- ❑ We also welcome **Connie Lam**, to our clinic. Connie is a veterinary intern in her final year of study at the University of Sydney. She will be with us for 4 weeks and we wish her luck with her veterinary career!
- ❑ **Nicole**, our newest nurse, has started a traineeship in animal studies (certificate 2), her first step to becoming a fully qualified vet nurse. She is enjoying the extra opportunity to improve her knowledge and skills.

Puppy Preschool

Congratulations to our recent graduates:

Memphis Bates, Lizzy Nolan, Ruby Costello, Trucker Carter, Archie Briggs/O'Neil, Fudge Petterson, Lu-Lu Price, Tenshi Cosgrove, Chopper Braithewaite



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. Our nurses **Dani** and **Ros** run the classes. Ask us for details.

New Products

Interceptor Spectrum: Interceptor now protects our dogs against tapeworm, as well as heartworm and the other intestinal worms. If you are using Interceptor, you will no longer have to buy the extra tapeworm tablet every 6 months!

Advantix is a new topical flea/tick product for dogs, which will kill and repel paralysis ticks, bush ticks and mosquitoes, as well as killing adult fleas and flea larvae.

Prescription Diet Canine j/d: Hills have launched a dog food for dogs with arthritis, called j/d (code for joint diet! We think they mean bone joints.) It contains high levels of omega3 fatty acids including EPA which controls inflammation deep inside joints, and has a reduced energy content to prevent weight gain. It contains natural glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate and giving them in this form should be cheaper than adding them as a supplement. Its antioxidant formula contains vitamins E & C, selenium and beta carotene is claimed to protect joints from harmful "free radicals" created by the inflamed joints.

Guardian All-Wormer Chew is a new heartworm and intestinal wormer for dogs. It comes as a palatable chew!

Its arthritis time again

We've said goodbye to summer and its ticks and snakes, and now we must think about winter and what this means for our pets. Colder weather tends to worsen the signs of arthritis and you may notice the following signs:

- Reduced activity, reluctance to walk or play
- Difficulty jumping into cars (or onto beds!)
- Difficulty getting up in the mornings (no, they're not being lazy!)



If you notice any of these signs, it may be because your pet is developing arthritis, and we recommend a health check with one of our vets. There are several different treatments available to help ease the pain of arthritis, including the new diet *Prescription Diet Canine j/d*. This diet is designed to reduce joint inflammation preventing further progression of the disease. We may also recommend weight loss and exercise for your dog. All of these factors are important in maintaining your dog (or cat's) quality of life. Visit our website for more information.

Care for wild birds



Have you ever seen a sick or injured wild bird and thought that nothing could be done to help it? At Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital we are able to help. In conjunction with WIRES, we provide free care and services for all native Australian wildlife. This includes birds of all shapes and sizes. We do this on a volunteer basis during our office hours.

Birds are fragile creatures and need to be handled with care. It is also essential to remember that these birds are wild and they will bite! We recommend that you wear gloves and use a towel when handling the bird to help prevent injuries from the beak and nails. This is especially important when dealing with parrots. If you happen to get bitten by a bird, or any other wild animal, it is important to clean the wound as best as possible and consult your doctor.

Often, sick and injured birds will be under a great deal of stress and will need to be kept as calm as possible until you are able to get them to us. We recommend that they be kept in a dark area. A cardboard box will be appropriate for this, with a shallow dish of water.

If we are open, you can bring the animal directly to us. We will provide free medical and surgical care until the animal is healthy and then arrange for a foster care until the animal is ready to be released. In some cases, euthanasia may be performed if it is deemed necessary on humane grounds.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide care for wild birds after hours. In this situation keep the bird in a dark, quiet place until we reopen or alternatively you could contact WIRES direct on (02) 8977 3333.

- Nicole

I think my pet gave me...worms!

Zoonoses is not the word for the snout of a zoo animal, it means a disease that can be passed to you from your pet. We're often asked about these diseases and there are a lot of myths out there that need to be explained. Since this is no small topic, and we don't want to cause mass panic by skating over the important facts, this will be an ongoing series, with new diseases discussed in following newsletters, so keep your eyes peeled! We'll be starting the series with a discussion on worms and other parasites that can be passed to humans. It just shows - we don't make you give your pet worming tablets purely for our own evil enjoyment!



Parasites

Intestinal worms and parasites can be passed to us from our pets. Worm and parasite eggs are passed in our pet's faeces (poos) and it is through accidental ingestion of these eggs that people are infected. This can occur from patting your dog to playing outside in areas where he or she might go to the toilet.

- Hookworms and roundworms (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris cati*, *Ancylostoma spp.*) can cause a syndrome in people called larval migrans, where the larvae of the worms migrate through the skin, internal organs, eyes or brain. This is a rare disease that is usually transmitted from puppies and kittens, which are infected when they are in the mother's womb or from her milk when they are feeding.
- Tapeworm – *Echinococcus granulosus* can infect dogs when they eat the offal (intestines, stomachs, livers, lungs etc) of marsupials such as kangaroos or infected livestock (cattle and sheep). The eggs are passed in the dog's faeces and can stick to the coat. People become infected when they accidentally eat these eggs and this causes the growth of hydatid cysts (you may have seen photos of enormous cysts in people's abdomens!)
- Giardia is a small protozoan parasite that can cause diarrhoea in dogs and humans. Diagnosis is difficult in both of us and treatment usually involves supportive care.

How to prevent these diseases:

- Dogs and cats should be wormed regularly. Puppies and kittens should be wormed every 2 weeks until they are 12 weeks of age, then monthly until 6 months of age, then every 3 months after that. An all-wormer should be used to protect against tapeworm as well as the other intestinal worms.
- It is very important to worm the dam (mother) during pregnancy
- Don't feed your dog offal from an unknown source
- Always make sure you wash your hands after playing with the dog or cat or handling its faeces. Getting children into the routine of hand washing is also very important, even after they've been playing in areas where the dog may defaecate.

-Alison

Strays

Did you know that technically it is an offence (under Section 62 of the Companion Animal Act) for someone to drop a stray dog or cat into a veterinary practice? By law, the animal is supposed to be returned directly to the owner or go to a Council pound. However, it is recognised that people *do* deliver strays to their local vet, and it is acceptable as long as the vet takes over responsibility of finding the owner of the animal or delivering the animal to the pound.

When a stray pet is brought into our hospital, we first record the details of the person who found the dog, and then the animal is scanned to see if it has a microchip. In the event that the animal doesn't have a microchip, we then send it directly to the pound in Campbelltown.



If the animal has a microchip, our staff will spend time trying to locate the owner, to avoid sending it to the pound. We do this by:

- Checking our computer database in case the animal is a patient of ours
- Next we will check the Australasian Animal Registry, which is another database that stores animal information and microchip details
- Failing these, we contact the Pet Find Line to search their database. If Pet Find is able to locate an owner, they can let us know within 30 minutes, and will direct the owner to contact us as soon as possible

Whilst waiting to hear from the owner, the animal is cared for in our hospital by our nursing staff, given clean bedding, fresh food and water and first aid if required.

As we spend a considerable amount of time caring for the stray and locating the owner, we will charge a small boarding fee on collection of the pet. Some people may feel that it is wrong for us to charge for this, but we believe that we are providing this service to our clients, as well as the general community and feel that this fee is minimal and deserved for our efforts. It is also a much smaller fee than that charged by the pound!

We should also emphasise that stray animals *can* be taken directly to the pound. If a stray is found after hours, it is advisable to try and keep it confined somewhere safe until business hours the next day. If the animal is badly injured, the pound vets will offer their service after hours.

We like to think that we can reunite all lost pets with their owners, but sadly, this is not always the case. Sometimes the pound is inevitable. We can only try our best!

Campbelltown Pound Phone Number: BH: 4628 3044
AH: 9663 1621
Campbelltown Pound Vet: BH 4627 1333

-Bronwyn

Hyperthyroidism in cats

Hyperthyroidism is a disease of cats, which causes an overproduction of thyroid hormones. Thyroid hormones (T3 and T4) play a role in metabolism in the body; they are involved in virtually every organ system. Overproduction of these hormones causes an increase in the cat's metabolic rate. It is a disease of middle age to older cats (older than 6-8 years of age, average 11-12 years). No breed or sex is more or less likely to get the disease.

What are the symptoms:

The most common signs are:

- Weight loss despite a normal or increased appetite
- Drinking and urinating more than usual
- Hyperactivity
- Poor coat quality
- Vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Increased heart rate
- Heart murmur or heart rhythm abnormalities (arrhythmias).



Which other diseases cause these signs?

- Renal failure (kidney disease)
- Diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes)
- Various cancers

Diagnosis

To confirm the diagnosis of the disease, blood must be taken for a full blood count and biochemical analysis and to measure the thyroid hormone (T4) level. Urine should also be tested to help rule out kidney disease and diabetes.

Treatment

There are 4 options when it comes to treatment. First of all we may decide not to treat at all (based on the cat's age and any concurrent disease, such as kidney disease). If we decide to proceed with treatment, we will need to factor in the age and health of your cat, other diseases and of course, the ever important finances!

Treatment options include:

- ❑ Radio-iodine therapy, which uses radioactive iodine to selectively kill the thyroid cells that are producing too much hormone. This is the most safe, effective and curative treatment available today.
- ❑ Surgical removal of the thyroid glands. There are a number of potential risks associated with anaesthetising these cats, and some potential complications of the surgery.
- ❑ Medical treatment with a twice-daily tablet is a good option for older cats or those with other diseases. Although this won't provide a cure for the disease and requires life long treatment, it is a less invasive method of treatment.

If you are concerned that your older cat is showing signs of hyperthyroidism, it is best to discuss this with one of our vets. Please also ask us for our more comprehensive handout 'Hyperthyroidism in Cats', which is also available on our website.

-Alison

A letter to all cats and dogs

Dear Cats and Dogs,

When I say to move, it means go someplace else, not switch positions with each other so there are still two of you in the way.

The dishes with the paw print are yours and contain your food. The other dishes are mine and contain my food. Please note, placing a paw print in the middle of my plate of food does not stake a claim for it becoming your food and dish, nor do I find that aesthetically pleasing in the slightest!

The stairway was not designed by NASCAR and is not a racetrack. Beating me to the bottom is not the object. Tripping me doesn't help, because I fall faster than you can run.

I cannot buy anything bigger than a king size bed. I am very sorry about this. Do not think I will continue to sleep on the couch to ensure your comfort. Look at videos of dogs and cats sleeping, they can actually curl up in a ball. It is not necessary to sleep perpendicular to each other, stretched out to the fullest extent possible. I also know that sticking tails straight out and having tongues hanging out the other end to maximise space used is nothing but sarcasm.

For the last time, there is not a secret exit from the bathroom. If by some miracle I beat you there and manage to get the door shut, it is not necessary to claw, whine, and try to turn the knob, or get your paw under the edge and try to pull the door open. I must exit through the same door I entered. In addition, I have been using bathrooms for years. Feline or canine attendance is not mandatory!

The proper order is kiss me, then go smell the other cat or dogs' butt. I cannot stress this enough. It would be such a simple change for you.

To pacify you, I have posted the following message on our front door...

1. They live here. You don't.
2. If you don't want their hair on your clothes, stay off the furniture
3. I like my pet a lot better than I like most people
4. To you, it's an animal. To me, he/she is an adopted son/daughter who is hairy, walks on all fours and is clearly better looking than your human variety kids.
5. Dogs and cats are better than kids. They eat less, don't ask for money all the time, are easier to train, usually come when called, never drive your car, don't hang out with drug-using friends, don't smoke or drink, don't worry about buying the latest fashions, and if they get pregnant, you can sell the offspring.

- Submitted by Jenny, one of our clients

Got a good joke about pets? Go to the new Humour page on our web site and submit your joke. But please remember that some of our cat owners won't appreciate too many "dead cat" jokes!