

# bicester vets NEWS

Compassion and Care

SPRING 2017

## Extended Opening Hours

At Bicester Vets we are constantly striving to provide the best service we can for our valued clients.

Last year we started providing normal priced consultations continuing right through the day from 9am to 7pm Monday – Friday.

Following the success of this, on 19<sup>th</sup> December we began keeping our reception open until 7pm.

This means that, not only can you get an appointment later, but if you need to collect a prescription or a bag of food, then our lovely receptionists will be there to assist you.

Furthermore, in January this year, we also extended our Saturday opening hours. We now have a receptionist at the front desk from 8am to 2pm to look after you.

Don't forget we are always available for emergencies outside of our normal opening hours and we have a nurse on site 24 hours a day to care for any inpatients.

If you have any suggestions or ideas that would improve your experience at Bicester Vets we would like to hear from you. So, please either put them in our *Suggestion Box* in reception or send us an email to [contact@bicester vets.co.uk](mailto:contact@bicester vets.co.uk)

### New Opening Hours:

Mon-Fri 8am – 7pm

Saturday 8am – 2pm

At all other times we have a vet on call for emergencies 24/7

## Topics in this issue:

- *Caring for your older cat*
- *Rabbit teeth - a growing issue!*
- *Lungworm alert!*

## Cat Corner & Waiting room



Lots of cat owners have been taking advantage of our **Bicester Vets Cats Corner** which was a very welcome addition to our waiting room at the end of last year. We know that many cats get anxious when brought into strange environments especially when there are dogs present. Our Cats Corner allows cats to have a visual barrier away from the rest of the waiting room and its inhabitants - there's even a table so the cat basket can be up off the floor which many cats prefer.

We hope your cats will feel less anxious in this little area of sanctuary in our waiting room.

Other changes in our waiting room include the expansion of our Pet Product display area. We can now display not only our extensive range of collars, leads & toys for pets but also dental care products, shampoos and dog and cat treats. We have also replaced our old waiting room chairs. The new ones are joined together meaning less legs for dog leads to tangle around.

## Congratulations



Danni Smith

The staff at Bicester Vets are always working hard to keep up to date and improve their knowledge to help you and your pets. Here are two of our latest successes:

In October last year our Veterinary Nurse **Danni Smith**, passed (with flying colours) her certificate in Emergency and Critical Care! Danni studied hard for 18 months for this qualification that helps to make our high standard of care even better.

**Well done Danni Smith RVN CertVNECC!!**

Also from our Veterinary Nurse team, in December of last year, **Sue Harding** our longest standing Veterinary Nurse, was awarded her ESVPS Certificate in Small Animal Nutrition! Sue studied hard for 18 months and is now well qualified to help you with all your pet's nutritional needs.

**Congratulations Sue Harding RVN NCert(SAN)**

We are very proud of both Danni and Sue. Well done.



Sue Harding

## Caring for your older cat – some top tips!



In their twilight years our cats can suffer from a range of conditions, but they are also experts at hiding the signs of illness! So, looking out for subtle changes in their behaviour can really make a difference. Here are some tips:

**Sore joints:** Recent studies have shown that approximately 80% of cats over the age of twelve have arthritis. However, it can be difficult to identify because they simply rest more, and because they are naturally athletic animals, they will often still jump, climb and play, but not as much as they

used to. Ask us to check their joints next time you are paying us a visit, and if we are concerned, a trial of pain relief medication often lets us know if they are sore or not. Make a stiff, elderly cat's life easier by placing steps up to their favourite places, putting food bowls close to where they rest, using low sided litter trays and giving them deep, soft beds in warm, cosy places.

**Weight loss:** Senior cats can lose weight due to many different conditions, but often it is such a gradual process we don't notice. It's a good idea to get into the habit of weighing your pensionable pussycat on a regular basis and if you notice a downward trend, bring them in for a check-up.

**Drinking more:** Kidney Failure and Diabetes are fairly common in older cats and both will cause them to drink more than they should. In fact, cats naturally drink very little, so often a cat who drinks 'well', is actually drinking to excess and should have a check-up.



**Eating less:** Sore teeth and Kidney Failure are two of the most likely causes of a reduced or changed appetite in a cat. If their mouth is painful they often keep eating, but they may start to prefer wet food or, if watched carefully, not actually chew properly. It can be difficult to fully check their mouths at home, so if you are worried, just bring them down!

**Eating more:** An over-active thyroid gland (Hyperthyroidism) and Diabetes will both make cats eat more, and while this is often taken as a sign of good health, it can be the opposite, especially if they are losing weight *despite* their appetite.

So – as you can see there are a lot of signs to keep a watchful eye out for. In addition it's also a good idea to bring older pets in for regular health-checks so that any problems can be picked up as early as possible.

## Rabbit teeth – a growing issue!



Did you know that rabbits have unusual teeth in that they are *continually* growing? In fact their teeth are perfectly adapted to their natural diet of tough abrasive vegetation, which – without continued tooth growth, would soon result in their teeth being totally ground down to nothing!

Thus, to keep our pet bunny's teeth healthy, most of their diet should comprise of good quality hay (which is very abrasive), a small amount of fresh green leafy vegetables, and a small amount of a pelleted rabbit feed. This keeps their teeth at a healthy (short) length plus also getting all the vital nutrition they need.

However it is easy to feed too much hard food (often of the muesli kind), which bunnies often prefer, and so ignore the hay. Insufficient hay means the teeth aren't ground down and so grow too long, developing sharp spikes which tear into the mouth (see photo). Muesli type mixes also encourage *selective* feeding, leaving vital nutrients uneaten and which can lead to bone weakness. For this reason, it is better to replace the muesli mix component with pelleted food.

The good news is that feeding the correct diet, as outlined above, can go a long way to avoiding most dental problems in rabbits. For more advice, please have a chat to our team who will be very happy to advise you!

### Oral exam reveals problems:



Overgrown cheek teeth (arrowed) are sharp, spikey and can lacerate the gums



Lungworm, caused by *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is gradually becoming more common through-out the UK and Ireland. In affected dogs, clinical signs can range from a mild cough to life threatening bleeding problems.



Slugs and snails can carry the larval stage of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* and if dogs eat slugs and snails, they can become unwittingly infected. Some pets seem to have a taste for these garden dwellers but all dogs are at risk. Some species of slugs are very small and can easily be accidentally swallowed when dogs eat grass, drink from puddles or play with toys that have been left outside. The disease is commonest in young dogs that eat or play with slugs and snails.

Once swallowed, the larvae migrate to the heart where they will develop into adult



Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm

worms. The adult lungworms live in the heart and those blood vessels supplying the lungs. Here they lay their eggs, which hatch into larvae and migrate into the airways of the lungs. The dog then coughs them up, swallows the larvae, sheds them in the faeces, and the life cycle begins again.

Clinical signs of lungworm can be vague and variable – ranging from a cough or tiring more easily, to bruising easily, serious bleeding problems and even fitting.

Lungworm can be diagnosed by checking for the larvae in the faeces or by specialised blood tests. The treatment for dogs who are infected with a lungworm involves killing the parasites plus also treating the bleeding or other symptoms they may have. The latter can be challenging and, sadly, many dogs have died because of the parasite.

The good news is that prevention is straight forward with spot-on or tablet medications, both of which are highly effective.

If you are concerned about lungworm, please have a chat to our staff who will be able to advise you on the best form of preventative treatment to protect your pets.