



PAWS, CLAWS & ALL FOURS



March 2018

Welcome

Welcome to our March newsletter. We had a very hot, dry January which was great for holiday makers but not for farmers. For our pets, we saw a greater than usual number of grass seeds buried in the skin between toes, in ear canals and under eyelids. We usually don't see this till February when grass seeds, especially barley grass, dry out and become hard and sharp. Grass seeds are a nuisance but are generally easy to treat.

Unfortunately we also saw cases of severe heat stroke in working dogs, some of which died. Both these problems are more common in Central Otago than here. As the weather has returned to more typical South Otago conditions, these problems have disappeared.

The last twelve months have been busier than usual for the small animal team. We thank you for your support and hope you find the newsletter useful.

Microchips

Peter Heslip Veterinarian

Microchips are a good and permanent means of identification of animals, which we strongly recommend. Current legislation requires all dogs be registered at 3 months of age, and all dogs other than working farm dogs, be microchipped before they are first registered. Clutha District Council is not enforcing microchipping legislation, but the benefits of microchipping are so clear we recommend all dogs and cats be microchipped.

One problem arose a few years ago with microchips produced by Virbac in China, between 2009 and 2012. A number of them failed within months and others have failed some years later. We notified all affected owners at the time and failed chips were replaced. Following recent publicity on the news media about failed chips Virbac advised us that all pets with affected microchips should be recalled and microchips replaced, at Virbac's cost. After we, like most clinics, had gone through our records in preparation to recall the dogs, Virbac advised us that the offer was withdrawn. They now will only replace chips which have failed. They are recommending annual checks of the affected microchips.

Recently implanted microchips are not affected. All microchips have a 15 digit number. Microchip numbers starting with 953- or 978- are unaffected. The affected microchip's start with 900-088 or 900-008 or 900-001. If your pet's microchip starts with these numbers we recommend having the chip scanned every year to check it is functioning. We are happy to do this and there is no charge. If you are unsure whether your pet's microchip is in the affected group we can scan them, or if they are on our database we can advise you by phone.

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Stiff joints in older cats and dogs

Catherine Copland (Veterinarian)

Many dogs and cats develop joint discomfort as they age. Limping, stiffness and reluctance to exercise are obvious signs. Subtle changes in behavior such as sleeping more, sleeping in a different place, and avoiding climbing or jumping are also signs of joint discomfort.

Synoquin is a supplement for cats and dogs that contains specially blended ingredients that support healthy joints, and help the production of healthy cartilage and comfortable movement. It contains glucosamine hydrochloride, an important ingredient in healthy cartilage, and chondroitin sulphate which gives cartilage its shock absorbing properties. Synoquin also contains ascorbic acid to reduce oxidative stress in the joint, zinc for healthy cartilage production and dexahan from krill which contains omega 3 fatty acids to help joint comfort and mobility.

There are many joint supplements available and it can be hard knowing which will be effective. Many contain glucosamine and chondroitin in the raw form such as shark cartilage or green lipped mussel. The ingredients in Synoquin have been carefully selected based on science and purified to be as effective as possible.

Synoquin is a capsule that can be sprinkled on food. It is not a drug and does not require a prescription, and is available for dogs and cats. We have had some very positive feedback from owners who have tried Synoquin for their pets and working dogs.



Over-Active Thyroid Glands in Cats (Hyperthyroidism)

Barbara Christensen (Veterinarian)

Generally caused by benign tumours in one or both thyroid glands, hyperthyroidism is a common illness that we see in older cats.

Symptoms include weight loss despite a good appetite, increased thirst, vomiting, diarrhoea and hyperactivity. Signs that can be picked up on examination include enlarged thyroid glands and an increased heart rate. The disease can be diagnosed with a blood test, however, given that the symptoms are similar to those seen in other common syndromes in older cats, a general blood screen is usually required to rule out other problems such as kidney disease.

If your cat has been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, there are four main treatment options available:

1. Daily medication to control thyroid activity – this can either be an oral tablet or ointment applied to the ear. Regular blood tests are required to ensure that the dose rate is correct.
2. The disease can be managed with a prescription diet restricting the amount of iodine the cat is eating. However, care must be taken to ensure that your cat is not getting access to ANY other food.
3. Radioactive iodine treatment. One of the only two permanent cures available but is limited to facilities capable of handling radioactive material. This treatment also depends on the availability of the radioactive iodine which is sourced from human hospitals.
4. The second permanent cure available is surgery to remove one or both thyroid glands. However, these older cats often present an increased anaesthetic risk.

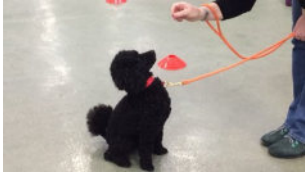
Medication, prescription diet and surgical options to treat hyperthyroidism are available at Clutha Vets. Current thinking is that aiming for a permanent cure is preferable to what could be years of medication. Surgery and radioactive iodine treatment can be expensive – but may work out cheaper than medication and regular blood tests in the long run.

If you are thinking that doing nothing is an option, please be aware that leaving this disease untreated will shorten your cat's lifespan. Hyperthyroidism will cause an increase in blood pressure which in turn will damage the kidneys and eyes. It is also not nice to see a ravenously hungry animal continue to lose weight.

Please come and see us if you think your cat has thyroid problems.

Dog Obedience

Michelle Powell (Vet Nurse)



We offer weekly dog obedience classes at the Balclutha Clinic. People often ask is there any point because my dog already sits and lies down on command?

Obedience training is more than teaching tricks or obeying commands. It is about teaching your dog life skills, about making good choices and developing a partnership with your dog. If you want a calm dog that loves to learn come and join us. We train with positive reinforcement and like to have fun in an encouraging environment.

If you are interested call the Balclutha clinic and talk to Michelle. You might find you have a really good dog hidden behind just a few bad habits.

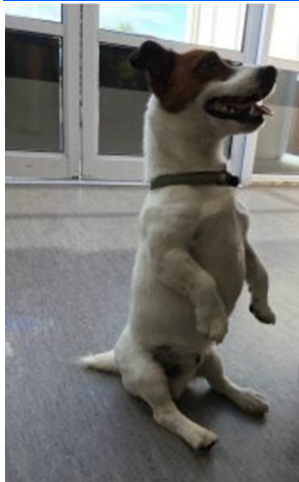
One of our vets got a bit of teasing from the nurses recently about what was written in a patient's clinical history.

The vet had listened to the owner's description of their cat's behaviour - it felt warm to touch and was sleeping in unusual places. The vet summarised it succinctly -

"Hot cat likes sleeping around".



Tank



Peter Heslip (Veterinarian)

Tank is a very busy 3 year old Jack Russell. He lives on a farm and considers himself indispensable to running the property. It's hard to know whether to call Tank lucky or unlucky. Perhaps lucky to have the owners he does, but maybe not so lucky to get run over twice and have four broken bones.

Tank's first accident in 2015 was getting run over by a 4 wheeler. He managed to break his pelvis in three places. He needed only rest to allow the fractures to heal and he returned to normal.

In his next accident, two years later, he was run over by a ute. This time he broke his left tibia (shin bone), the calcaneus bone in his right hock (tarsus)

and the ball off his right femur. This required three surgeries. Firstly a pin and wire were placed in the tibia. Then another pin and wire was placed in his hock to stabilise the calcaneus bone. Finally he had the broken ball of the femur removed. This means he has no hip joint and the leg is held only by muscles.

Tank has made a good recovery from his surgeries and is walking well. He is due for pins out in another month. Hopefully Tank has learned from his accidents.



Pelvis



Tibia



Tarsus

Rabbit Calicivirus

Peter Heslip (Veterinarian)

A strain of rabbit calicivirus was illegally introduced into New Zealand to control rabbit problems, about 20 years ago. While initially successful, rabbits have developed immunity to the disease. The legal introduction of a more virulent strain has been approved. The new virus has been imported but a release date has not yet been announced.

Pet rabbits will also be affected by the new strain of virus. Cylap is the only rabbit vaccine in New Zealand and it is not licensed for use against the new strain of calicivirus. However, a trial in Australia has shown it to be effective.

The take home message - If your rabbit is not vaccinated it should be, before the new strain of virus is released.



Cushing's Disease

Peter Heslip (Veterinarian)

Cushing's Disease is a result of over-activity of the adrenal gland and excessive cortisol production. We diagnose a case every few years, so it was a surprise to recently diagnose two cases within two weeks.

The symptoms are caused by high blood cortisol levels and typical signs include a big thirst, a pot-belly and scaly skin with thinning of the fur. Dogs are usually happy but sluggish and weak. Not every dog shows all the symptoms, and all these symptoms can also be seen with other diseases. Often owners attribute the symptoms to old age.

There is no simple test for Cushing's disease and we have to do hormone response tests. This involves giving a stimulatory hormone and showing excessive production of cortisol in response, or a suppressing hormone and showing that cortisol production is not suppressed as it should be.

Treatment is with a pill called trilostane, which blocks the production of cortisol. Trilostane is given daily for life. The rapid drop in cortisol levels causes a rapid return of vigour and reduction in thirst. Fur loss takes six to twelve months to resolve.

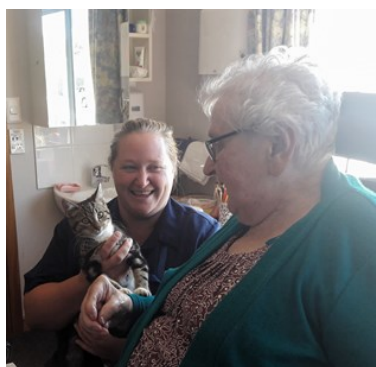
Diagnosis is not easy, and treatment is a major commitment, but the results of successful treatment are very rewarding. A typical comment from owners is that their pet is now behaving like a new dog.

Ollie before treatment in July 2017 with scaly skin, fur loss and lethargy - right

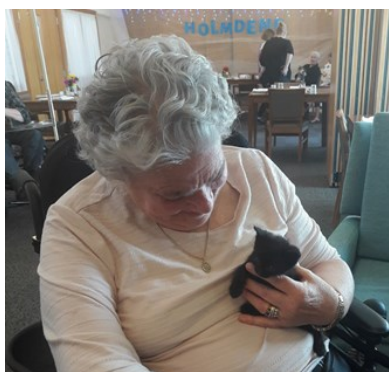


Six months later Ollie's skin looks much better, with early fur regrowth. More important than looks, Ollie is feeling better and is much more active - left

Holmdene



Residents and visitors of Holmdene recently enjoyed a visit with Gillian, the little black kitten, and Tabbigail, the young tabby cat



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