

Choosing a pet!

Picking the right pet means choosing a pet that fits in with your life, so think carefully about the type and breed of pet, to make sure you can meet its needs, and it fits the bill from your point of view. A few tips follow!

Dogs need plenty of exercise and attention, as well as regular trips outside, so aren't always ideal for working owners. It's wise to research different breeds to ensure you can cope with your prospective pooch's exercise, grooming and emotional needs. If you have time for a pup, find a reputable breeder and make sure the parent dogs have had the necessary pre-breeding checks, and that the pup is healthy and well socialised.

Cats are more independent, and so can be more suitable for owners that work, but they still need to be cared for, and some require a huge amount of grooming.

Rabbits, guinea pigs, and small furries make great pets too, but like all pets, should be checked properly at least once daily and should have access to a large exercise area.

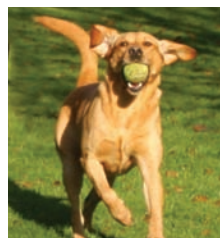
When you pick up your new pet, it's a good idea to bring it in to us for a prompt health check. We can make sure it's fit and healthy, and can advise you on appropriate feeding, exercise, training and socialisation as well as vaccinations, worming and parasite control. We can also talk through pet insurance, and microchipping, to help you keep your new pet safe and healthy and to help you and your pet to enjoy your lives together.

Don't break the bank! Is your pet insured?



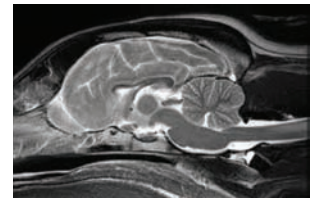
HAVE you thought about insuring your pet? We'd like to encourage you to do so! Advances in veterinary medicine mean that we can offer an incredibly high level of care to your pets, but this does not come without costs, and some conditions – particularly those that require referral to a specialist, can be very expensive to treat. Accidental injuries such as broken bones, torn ligaments and wounds can happen in an instant, and conditions such as cancer, medical problems and infectious diseases, can crop up out of the blue.

The good news is that pet insurance offers owners and vets the peace of mind that the most appropriate treatment can be offered in each case, without cost becoming a major issue. However without pet insurance it can sometimes be hard to afford unexpected vet bills, and decisions on treatment may have to involve economic considerations, which is never ideal.



Also, we owners are legally responsible for our dogs' behaviour, and claims against dogs are being increasingly made following bites, jumping up incidents, and accidents which can sometimes be very costly. Personal liability insurance is advisable and is included with most pet insurance.

We strongly advise insuring your pet with a reputable company, and to make sure your pet has an adequate level of cover. Ideally, pet insurance should also include life-long cover so that pets don't run out of insurance after a year, or once a certain amount of money has been spent. Please contact a member of our team if you would like any further information on the benefits of pet insurance!



MRI scans have revolutionised our ability to visualise conditions such as spinal cord and brain problems.

Some Typical costs:

- Cataract surgery: Sight Back. Approx £2,500 per eye
- Total Hip Replacement: Bounce back. Approx £6,500
- Fracture repair: Limb saved. Typically approx £1,000-£4,000
- Cancer treatment: Life back. Variable depending on type £1,000-£5,000 +
- Disc surgery: Hindlegs back. Typically approx £4,000- £5,000
- Toy removal from bowel: Dog back. Approx £1,000-£2,000
- Arthritis: Comfort back. Variable often £1,000 + per year

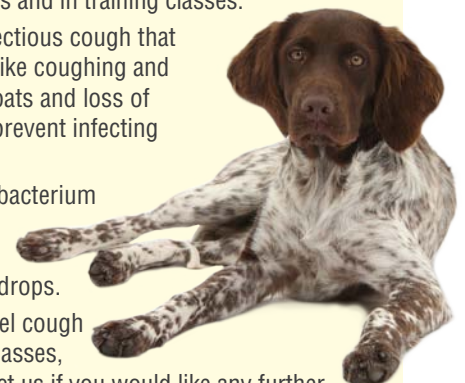
Kennel Cough – is your dog protected?

IS YOUR dog protected against kennel cough? It's *known* as kennel cough, but it isn't just caught in kennels! On the contrary, your pet is more likely to encounter the disease wherever dogs meet, such as the park, in the street, at dog shows and in training classes.

Kennel cough (or Infectious Bronchitis) is a highly infectious cough that affects dogs, causing symptoms of severe whooping-like coughing and breathlessness as well as high temperatures, sore throats and loss of appetite. Even in mild cases, the need for isolation to prevent infecting others can hinder normal exercise and socialisation.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella Bronchiseptica*. Luckily a vaccine is available, though unlike your dog's normal routine vaccines kennel cough vaccine is given by intra-nasal drops.

We recommend that dogs are vaccinated against kennel cough before going into kennels, dogs shows, dog training classes, or at other times when the disease is rife. Please contact us if you would like any further information on kennel cough vaccination, or would like to book an appointment.



Fit for life! Is your pet the correct weight?



Spring has Sprung!

IT IS time to get out and about and enjoy the spring sunshine, but watch out for lurking spring time dangers.

It's great to exercise off the winter blues, but build things up gradually and avoid **over-exertion** as excessive exercise can result in injuries, for you and your dog! So rest any lame legs and get them checked out promptly.

Avoid playing with **sticks** as they can cause throat injuries, that may necessitate emergency treatment. Specially designed dog toys are always a much safer option.



Remember to keep **flea** and **tick** control up to date (ask us for more advice on the best products available) as parasite numbers are building up now, and be aware that levels of **pollens** and plants that can cause allergic skin disease and itchiness are increasing too.



Out in the garden, be aware that **slug pellets**, **bone meal** and **weedkillers** are common sources of poisoning and

try to ensure that pets don't dig up **spring bulbs** and eat them – since many are poisonous. Seek immediate veterinary advice if any case of poisoning is suspected.

Try to avoid growing or displaying **lilies** if you have cats, as the pollen can be very toxic, and enjoy your Easter



chocolate, but don't let your pets share it! Chocolate (especially the plain varieties) can be very dangerous to pets and might necessitate emergency treatment.

Finally, turning to **rabbits**, if you haven't had your rabbit vaccinated against **Myxomatosis** and **VHD** yet, act now! These usually fatal illnesses are a greater risk to rabbits as the weather warms up.



Enjoy your spring safely and have fun!

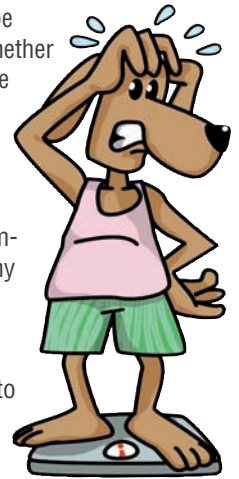
DID you know that a staggering $\frac{1}{3}$ of dogs and $\frac{1}{4}$ of cats are estimated to be overweight? So now is a great time to take a look at your pet, and check whether he is carrying a few extra pounds! Being over-weight predisposes to a range of problems including diabetes, arthritis and heart disease, and can also result in liver disease, hormonal problems, breathing difficulties and even anal sac problems. Also, pets that are an ideal weight tend to be generally healthier, have a more effective immune system and have less skin disease.



X-ray of an arthritic hip joint in a dog. The symptoms of arthritis are often much worse in overweight pets.

Maintaining the correct weight depends on a combination of being fed the right amount of a healthy balanced diet, as well as an appropriate level of exercise. It only takes a small excess of calories over a period of time to become overweight, but can take a reduction in calories of 25% or more to achieve weight loss due to changes in metabolic rate. Meanwhile exercise levels should be increased *gradually* to avoid injuries.

Recognising if your pet is overweight is the first step to a healthier life. Can you feel his or her ribs? Does your pet have a 'waist' when viewed from above? Or are your pet's ribs buried deep while the body shape curves out from chest to tail? Why not bring your pet in for a weight check – if they are overweight we can help by advising on what to feed and how much to give, and how to improve exercise, fitness and stimulation. We can also provide regular weighing sessions to help maintain enthusiasm! So don't delay – if your pet is looking a little portly – come and see us for a check-up!



Fact File: Kidney Disease



IS YOUR pet drinking more and/or losing weight? Does he seem unwell? Is he off his food? These are some of the typical signs of chronic kidney disease, a disease seen commonly in older cats, and more sporadically in dogs.

One of the major functions of the kidneys is to filter urea (produced by protein breakdown) and to produce urine. Dogs and cats have two kidneys and each kidney has several hundred thousand tiny units called **nephrons**. These filter the blood, removing

toxic waste products, salts and water which are then concentrated to form urine. Over time a proportion of the nephrons will disappear with age and not be replaced. Other factors such as toxins, infections or cancer may also destroy nephrons.

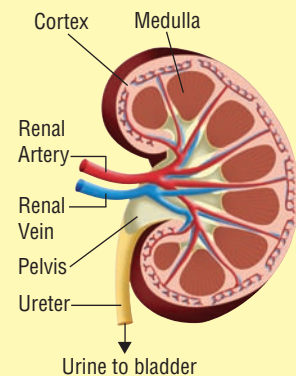
However, the good news is that the kidneys have *excess* filtering capacity with the result that, initially at least, any disease in the kidneys has little effect on their function. In fact, problems with kidney function only start to be seen when around two thirds of the of the nephrons have been lost. The problem with this is that once that degree of damage has occurred it can often be difficult to treat.

However, new treatments offer hope for affected animals:

- Specially formulated diets (lower in salt, phosphate, protein) can help to reduce the workload of the kidneys and help reduce ongoing damage.
- Novel medications can be used to inhibit or block ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) which can result in better function in the kidneys, and reduced protein loss in the urine, associated with better quality of life and longevity.

If you suspect your pet may have kidney disease, it's a good idea to bring them in for a check up, and bring a urine sample too which we can analyse. Blood tests are very helpful in ruling out other conditions such as diabetes mellitus and hyperthyroidism (seen in cats) and allow us to identify the best course of treatment for your pet.

Kidney Anatomy



The kidney is a complex structure as can be seen in the diagram above. The renal artery supplies the kidney with blood, and thousands of tiny **nephrons** in the cortex and medulla filter the blood, removing waste products to form urine.