



# NEWS Letter

Issue 29, Spring 2005

**Welcome** to our **spring** newsletter. Our winter newsletter sparked a lot of interest and questions regarding our new clinic, and we hope to answer a few more of those questions in this issue. We also have some exciting news regarding the Great Big Animal Open Day. As usual, we have contributions from several staff members in this issue. This issue includes articles on:

- **Fleas** – is your pet flea free for summer?
- **Zoonoses** – I think my pet gave me itchy skin!
- **Insect bite reactions and your pet**
- **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus** – our nurse Nicole gives an owner's perspective.
- **Our regular joke** – how to give a cat a tablet!

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*

## Flea Time is here Again!

It sounds like the start to a song, doesn't it? For some of you, fleas are a year round problem – given the right conditions (such as heated houses through winter), these pesky pests can survive all year round. For others, they are just a summer problem. For all of winter these fleas have been lying dormant, but are growing in numbers all the time. As our weather warms up, 3 months of fleas and eggs start to wake up. If you've been slack with the flea control over winter, now is the time to start again!

A friendly fact, folks: Did you know that adult fleas only make up 5% of the flea population in your home. The other 95% are eggs and larvae that are living in the environment (carpets, bedding, garden). This is important for two reasons:

1. If you are only starting flea control again after a break, it may take up to 3 months to get the fleas under control again.
2. Providing year round flea control reduces the egg and larvae population in and around your home, meaning you're much less likely to ever have a problem!

There are excellent products available to kill and prevent fleas. Please talk to our staff if you are unsure about which product is best for your pets. Also see our website for more information.

*- Ros*



**Sunday October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**10 am till 2 pm**

**92 Oxford Road, Ingleburn**

Sunday October 9<sup>th</sup> will be the biggest day on the animal calendar. We are joining practices right across Sydney who are taking part in The Great Big Animal Open Day by throwing our doors open to the public. This is a chance to come back-stage, ask questions and learn more about the amazing world of animal care, plus have some fun too. Finish off the school holidays with a great day out!

### What will be happening?

Attractions of the day include: glimpses of "back stage" at a veterinary hospital, treats for the kids, free sample bags, a sausage sizzle all day, guest speakers, demonstrations and lucky door prizes.

### Who is it for?

Everyone is welcome. Pet lovers, owners, carers, those looking to acquire a pet, families, animal interest groups and the community at large. This is the perfect opportunity for the public to visit the local vet and ask every question they've always wanted to but haven't had the chance. However, as exploring the hospital and listening to seminars may be difficult with your pets, we've made this a "human only" event and we'd appreciate it if you could **leave your pets at home!**

### The Great Big What??

This event is an initiative of the Sydney Metropolitan Practitioners Branch of The Australian Veterinary Association. The idea is to open up the wonderful world of animal care to the general public, with the local vet practice as the staging point. So mark the date on your calendar now – Sunday October 9<sup>th</sup> from 10am till 2pm. Come and join in the fun!

## New Clinic Update

Last newsletter we announced that we will be moving and you've all been very curious about the progress of the new hospital and our plans to move. The question on everyone's lips is now: *When will we be moving?*

It's a fair question! The date isn't certain yet but we hope it will be in November (this year!). We will advise the exact date in our next newsletter. The address will be the corner of Noonan and Williamson Roads, Ingleburn. You can see the building easily now, from Williamson Rd, and mighty impressive it looks too! There have been some concerns raised about the distance to our new hospital from the centre of Ingleburn, from those that walk to our hospital. We have some ideas and hope to answer all your questions in the next newsletter. If anybody has any questions or concerns about the move, please contact us and talk to our staff.

- Mark

## Feline Immunodeficiency Virus – an owner's perspective!

It has recently come to our attention here at Ingleburn Veterinary Hospital that we have diagnosed an increased number of cats with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), including my own cat!

FIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, resulting in the cat having difficulty in fighting off simple infections. It is spread by cat fights and sharing saliva and other body fluids, and can also be transmitted by the queen (female cat) to her kittens through birth and lactation (her milk). Cats with a history of fighting (such as those that have developed cat fight abscesses) could be infected with this virus, which is diagnosed by a simple blood test. Although it is a virus that is similar to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and has been called Feline AIDS for many years, the two diseases are different.

Recently, my own cat, "Thomas", was diagnosed as being FIV positive. Thomas was welcomed by our home as an adult stray tom cat. It was our first priority to get him desexed to prevent unwanted breeding as well as to attend to his many fight wounds. All went well and months passed before it was noted that he had a strong odour coming from his mouth. Concerned, I brought him to work with me for a check up. Upon examination, the cause of his bad breath was diagnosed as gingivitis (inflammation of the gums), but his teeth were in good condition with little tartar. Barry (our locum vet) was concerned with the extent of the infection and I was advised that it would be beneficial to rule out Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) and FIV as the causes. These tests were also recommended as he had been a stray and known to be involved in cat fights before we adopted him.

The following day, the results were in and sure enough, Thomas was FIV positive. Upon this diagnosis, Thomas was given a strong course of antibiotics to help resolve his gingivitis. He has since recovered fully! We will now

keep a close eye on him to ensure that all infections or illnesses are identified as early as possible so that we can supply his immune system with any extra help it may need.

As always in the veterinary world, diseases seem to come in threes, and the very next week, we diagnosed 2 more cases of FIV! In most cases a positive diagnosis means only that we keep a closer eye on the patient, but it can lead to death in some cats. As cats can spread the disease in their saliva, it is advisable to test all cats in the household, and to not introduce any more cats to the household if one tests positive. We also recommend that you keep your FIV positive cat inside and feed all cats separately.

There is now a vaccination available for the disease, but the jury is still out as to whether it will be effective. Several feline specialists have recently written to the Australian Veterinary Association to express their concern regarding the vaccination. They feel that vaccination may not be worthwhile for the following reasons:

- ❑ FIV is not a very common disease in Australia
- ❑ The vaccine only protects against 2 of the 5 strains of the virus and its not even 100% effective against these!
- ❑ In most cases the disease does not cause death and often causes no symptoms (usually, cats with the disease live to old age and die of something unrelated!)
- ❑ Cats will need to be tested for FIV before the vaccine can be administered.

We are always updating our vaccination protocols and preventative measures according to the current recommendations, and we will endeavour to keep you up to date on this issue. However, until there is more evidence to suggest that vaccination against FIV is a worthwhile measure, we will not be recommending it. If you would like more information about this vaccination, please talk to one of our vets.

- Nicole (with extra vaccine information from Alison)

## Staff News

- ❑ In August we said goodbye to our locum **Barry Cameron**. We thank him sincerely for his hard work, enthusiasm and sense of humour and wish him well on his return home to the UK.
- ❑ We welcome back our locum vets, **Corinne James** and **Marcel Vel** who will be working for us part time.
- ❑ We also welcome **Matt Gray** to the clinic. Matt is an Ingleburn local and is completing an Animal Studies course, which is based in Tamworth (most of this course is completed by correspondence). He will be working part time as a kennel hand and veterinary nurse.
- ❑ Congratulations to **Nicole Stanley**, who has given birth to a baby boy. Nicole used to work as a vet nurse and has occasionally run puppy preschool classes over the last 12 months. We wish the Stanley family all the best

## I think my pet gave me ... itchy skin

**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. This is an ongoing series, with new diseases to be discussed in following newsletters, so keep your eyes peeled! This month's article looks into two causes of skin disease in humans – ringworm and Sarcoptic mange (Scabies).

### Ringworm

The biggest problem with ringworm is that it is named badly! Despite its name, ringworm is not a worm; it is actually a fungal skin infection which causes red, itchy rings on the skin of humans.

Ringworm can look very different on our pets. Sometimes they have small bald patches, which they may have been licking or scratching at and others can have a rash all over their bodies. Some cats and dogs can show no symptoms of ringworm at all and still be carriers of the fungi.

Ringworm tends to affect puppies and kittens, but our older patients and our patients that have a poor immune system (due to disease or medications) are also more at risk. In the same way, children and immunocompromised people (such as those with cancer or AIDS) are also more at risk than healthy adults. Ringworm is transmitted to humans by skin to skin contact with an infected person or pet, from contact with bedding, hair brushes or other items the infected person or pet have used, or less commonly, from the soil.

We can often diagnose ringworm in pets by running a UV light over the skin, however, this does not work in all cases and we may need to send some hair away to be cultured. Luckily, ringworm in ourselves and our pets can be easily treated with an antifungal medication or cream. If any family members find a red, itchy ring on their bodies, it is best to consult your doctor.

### Sarcoptic Mange (Scabies)

“Mange” is a word that is often associated with stray or poorly looked after dogs; however, this is not always the case. Sarcoptic mange is caused by a microscopic mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) that lives in the top layer of the skin. Dogs can become infected by other dogs, foxes, wombats and other marsupials (e.g. kangaroos), and also by humans! They can pick up the mite even when they brush up against trees where affected wildlife have been scratching. People can also be infected by these animals.

In both dogs and people, the mite causes an intensely itchy rash. It can be very difficult to diagnose, and we often treat pets based on the suspicion that they have the disease. There is several different treatments available, including injections of a parasiticide, or topical application of Revolution or Advocate.

The risk of catching Scabies from your pet (or from wildlife) is slim; however, always consult your doctor if in doubt.

- Alison

## Labor Day Public Holiday

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October: 9am – 5pm

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October: 10am – 12 noon

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October: 10am – 12 noon

Phone **9829 1947** at any time for emergencies

## New Services

We have recently purchased a new Ultrasound machine to help us provide you with the best diagnostic services that we can. An ultrasound (or also called a sonogram) is best known for its use in human medicine to monitor foetal development during pregnancy, but can be used widely in diagnosing many diseases, including liver disease, pancreatitis, kidney or bladder diseases and heart disease (to name just a few). It can also help us to determine the location of abdominal tumours and diagnose early pregnancies (from 28 days).

Ultrasound works by sending out high frequency sound waves into the body. These waves bounce off different tissues and organs and return to the surface, where the machine picks them up and assesses how quickly they returned and how strong they are when they return. The machine uses this information to put together an image on the screen.

It can take many years to become skilled in ultrasonography, especially when assessing the heart (this is called an echocardiogram), the pancreas, intestinal diseases and hormonal diseases. Therefore we may still require the services of a specialist ultrasonographer, who visits our clinic every 2 weeks. However, we look forward to using our new machine and continuing to provide a high level of care to our patients.

- Alison

## Insect bite reactions

Spring is here and so are all the crawling, biting insects! Dogs are inquisitive creatures and will often put their noses into places they shouldn't, and the most common result of being bitten by an insect such as a bee, wasp or ant is facial swelling. The swelling can be dramatic, particularly around the eyes and muzzle.

This swelling will often go down by itself, but we can hurry the process up with antihistamines and anti-inflammatories. Insect bites can occasionally also cause vomiting, diarrhoea, blood in the faeces, respiratory distress (trouble breathing) and death (however, this is rare!). Young dogs seem more susceptible and more sensitive to insect bite reactions than older dogs.

If you suspect an insect bite reaction and apart from facial swelling, your pet seems otherwise normal, the swelling should go down within a few hours. However, if concerned at all about your pet's health, it is best to seek veterinary advice immediately.

- Alison

## Puppy Preschool

Congratulations to our recent graduates:

*Bella Porter, Munch Fox/Dowell, Archie Briggs/O'Neill, Toby Webster, Nelly Nicolas, Bonnie Morgan, Kobi Brand, Buddy Lowe, Storm Clements, Zac McShane, Bella Elston, Bailey Brown, Bella Doherty, Tiger Gilbert, Bella Carr*



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.

## Some modern day dangers

There have recently been reports of “new” gastrointestinal foreign bodies i.e. things that pets eat that get stuck in the stomach or intestines. Tampons and satay sticks seem to be the newest culprits!

- Tampons are more likely to be put in the rubbish these days than flushed down the toilet and dogs sometimes get hold of them. The main problem is the string which bunches up the gut and cuts through it, causing severe intestinal lacerations and peritonitis (infection inside the abdomen).
- Satay sticks are meat flavoured and obviously very attractive to dogs. They get through the stomach into the intestines but won't go around corners, so end up puncturing the intestine, causing severe pain and peritonitis.

Both of these objects are likely to need surgical removal if they are eaten, and may cause death if the damage is too severe. So please ensure your dog doesn't have access to any of your household bins and dispose of these items carefully.

- Mark

## Supplying Medications

We have many patients who are on daily medications, such as our dogs and cats with diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, hypo/hyperthyroidism, skin diseases ...and many, many more! It is therefore necessary to see owners on a regular basis to supply these medications. According to the Health Department of NSW (who regulates the supply of drugs in the state), *a veterinarian must be the one who dispenses these medications, not a veterinary nurse.*

This can cause some problems – often our vets are busy with consulting and it may take a short period of time for them to be able to dispense the medications required. Waiting for a vet to dispense the medication allows them to discuss your pet's health and any problems that you may be encountering.

Therefore, if you have medications to collect, we would appreciate it if you could:

- Call ahead and book an appointment
- And be prepared for a short wait if we are busy

We do apologise if this causes any inconvenience, but we feel that it is in your pet's benefit to have a vet dispense his/her medications.

## How to give your cat a tablet:

1. Pick up cat and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on either side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheeks while holding pill in right hand, as cat opens mouth pop pill onto back of tongue. Close mouth to allow cat to swallow.
2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind couch. Cradle cat in left arm and repeat process.
3. Retrieve cat from bedroom and throw soggy pill away. Take new pill from foil wrap, cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand. Force jaws open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for 10 seconds.
4. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call spouse from garden.
5. Kneel on floor with cat wedged firmly between knees, holding front and rear paws. Ignore low growls emitted by cat. Get spouse to hold cat's head firmly with one hand while forcing wooden ruler into mouth. Drop pill down ruler and rub cat's throat vigorously.
6. Retrieve cat from curtain rail; get another pill from the packet. Wrap cat in a large towel and get spouse to lie on cat with its head just visible from below spouse's armpit. Put pill in end of drinking straw, force cat's mouth open with pencil and blow down drinking straw.
7. Check label to make sure pill not harmful to humans, drink glass of water to take taste away. Apply band-aid to spouse's forearm and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.
8. Retrieve cat from neighbour's shed. Get another pill. Place cat in cupboard and close door onto neck to leave head showing. Force mouth open with dessert spoon. Flick pill down throat with elastic band.
9. Find screwdriver to put door back on hinges. Ring fire brigade to retrieve cat from tree across road. Apologise to neighbour who crashed into a fence while swerving to avoid cat. Take last pill from packet.
10. Tie cat's front paws to rear paws with string and bind tightly to leg of dining table. Find heavy duty gardening gloves from shed. Force cat's mouth open with small spanner. Push pill into mouth followed by large piece of fillet steak. Hold head vertically and pour a glass of water down throat to wash pill down.
11. Get spouse to drive you to emergency room; sit quietly while doctor stitches fingers and forearm and removes pill remnants from right eye. Stop by furniture shop on way home to order new table
12. Arrange for vet to make a house call.

**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!**