

# WINGRAVE

## VETERINARY SURGERIES

## NEWS

### RHD-2: new strain of rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease reported



- RHD-2 reported in the UK – not covered by standard annual Myxo-RHD vaccine
- Vaccine against RHD-2 has recently become available

Rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD or RHD) has been present in the UK for decades and is one of the diseases we currently vaccinate against yearly. It can cause symptoms of lethargy, fever, and seizures; however, sadly a common outcome is sudden death without signs of illness.

In recent months the European strain of the disease, referred to as RHD-2, has been reported in small outbreaks in the UK. Sadly, the usual vaccines used in the UK do not fully protect rabbits against this form of the disease, but a European vaccine has become available for use in the UK from June 2016.

While there have not been any confirmed cases in the immediate area, we have been working to get and maintain a stock of the new vaccine and keep our rabbit owners aware of its existence and importance!

We recommend that rabbit owners take extra care to limit potential disease exposure: it can be carried by insects and rodents as well as contact with infected rabbits and their waste. Therefore, take care when introducing any new rabbits; wash hands (and shoes) if visiting other groups of rabbits to avoid spread between homes; consider adding mesh to openings/windows to keep out insects and wildlife; and do not forage wild plants for your rabbits from high-wildlife areas which may have been exposed to wild rabbits and their urine.

Once again, we have not seen any cases in the immediate area so far. However, please do report any illness and especially any sudden deaths so we can accurately diagnose the cause – this will help us and the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (RWAFF) keep track of the spread of this disease.

### Pet Car Travel - Top Tips

Travelling with your pet in the car can be daunting. Here are our top tips:

**START EARLY!** Puppies and kittens who get used to going on car journeys tend to be better travellers when they are older.

**BE SAFE!** To prevent against injury in the event of an accident your pet should be secured within the car. Cat boxes and dog crates should be strapped in by a seatbelt or secure fastening. If dogs are sitting on the car seat then a doggy



seatbelt harness is recommended. For dogs in the boot it is essential that a dog guard is securely fitted that will take the weight of the dog in the event of an accident. A dog should not travel in the front foot well unless the passenger airbag is disabled (and obviously then no one should sit in the front seat). Making use of the rear foot well by pulling the front seat forwards is preferable.

**BE COMFORTABLE!** Carriers should be big enough for your pet to stand up and turn around and have comfortable absorbent bedding.

**BE CALM!** Using pheromone products such as Feliway, putting a familiar toy in the carrier and covering cat boxes with a towel can help keep your cat calm in the car.

**BE COOL!** Temperatures can climb very quickly in warm cars and animals can quickly overheat and sadly even die. Never leave an animal in a warm car even for a short period of time.

**TAKE A BREAK!** Be ready to take more breaks than normal! When travelling on longer journeys with pets it is important to take regular breaks to check on the animal, offer water and the option of going to the toilet. A small litter box and non-tip water bowl work well for cats. Make sure all the doors and windows of the car are shut before you open the cat box. Unless it is a very long journey we advise the last meal should be about two hours before you set off to reduce the risk of motion induced vomiting.



### Choosing the ideal diet for your pet!

When choosing a diet for your pets, the range and variety of diets can be over-whelming. So how do you decide which is best for your pets? The good news is that specially balanced *life-stage* diets are available for every stage of your pet's life, from tiny puppies and kittens to senior pets.

**Puppies and kittens** require specially formulated diets with higher (but not excessive) levels of energy, protein for muscle development and essential fatty acids for a healthy shining coat. **Adult pets**, with their major growth phase behind them, require a balanced diet to keep them healthy, but with lower levels of many of the nutrients mentioned above.

**Senior pets** are vulnerable to many health issues, and specially formulated diets typically contain supplements to soothe arthritic joints and help heart, brain and kidney function.

If you are wondering about how to ensure your pet's diet is a perfect fit for them and their lifestyle, please come and speak to us – there are a range of great options to choose from!



Images: Warren Photographic

## Autumn alert!



Summer is sadly over! The weather is cooling and the nights are drawing in. It is time to hunker down and light the fire. However, it is not the time to take your eye off the ball with our pets!

**Flea alert:** Autumn is the favourite time of year for fleas! Although it is colder outside, the heating in our

houses turns them into flea paradises. Keep an eye out for these annoying pests and of course keep up your pets' flea treatments.

**Troublesome ticks:** Ticks also enjoy the Autumn as they thrive in the more humid conditions outdoors. Ticks live in long grass and woodland areas waiting to latch on to passing pets. Once attached, ticks feed on your pet's blood – often for several days.

The main issue with ticks is that they can carry diseases in their saliva which they can potentially transmit to pets:

- **Lyme disease** is the primary tick borne pathogen in the UK and Ireland and can affect dogs and humans, and is carried by a small percentage of *Ixodes* ticks. Affected pets often show signs of arthritis, fever, lack of appetite and lethargy.
- **Babesiosis** is a tick borne disease which may affect dogs (but not humans) travelling to and from mainland Europe. It is caused by a tiny blood borne parasite *Babesia* which destroys red blood cells. Signs include dark red urine, pale or yellow gums, lethargy and fever. A recent outbreak of Babesiosis on the UK mainland (in Harlow, Essex) marks a further development in the spread of Babesiosis. This recent UK outbreak is very localised but it is important to be vigilant when travelling into at risk areas.

**Obesity awareness:** With the shorter days, the opportunities to exercise for both cats and dogs is less. So make sure you monitor their weight to ensure they don't put on a layer of winter blubber! Think about buying puzzle toys and feeders, these will keep them entertained and help get rid of some energy.

**Arthritis:** The cold can creep into the joints of older pets, making them stiff and sore. If you are concerned, come and talk to us about the medications and supplements that can help pets.



Additionally – watch out for falls of apples or conkers, both cause nasty tummy upsets if your dog eats too many. Also, if you need to use anti-freeze in the car, ensure there are no leaks and that the containers are well out of reach, as it is deadly to our pets.

Enjoy the Autumn weather and get in touch if you have any concerns!

## When did your pet last have a check-up?



When did your pet last see us for a check-up? Animals are extremely good at hiding signs of illness and pain and it can be very hard for owners to spot the subtle signs of problems. This is especially true of chronic conditions like arthritis, dental disease and kidney problems.

A good example of this is an older cat whose appetite has recently changed. An *increased* appetite is not an uncommon finding in older cats and should not be ignored since it may be a sign of hyperthyroidism; here an overactive thyroid gland increases the metabolic rate. Conversely, a *decreased* appetite may signal a range of underlying problems including dental and kidney problems.

The regular booster visit is a great time for us to give your pet a check over and ask you how things are going. So if we haven't seen them for a while, give us a call today!

### Check your pets for ticks!



Parting the coat reveals an *Ixodes* tick. These are widespread across the UK

and Ireland and may be infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the organism that causes Lyme disease in dogs and humans.



*Dermacentor* ticks can potentially carry *Babesia* organisms, the cause of

Babesiosis in dogs. These ticks are found in mainland Europe and parts of the UK.

### Effective tick control

Prevention of tick-borne disease in pets can be achieved by:

- **Daily monitoring for ticks** plus careful removal of ticks with a tick remover (see below).



- **Chemical tick prophylaxis** with veterinary anti-parasitic products that rapidly kill, repel or expel ticks are all useful in reducing tick feeding and therefore disease exposure.



## Firework Fright!!

The firework season is nearly here! The early nights are perfect for displays but if your pet finds them frightening, then night-time can become a nightmare for pets.

We recommend starting a desensitisation programme several months in advance. Podcasts of firework noises are available free from the Dogs Trust website. These should be played to your pets starting off quietly and building up the volume. Done correctly, it normalises the sounds for your pets and means they don't react to the real thing!

### So how can you help your pets on Firework night?

**Tire them out!** Give your dog a really good walk and a big meal, 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.



### Provide a den!

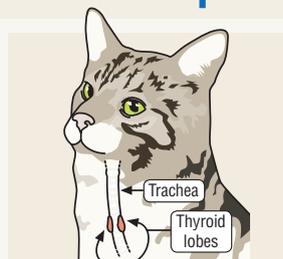
Animals feel much more secure in small spaces and it will help to

muffle the noises – as does keeping the curtains closed and the TV on.

**Use Adaptil and Feliway:** These are calming pheromone products that help to reduce anxiety. They are both available as plug-in diffusers, best positioned close to where your pet sleeps. Feliway also comes in a spray that can be sprayed on bedding and Adaptil as a collar. Ask us about them and how they can help!

Additionally, although we need to comfort our pets when they are frightened, it is important not to be too over-effusive because this can encourage attention seeking behaviour. The best time to praise them is when they are being calm and relaxed.

Finally, some pets simply cannot cope and they need sedative medications. If you think your dog or cat might benefit from these, please come and have a chat with us.



**Diagram:** showing position of the thyroid lobes and trachea

The thyroid gland consists of two tiny lobes, located on either side of the trachea (windpipe). The thyroid gland produces thyroid hormone which regulates your pet's metabolic rate. Excess thyroid hormone leads to an increased metabolic rate.