

# WINGRAVE

## VETERINARY SURGERIES

### NEWS

### Chips with everything!



It is now a legal requirement for all dogs in the UK to be microchipped. This is to try to reduce the stray population and encourage responsible pet ownership.

However, it is a very good idea to microchip **all** your pets, not just the dogs! We can also chip **cats, rabbits, birds** and even **reptiles!**



A microchip is hardly bigger than a grain of rice and having it implanted is quick and simple. Like a normal injection, it is inserted under the skin at the back of the neck, and once there, it lasts a lifetime.

All the chip numbers are held on a central database and you can register as many contact details as you like, so as well as your own numbers, add family members and even work!



Finally, don't forget to keep that information up to date! A chip loses its effectiveness if the numbers are no longer current!

If you would like your pet to be microchipped, or want to know how to add more numbers to the database, please just speak to our friendly practice team!

### FESTIVE OPENING TIMES



Please check our website for details of our opening times during the festive season.

### Winter Weight Gain

With the cold weather and dark nights creeping in there is nothing better than staying nice and warm, curled up on the sofa with some comfort food and your dog or cat. However, with many of them getting less exercise over the winter months our pets, just like us, need correspondingly less food.

Overweight animals are at increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and joint problems. Head Nurse Mandy Pitt, gives some top tips on preventing and tackling winter weight gain in our furry friends.

Come and see one of our Wingrave nurses at the start of winter to check your pet's weight so we can help you detect and manage any increase. If necessary, we can help you put in place a weight management programme



to include a diet and exercise routine to suit your pet's requirements.

Keep an eye on the number of treats and substitute some for healthier alternatives. Don't cut out all your pet's favourite tit bits but make sure they don't over indulge!

If it is really just too cold to go out for a walk, invent some indoor games to ensure your pet still gets some exercise. We have some great food puzzles which should entice even the laziest cat off the sofa!

Call your local branch of Wingrave today to book an appointment if you would like to come and have a chat with one of our experienced nurses.



### Christmas Calamities

The festive season is an exciting time, with plenty of lovely food, chocolates galore, presents, visitors and not to mention all the decorations and the tree! So here are some tips to keep your pets out of trouble over this fun time.

**Festive Food Alert** – with so much extra food in the house it is essential to keep it well away from pets. Rich foods can lead to upset tummies, but be especially aware of currants and raisins which are very toxic to the kidneys. Chocolate is another festive favourite, but as little as 50g of plain chocolate can be fatal in small dogs. Turkey meat is fine, but if your pet gets hold of turkey bones there is the potential for dangerous gut blockages. Also don't forget about the presents under the tree! Dogs, with their sensitive noses will be able to tell exactly which gifts are edible and the wrappings and ribbons won't do their tummies any good either!

**Dastardly Decorations!** Make sure your decorations and tree are either well out of reach or securely fastened down. Cats are great climbers and find the twinkly lights, tinsel and baubles irresistible and will love to bat them about or, worse, chew on them which could cause them harm if they are accidentally swallowed or broken.

Cat with wool, rabbit, dog in snow, Jane Burton



### Fleas?! But it's freezing!

It's true! The winter months are often the worst for fleas because although it is cold outside, our houses are warm and just right for them to breed in their thousands. This is why it is important to continue with flea protection at this time of year because just one or two fleas can easily turn into an infestation. In many cases new flea problems are caused by flea eggs from *old* infestations hatching out and reinfesting your pets!

Common symptoms of bites include itchiness, red rashes, hair loss and severe irritation, which is particularly marked in pets with an allergy to flea saliva. Some affected pets develop secondary skin infections and may require antibiotics and treatment to relieve their itching.

Have a chat to our lovely staff about how to protect both your pets and your house from fleas in winter! For optimum flea control, treatment should ideally be all year round!



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## Guinea pigs are great!



Guinea pigs make lovely pets! They are easy to handle, very sociable and, provided they are well cared for, tend to stay in good health. Here are some tips to keep them healthy:

Firstly, guinea pigs should always be kept in pairs or groups; they will become stressed and anxious if they are on their own. The best combination is a same sex pair or group.

Although it is common to keep guinea pigs with rabbits, the rabbit often ends up bullying the guinea pig and sometimes cause nasty injuries.

Next, they will need a nice place to live! Get a large hutch with separate sleeping and living compartments but as guinea pigs often find the slopes in the two-level kinds too steep, get them a bungalow, not a house! They will also need lots of space to run around. A secure run is ideal, especially if it is attached to the hutch so they can shelter from bad weather. Guinea pigs can live outdoors all year round but you need to ensure the hutch is well insulated.

A well balanced diet is vital. They should have a constant supply of good quality hay (to help wear down their teeth), about half a handful of fresh vegetables per pig every day and a small amount of food in pellet form. Fresh vegetables are essential as a source of vitamin C.

You also need to play with your guinea pig every day. Unlike rabbits, who can be very flighty, guinea pigs are usually happy to be held and the more often you do it, the more relaxed they will be. Also, handling them regularly will allow you to pick up quickly on any health issues they might have.

Although they are generally healthy, common problems to look out for include:

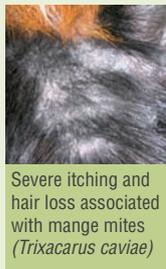
- **Respiratory problems** can cause persistent sneezing and discharge from the eyes, causing your pig to feel unwell and lose their appetite.

- **Skin problems such as mange and ringworm**

**Mange:** Guinea pigs can also carry mange and these burrowing mites can cause itching and hair loss (see photo right).

**Ringworm:** Guinea pigs can suffer from ringworm which can also be passed to humans. This causes scaly skin with sores and may be very itchy.

If you would like any further information on caring for your guinea pig or you are concerned about their general health – please contact us today!



Severe itching and hair loss associated with mange mites (*Trixacarus caviae*)

## Winter aches and pains



The balmy summer months are sadly just a distant memory and as the colder weather kicks in, older pets often noticeably slow down and stiffen up. Just as in ourselves, the low temperatures can really affect their joints. Those pets already on medication for arthritis may need an increased dose, and we commonly diagnose the disease during this time of year.

Arthritis (also termed degenerative joint disease) is a condition in which the joints, which should be smooth moving and well lubricated become rough, cracked and swollen. In the early stages your pet may just seem a bit stiff after resting but still able to exercise freely once they have got moving, but as it progresses the signs become more obvious. They may really slow up on walks, struggle with stairs or start to limp. However, remember that our pets are brave! Very rarely do they cry out in pain, even if you have a good feel at their sore joints.

Arthritis is most common in older pets, largely due to “wear and tear”, but it can strike the youngsters too. For them, rather than simply an ageing change it is generally triggered by conformational issues – essentially malformed joints such as hip dysplasia, which puts a joint under unnatural strain and triggers the painful changes. Cats can also suffer from arthritis, with many surveys estimating between 60-90% of elderly cats being affected.

To help your pets with sore joints, especially in the winter, make sure they always sleep on a deep, soft bed and keep the ambient temperatures warm – you could even consider a pet safe heat pad or hot water bottle. Make sure they get out and about every day to keep their joints moving, and don't let them put on any extra winter weight! Obesity will really put their limbs under strain. Finally, make sure you keep up with their pain relieving medications and supplements, if they are on them, and if you are concerned that they may be struggling, please come and talk to us!

### X-rays and arthritis

Radiography is commonly used to investigate joint problems.



X-ray of a **normal hip joint** – note the perfectly formed “ball and socket” joint of the hip joint.



**Arthritic hip joint** in a dog with hip dysplasia. Note the very shallow ball and socket joint and the secondary new bone around the joint (arrowed in yellow)



## Winter Worms!

Even in the colder months, we mustn't neglect our worming regimes for our pets!

Worm eggs are shed in their millions in the faeces of infected animals and can survive for many months in the soil, even in freezing conditions, and are then reactivated when ingested. This commonly happens when dogs go sniffing in the undergrowth or cats



groom themselves. Also, some worms are passed by fleas, whose numbers often increase at this time of year, because although outside is chilly, our homes are lovely and warm for them!

Although some pets show symptoms of worms – itchy bottoms, diarrhoea or bloating, many appear completely normal but still carry big infestations. Also, don't forget some of the worms that infect our pets, can also infect humans as well – even more reason to keep up with protection! Please speak to our staff about which worming products would be best for your pets!



Typical roundworms in this case *Toxocara canis*