

NEWS



SUMMER 2026

Orchard Health Plan

The affordable way to keep your pet fit and healthy.



For peace of mind, our health plan provides you with all your pets' preventative healthcare needs - including treatment for fleas, ticks, lungworm and intestinal worms, vaccination and an additional six monthly check.

This makes it ideal both for new pets just joining your family, and older pets that benefit from more regular vet assessment.

Plans are available for dogs, cats and rabbits **from £11.99/month**.

If you would like further information on our health plan or any of the topics included in this newsletter, please ask a member of the practice team. We are happy to help!

Rabbiting on!



Rabbits can make a wonderful addition to the family, but despite their small size, they require plenty of care and attention.

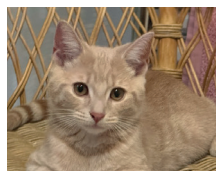
Keep it social! Rabbits are highly social animals, and a bonded pair, ideally a neutered male and female, is recommended to provide companionship.

Teeth and diets: Rabbits have continuously growing teeth, so a high-fibre diet is essential to keep them worn down and healthy. We recommend a diet made up of around 85% hay or grass, 10% leafy greens, and a small portion of commercial rabbit nuggets. Signs of dental problems can include excess salivation. Finally, **vaccination** is vital! Rabbits should be protected against Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease, both of which can be rapidly fatal. Annual vaccination is recommended.

Looking after your new arrival!

Introducing a new pet into your family is an exciting and rewarding experience – but it also comes with important responsibilities. Alongside choosing leads, collars, bedding and toys, it's essential to plan ahead to keep your new companion happy and healthy. Here's a simple guide to help your pet get off to the best possible start!

Vaccinations: Dogs, cats and rabbits all require vaccinations, protecting them against potentially fatal infectious diseases. Our team will be able to talk you through the exact schedule of vaccines required. Regular booster vaccinations, combined with a health check, are the best way of protecting your pet, plus at the same time we can keep a watchful eye out for any problems.



Microchipping is a legal requirement for dogs over eight weeks old and is now also a legal requirement for cats in England (and it is highly recommended for cats in general). It provides a permanent form of identification, helping ensure you can

be reunited with your pet if they are ever lost or injured. We also recommend microchipping for other pets, including rabbits.

Worming: Puppies and kittens can acquire roundworms from their mothers early in life, making prompt treatment vital. As they grow, they remain at risk from roundworms and tapeworms, while dogs may also be affected by lungworm. Regular worming treatments are an important part of ongoing care.

Flea Control: It's very common for young pets to arrive with fleas. An early check-up allows us to recommend the most effective treatments for your pet, as well as advice on managing fleas within your home environment.

Neutering: Cats are typically neutered from around six months of age if they are not intended for breeding. For dogs, the decision is more individual and depends on factors such as breed, age and lifestyle. Our team is happy to discuss the best approach for your pet

Socialisation is another important topic. The early experiences a puppy or kitten has of people and their surroundings has a huge impact on their behaviour and personality for the rest of their life. Please ask us for further information on socialising your pets. Also – please let us advise on a range of other topics such as **dental care**, **pet insurance** and **nutrition** to name just a few!

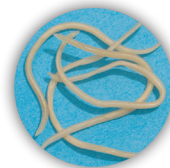


Vaccination against infectious diseases

We recommend you regularly vaccinate your pets against the following, potentially fatal, infectious diseases:

Dogs are routinely vaccinated against: parvovirus, leptospirosis, hepatitis and distemper.

Cats are usually vaccinated against cat flu, panleukopenia, and feline leukaemia virus.



Kennel Cough – is your dog vaccinated?



Did you know that kennel cough is a highly infectious, but rarely life-threatening, respiratory infection that can spread from dog to dog wherever they socialise – in kennels, at dog training, dog shows or just out on walks?

Affected pets usually develop a harsh “honking” cough, which often sounds as if they have got something stuck in their throats. Other symptoms include loss of appetite and breathlessness. In the worst cases, dogs may cough for weeks and some may get more serious complications such as pneumonia.

The condition is caused by a mixture of viruses and a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Prevention is much better than cure, because without vaccination, treatment of kennel cough can be a costly and lengthy process. Only an annual vaccination with a specific kennel cough vaccine can offer protection against *Bordetella*. So – don't take any chances with this distressing cough – make sure your pet is vaccinated. Kennel cough vaccination is also a key requirement of most boarding kennels. Please contact us today for further information or to book an appointment!

Getting to the root of the problem!



Did you know that dental disease is a very common, but often *hidden* problem in our pets? In fact, by the age of just three years old, the majority of pets are already suffering from some form of dental disease.

The sad thing is that most pets start life with a healthy set of teeth and gums, but over time, painful dental problems can easily develop. Poor dental health is not only uncomfortable and can lead to tooth loss, but infections can also spread throughout the body and potentially cause significant organ damage.

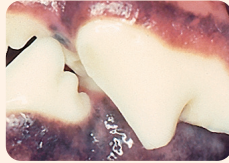
A healthy mouth typically has bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums. However, over time, the accumulation of a biofilm of bacterial plaque on the surface of the teeth leads to inflammation of the gums – a condition called **gingivitis**. At this stage, you might notice reddened gums, bad breath, and some tartar build-up on the tooth surface. If this continues, the tartar will inflame the gums further and allow bacteria to penetrate below the gum line, progressively destroying the periodontal ligament (the fibrous structure that anchors the tooth to the bone). This painful condition is known as **periodontitis** and, if left untreated, can result in tooth loosening and eventual tooth loss.



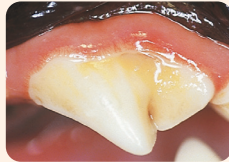
Cats may also be affected by gingivitis, but they can additionally suffer from **tooth resorptive lesions**. In these cases, the enamel is lost, exposing the very sensitive dentine beneath. There is often an area of bright red gum over the affected site, which can hide a painful cavity within the tooth. Despite this, cats often show very few outward signs of dental pain.

Regular dental check-ups (as part of the booster visit) are a key part of monitoring for dental disease. The good news is that if dental problems are identified at an *early* stage, a combination of a scale and polish and ongoing home care can make a big difference to your pet's oral health. With a clean mouth, daily teeth cleaning is a great way to try to prevent future dental disease. However not all pets are amenable to this and there are many alternative products available, which we would be happy to discuss with you.

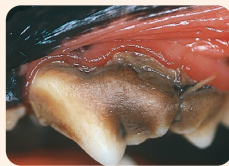
Gallery of dental conditions in pets



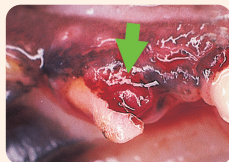
Healthy mouth with bright white teeth and pink (or pigmented) gums



Gingivitis with swollen and inflamed gum margins.



Periodontitis with redness and recession of the gum margin.



Tooth resorptive lesion in a cat: Typical lesion (arrowed). The tooth is progressively destroyed and is usually very painful.



Scale and Polish: Removing the tartar using an ultrasonic scaler, followed by polishing is a very effective form of treatment and should ideally be followed by effective home care.



Summer survival guide!

Summer is finally here, bringing long sunny days, warm evenings and time outdoors – but the heat can be tough on our pets. The warmer months can pose serious risks, so it's important to take steps to keep animals comfortable, healthy and safe.

Stay Cool: Heat can be dangerous for dogs, cats and small pets. Walk

dogs early in the morning or later in the evening, and never leave them unattended in cars. Paddling pools and frozen treats can help them

cool off, and water should always be available.

Overweight, thick-coated and brachycephalic dogs are the most vulnerable to heat stroke.

Guinea pigs and rabbits can also overheat easily. Always provide plenty of shade and cool water, ideally in a bowl, and move their housing to a cooler area during extreme heat.



Sunburn: Thinly haired or white coated pets are at risk of sunburn, especially if they are dedicated sun worshippers!

White cats are particularly vulnerable to developing skin cancers on their ears and noses, so pay close attention to these areas. To protect your pet, you can apply high factor sun lotion specifically designed for pets (avoid human sunscreen).



Ear tip of a cat showing early cancerous changes

Grass awns are another summer problem – the grass awns of the meadow grasses are easily trapped in the coats of pets. They then migrate and become lodged in a variety of places including the ears and between the toes. It is always a good idea to groom your pets regularly to keep a close eye out for grass awns.



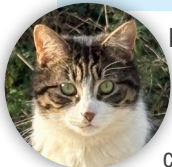
Grass awn lodged in the external ear canal.

Tick Troubles: Ticks are most active from March to October, often in long grass and wooded areas. Check your pet after walks and remove any ticks promptly using a special tool. We are also happy to assist with tick removal. Prescription-strength tick prevention products offer the most effective protection against ticks and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease.

Enjoy summer with your pets – keep them cool, check them often and stay alert for seasonal hazards. For more advice, contact our practice team; we're always happy to help.



Pet Insurance – is your pet protected?



Pet insurance is something that we advise all our owners consider for their animals. We know that vet bills are often unexpected and can mount up over time, so having a good policy will really combat the worry of being able to afford their care; whether it is a one-off misadventure or a longer-term illness. There are several different kinds of policies; '12 month' ones will only cover a condition for the first year after diagnosis, whereas 'life long' will continue to pay for treatment for as long as is necessary. Some will pay up to a certain amount per condition, whereas others are unlimited. So you really need to understand the policy before taking it out.

With appropriate pet insurance, we can hopefully ensure that any treatment decisions are made on the basis of need rather than cost. If you would like any further information on the benefits of insuring your pets, please don't hesitate to ask a member of the practice team!

We naturally tend to think of **surgical emergencies** (such as this sock which was removed at great expense from the small intestines of a dog) as the main reason for insurance. However, many **medical conditions**, such as **heart disease**, **skin problems** or **diabetes...** to name just a few, can be equally costly to treat – especially so if they are life-long conditions.

