



Staff update...

Here's some news on recent staff changes at Bicester Vets:

In August **Danielle Nix**, one of our lovely Animal Care Assistants, became a Student Veterinary Nurse. Danielle will complete her training here under the guidance of a qualified Veterinary Nurse and attend one day a week at Warwickshire College. We wish her well in her studies.



Charlotte Wright (left) pictured with Danielle Nix (right).

Also joining Danielle as Student Veterinary Nurses, we have **Charlotte Wright** and **Kimberley Dunham**. Best of luck to you all.

Nikki Karras joined the team at Bicester Vets in the summer and is doing a great job, along with Becky, as our Animal Care Assistants.

Also in August, we welcomed **Fiona Turner** to the receptionist team. Luckily Fiona was relocating to Bicester from Scotland where she was already working as a veterinary receptionist. Learning the receptionist role can be quite daunting, but Fiona's previous experience and friendly manner has meant that she was soon able to assist our lovely clients and their pets.

In September **Grace McKnight** joined our veterinary team. Grace qualified from Cambridge in 2016 and gained experience working in a small animal practice before joining us. Grace has a special interest in ultrasound and dermatology.

We are very pleased to have all these new team members at Bicester Vets and trust you will get to meet some of them soon.



Lungworm in Dogs

Whilst out walking the dog this year you may have noticed the amazing number of large slugs on the ground. Now slugs are pretty ugly creatures but you might not know that they can also harbour a sinister parasite which is dangerous to dogs.

The parasite is called **lungworm**, (*Angiostrongylus vasorum* to be precise) which is otherwise known as French heartworm. This worm is endemic in many parts of the UK, living

in the wild fox population. The eggs are passed in faeces and are ingested by slugs and snails where the larvae develop. Pet dogs can then be infected by eating slugs and snails or inadvertently by licking the slime trails or even drinking water or eating grass that slugs have been through.

The parasite develops in the dog where the adult worms live in the heart and pulmonary (lung) blood vessels. Eggs are laid in the lungs where they are coughed up, swallowed and passed again in the dog's faeces; and the cycle continues.

The effect of the parasite on the dog can be quite varied and extremely serious. Signs range from a cough and lethargy to spontaneous bleeding and death. Diagnosis can be made using a blood test, faecal test or by finding the eggs or worms in a lung wash (this is a special test done under anaesthesia when investigating lung disease).

As always, prevention is better than cure, so we now recommend lungworm prevention as a standard part of any preventative healthcare plan. Many traditional "wormers" don't kill lungworm so don't presume your dog is protected. As well as this, the parasite can cause disease in one to two months, so monthly preventative treatment is essential.



Many vets will have a **Preventative Healthcare Plan** which includes routine parasite protection. As with anything, these plans aren't all the same and cheaper ones may not even include lungworm protection; so check your plan to ensure lungworm prevention is included.

Here are some key facts about lungworm in dogs:

- The parasite exists in most parts of the UK
- Lungworm infection can be deadly
- Prevention requires specific worming products given every month

Give us a call for more information.

Fattening up for the winter?

The shorter days and colder weather mean pets often exercise less and have more time to beg for treats! However, it is really important to ensure they don't put on weight because those extra pounds are really bad for their health; joints are put under unnecessary strain, so is the heart and other organs and it leaves them vulnerable to developing illnesses such as diabetes.

To tell if your pet is a healthy shape, simply put your hands on them! You should be able to easily feel their ribs and spine without them being too prominent. They should also have an obvious narrowing of their body behind the ribs and a 'tuck' in their stomach from the side. To help porky pets slim down consider things like changing their food to a 'light' version, cutting back on treats and stopping table scraps. We are here to help – so if you are worried, bring them in for a check-up.





Winter Wonderland?

The cold winter months bring particular challenges for our pets, and as their owners, we need to be alert to the problems they can suffer at this time of year.

Arthritis is very commonly first diagnosed in older patients during the winter months. This isn't because the disease first strikes during this period but because the lower temperatures seize up the limbs and make the symptoms of pain and stiffness more obvious. Most pets will really benefit from anti-inflammatory medications but you can also help by giving them joint supplements, lovely soft beds, and many will enjoy resting by the radiator or on a pet-safe hot water bottle!

Out and about: Although the weather can be miserable, it is still important to ensure dogs get their walks! Make the most of the shorter days by playing games while you are out to give your pet mental as well as physical stimulation and short coated breeds like greyhounds and whippets often benefit from wearing coats. Take care though in snowy or icy conditions, as both can ball up in hairy paws and be painful. Also bad for feet is grit, which can really irritate the skin.

Festive alert: The festive season can also pose a huge range of very tempting hazards for our pets!



Chocolate is a festive favourite, but as little as 50g of plain chocolate can be fatal in small dogs. **Turkey bones** can cause choking,

constipation, as well as seriously damaging internal organs. Make sure **fairy lights** and electric wires are 'chew-proof' from inquisitive puppies, kittens and even rabbits too. Brightly coloured **baubles** and **tinsel** are new and exciting objects for pets, who may try to eat them and cause themselves all sorts of internal problems. **Seasonal plants** such as holly, poinsettia, ivy and lilies are all extremely toxic.



Finally, have fun with your pets and stay safe over the festive season!



Healthy eyes are open and comfortable and free from discharge. Light is seen to reflect from the moist, healthy cornea

How healthy are your dog's eyes?

The eyes are very complex organs and thankfully function normally most of the time. Externally the eyes are protected by the eyelids and also the third eyelid (in the corner of the eye).

Healthy eyes: Your dog's eyes should be open, sparkly-clear and free of discharge or excessive tearing. Inside, you can see the coloured part of the eye (the iris) and a pupil which responds to light. You can also gently draw back the upper eyelids to see the 'white' of the eye, which should be just that – white or only marginally pink.

However problems can occur and here are some common ones:

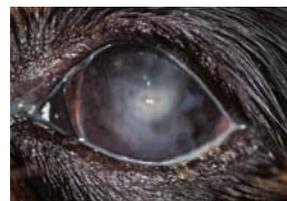
Dry eye occurs when there is inadequate production of tears by the tear glands and is normally an immune-mediated condition in dogs. Most commonly this is seen in middle to older-aged dogs as well as specific breeds. Typical signs include increased levels of thick, yellowish discharge from the eyes, pinkness of inner eyelids and white of the eyes. Discomfort may be noticeable, with increased blinking or rubbing at the eyes.

Happily, diagnosis of this condition can be made using a simple test to measure tear production. Once a diagnosis is made, treatment is necessary with an ointment containing ciclosporin which is usually applied twice daily to the affected eyes and life-long. Keeping this treatment consistent is important for the medication to work and for the eyes to stay comfortable. Many dogs also need lubricants applied regularly throughout the day.

Cataracts: A cataract occurs when the transparent lens inside the eye becomes opaque. Cataracts affecting the whole of the lens will cause blindness. Hereditary cataracts can present at various ages and in a large number of breeds. Cataracts are also commonly seen in diabetic dogs and these develop very quickly, causing blindness in just days or weeks. Advanced cataracts also cause inflammation inside the eye, which can lead to other problems including glaucoma (a high pressure inside the eye). Any eye with a cataract should therefore be monitored regularly. Cataract surgery to restore vision is possible in many cases and will require a referral to a specialist ophthalmologist.

Glaucoma: This is a high pressure inside the eye, which causes blindness if not treated appropriately and quickly. Changes you may notice include redness of the white of the eye, a clouding/ blueish colour to the cornea (front window) or lethargy due to pain. As such any dog presenting with this sort of "red eye" should be treated as an **ocular emergency**.

Early diagnosis is the 'golden rule' with eyes, so don't delay! If your pet is showing *any* symptoms of eye problems, make an appointment for your pet today!



Dry eye with a dull lustreless eye and mucoid discharge



Cataracts in diabetic dogs are a very common issue



Glaucoma (high pressure) in this eye has caused redness of the white of the eye and a blueish clouding of the cornea

Bunny Upsets!



We always recommend keeping a close watch on how much your rabbits are eating. A reduction in appetite or faecal production may indicate that there is an underlying health problem. Rabbits need a high fibre diet to maintain healthy teeth and encourage food to move through the digestive system at a normal pace. If a rabbit is unwell the intestinal motility can slow and appetite may reduce. They may seem withdrawn and hide away from contact. In severe cases bacteria in the intestines produce excess gas, which progresses to a swollen abdomen or bloat, which can be life threatening.

If your rabbit seems to be eating less, it is well worth making an appointment for a check-up. We will look for underlying causes and can prescribe medications to make your rabbit feel better and start eating again.

If you would like your rabbit to have a general health check, please give us a call today! And remember, any bunny that is not eating should be seen as soon as possible. Don't delay – call us today!