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ORCHARD VETERINARY GROUP

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NEWS

Choosing the perfect pet!

The secret of a great relationship between owner and pet is ensuring that you both want and need the same things. If you are considering a new pet have a good think about the time you have to spend with it, and whether or not you are out during the day at work, as this may determine what is the right pet for you.

Dogs, in particular, need a lot of stimulation and exercise as well as regular toilet trips, all of which can be quite a challenge if you work full time. If a dog is the pet for you, choose a breed that fits in with your life, in particular pick one that will enjoy the same level of exercise as you – some need several hours a day!

Cats tend to be more independent than dogs and can cope better with being left for slightly longer periods, especially if they are given access to outdoors.

Rabbits, guinea pigs and small furries can make great pets for children, but they need adult attention and handling too, and children need close supervision when handling their pets. Plenty of exercise in a large outdoor run helps to keep these pets happy. We have a responsibility to all our pets to provide them with the food, water, exercise, shelter, love and medical attention they need to keep them happy and healthy, and it is advisable to make sure all of this is possible before taking on a pet. That way owner and pet can enjoy a long and happy future together.

Pet Insurance – a really good idea!



THINKING about insuring your pet? We'd like to encourage you to do so! Pets give us so much enjoyment and are one of the family – you look after them and ensure they have regular health checks, vaccinations, appropriate diets, worming and flea control. But what about pet insurance?

Each year, on average 1 in 3 pets suffer illness or injury, so unexpected veterinary bills can, unfortunately, occur at *any* time.



We often think of insurance covering *emergency* treatment of broken bones or wounds following road traffic accidents, but don't forget animals can also develop many *medical* conditions such as skin disease, ear problems, heart disease and arthritis – to name just a few!

Veterinary medicine does not stand still and our dedicated team of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses frequently attend courses to update their knowledge – with the aim of giving *you and your pet* the very best in veterinary care. As a result, our ability to treat life-threatening conditions such as heart disease (see article back page) has improved greatly. However the drugs used to treat such conditions can be costly and we frequently see the agonising choices our clients have to make regarding the treatment of their pets. With appropriate pet insurance, we can hopefully ensure that your pets get the best of care *without* heart wrenching financial decisions becoming a limiting factor.

Case Study – Poppy the Chocolate Lab

When you see Poppy leaping across the fields (see photo left), you wouldn't think that at just eight months of age she developed a serious elbow lameness requiring specialist key hole joint surgery. Her owners are delighted with the care they received and Poppy is now fully recovered. They would have been even happier had they had the foresight to get her insured though!

Third Party Cover – what is it?

An additional benefit of pet insurance is *third party cover*. It's a worrying fact that as a dog owner you can be held legally liable for the actions of your dog. Should your dog stray and cause a road traffic accident, you could be held liable for the actions of your pet.

Winter Fleas: Don't get caught on the hop!



THESE days the advent of winter no longer stops fleas in their tracks! Fleas love central heating and will breed in the carpets and bedding, as well as in the cracks of hard flooring. In addition flea development can continue on the coat of most animals. Worse still, adult female fleas can lay in excess of 50 eggs per day – thus a brief infestation can result in thousands of flea eggs being produced!

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.

Thus, for optimum flea control – and peace of mind – treatment should ideally be **all year round!** Spot-ons and sprays can be used to kill fleas on the pets, whilst larvicidal house sprays can be used to prevent fleas developing in the home. We are happy to advise you on the most suitable form of flea control for your **pet and your home** (don't forget you need to treat **both**)!!

The big chill – a seasonal survival guide!



WITH THE onset of colder winter weather, just how prepared are we, and our pets, for the colder weather? Outlined below are a few tips to keep your pet fit and well:

Now is the time when many of us start to feel aches and pains and

our pets are no exception! Look out for any limps and difficulties in rising after rest; these are signs that your pet may have some joint stiffness – usually made worse by cold or damp weather. If your pet is showing any signs of stiffness or limping, please get in touch.

Remember that whilst many dogs love playing in the cold and snow, slim fine coated breeds find it much harder to conserve their body heat and may benefit from dog coats. Also beware of winter hazards such as frozen ponds and lakes.



Around the house, as well as food – pets are often on the look out for anything else they can eat! Christmas decorations – in particular ribbons and tinsel, are very attractive to

pets, and if swallowed, may lead to an intestinal blockage.

Whilst on the subject of edible items, don't forget that

chocolate – especially the plain varieties, can be

very toxic to dogs. Cat owners should also be



aware that **lilies** pose a significant risk to cats – with all parts of the plant including the flowers and pollen being extremely toxic.



This is also the time of year that many car owners prepare their cars for icy weather. **Antifreeze** (used in car radiators) is a very palatable poison. If swallowed, even small amounts can cause kidney failure and usually death.



Winter is also a difficult time for all animals that live outside, especially pet rabbits and guinea pigs. It is important to ensure that their hutches are warm and dry, and in a sheltered position. Give them fresh food and water every day and check the water bottle regularly to ensure that it has not become frozen. Finally, if you would like further information on any of these topics – please just give us a call!



Winter weight worries!

It's a good idea to keep an eye on how much exercise pets get during the winter months; with many pets spending more time indoors – they are getting less exercise and need correspondingly less food. Add to this lots more titbits associated with the festive season and it is all too easy for pets (and sadly also us – their owners) to start expanding their waistlines!

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if your pet seems to be gaining a few extra pounds and we can give you some nutritional advice; carrying too much weight has a multitude of adverse effects on the body.



Ticker trouble! Is my pet affected?

WHILST MOST pets take normal heart function for granted, heart disease is nevertheless surprisingly common in dogs and cats.

The heart is essentially a muscular pump responsible for supplying the tissues of your pet's body with oxygen and nutrients, allowing them to lead a normal active life. The heart pumps blood from the body through the lungs to get oxygen, and then to the tissues of the body. As the heart muscles squeeze and pump, valves within the heart prevent backflow of blood.

Heart disease – which can be gradual or sudden in onset, is the loss of the normal pumping action of the heart. Whilst there are many possible causes of heart disease, the most common are usually associated with either **heart valve** problems, or a problem with the **heart muscle** itself.

In **dogs** it is generally more common in older pets, but in certain breeds it is more prevalent at an early age. In **cats**, heart disease is quite commonly linked with thyroid gland disease.

Heart disease is associated with a range of symptoms including:

- coughing, • laboured breathing,
- tiring more easily, • reluctance to exercise, • pale or blueish gums, • fainting or collapse

If you are concerned that your pet is showing *any* of these signs, please come and see us for a full clinical examination. The good news is that new methods of diagnosis and novel forms of treatment are now transforming the lives of many affected pets.

Keeping your Guinea Pig fit and well!



GUINEA PIGS (or Cavies) come originally from South America and are sociable animals that make great family pets. They thrive on a mixture of hay, fresh greenstuff, fruit and vegetables and can be given small amounts of commercial concentrate.

Relatively trouble free, they require no vaccinations but we do recommend regular health checks so their teeth and nails can be monitored. Problems to look out for include **chest infections** (that can follow bad weather or stress), **diarrhoea** (which can relate to infections or a diet change), **skin disease** and **dental problems** (usually associated with overgrown teeth).

We are here to help! If you would like any further information on any aspect of guinea pig care, or if you would like a check-up for your pet, please contact us!

Skin problems

Skin problems may occasionally occur and the most common of these is an infestation with a burrowing mange mite –

Trixacarus caviae. Affected



guinea pigs are itchy and develop scaly skin, which is often most obvious on the ear tips initially. If untreated, areas of hair loss, self inflicted wounds and skin infection can develop.