

bicester vets NEWS

WINTER 2016

Compassion and Care

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.

All puppies born after April 2016 should be chipped and registered to their breeder, before the details are changed to the new owners. Any adult dogs who haven't been done, should be chipped as soon as possible since you can be fined!



However, it is a very good idea to microchip **all** your pets, not just the dogs! **Cats** often

wander and lose collars, so it's just as important. We can also chip **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, to ensure if your pet does go missing, someone is always contactable.

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 A chip loses its effectiveness if the numbers are no longer current!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!

Girls in Green

We are delighted to have two of our student nurses pass their exams this summer to become fully qualified Registered Veterinary Nurses.

Kim Burdett came to us in 2012 as a placement student from Warwickshire college, she spent three days a week here doing practical work and two days a week at college. As she progressed we soon realised that she had the makings of being an excellent nurse and we always hoped that when she qualified we would be able to offer her a full time position and that she would accept!

In July this year Kim graduated with a 1st Class BSC Honours degree and joined our team of Full time qualified Nurses. Kim enjoys the variety of the job and has recently moved to Bicester to be close to work and her friends here. She likes all animals but does have a soft spot for cats and is hoping to get one of her own in the near future.

Leanne Walsh always wanted to be a Veterinary Nurse, she first impressed us as a work experience pupil where she showed her ability to learn and work hard.

When an Animal Care Vacancy became available we contacted her and she started working here in July 2013, soon proving to be an asset to the team. In September 2014 she started her training as a Veterinary Nurse, going to Warwickshire College one day a week, studying hard and working under the guidance of our qualified nurses and vets.

Leanne graduated in August this year. She loves all animals but has a particular interest in Exotics, having some of her own at home.

We are very proud and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the pair of them.



Leanne (left) and Kim (right)



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!

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.

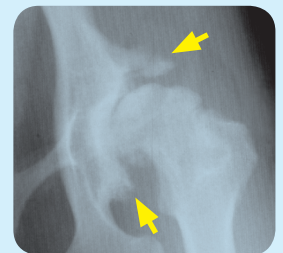
To help your pets with sore joints, especially in the winter, make sure they always sleep on a deep, soft bed and keep the ambient temperatures warm – you could even consider a pet safe heat pad or hot water bottle. Make sure they get out and about every day to keep their joints moving, and don't let 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!

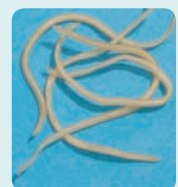
Even in the colder months, we mustn't neglect our worming regimes for our pets!

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*