

# North Hobart Veterinary Hospital

# Animal Antics



ISSUE 23 - WINTER 2009

Welcome to the Winter edition of *ANIMAL ANTICS* issued quarterly to keep you up to date with the latest veterinary news and practice activities at the North Hobart Veterinary Hospital.

## AUGUST IS PET DENTAL MONTH

During the month of August we will be offering free five-minute dental checks for our animal clients. We have provided this service for the past 3 years and have found it very successful in educating pet owners in how to care for their animals teeth.

If you would like to book your pet in for a free dental check please call reception to book your appointment.



See **Page 3** to find out what happens when your pet comes to hospital for a dental procedure.

## PRACTICE NEWS



We would like to welcome Eva Audrey to the North Hobart Vet family.

Congratulations to Sarah on the arrival of her daughter, a sister for Owen, on 25 April, 2009

Chantelle has just completed her Certificate II in Veterinary Nursing and has already moved on to her next challenge! Well done Chantelle!

Recently four of our nurses; Dianne, Abbey, Angela and Belinda; attended the Veterinary Nurse Conference Australia (VNCA) in Melbourne to network with other veterinary nurses and be updated on the latest trends in nursing. Ongoing education is vital to make sure that we can offer our clients the best possible treatment for their pets.

## CANINE COUGH

Canine cough is one of the most common infectious diseases of dogs. It is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can occur in massive outbreaks and is sometimes referred to as Kennel Cough. However, dogs can become infected with Canine Cough anywhere dogs gather, such as the dog beach, park, dog shows, obedience classes and not just at Kennels.

**THE CAUSE:** Canine cough can be caused by a number of different viruses but the two most common infectious agents are Bordatella Bronchiseptica and Canine Parainfluenza.

**THE TREATMENT:** This is usually antibiotics and symptomatic therapy such as cough syrup.

**THE SIGNS:** The classical signs are a harsh, hacking cough that often finishes with gagging. Severely affected dogs may be depressed, have a fever, stop eating and can even develop pneumonia. The coughing bouts may persist for a number of weeks despite treatment.

**THE CONTROL:** Puppies should be vaccinated against canine cough when they have their normal vaccinations. Then they should have a booster vaccination annually.

Canine cough can occur at any time of the year and can affect all ages. If your dog develops a cough or signs of any of the above symptoms please contact us for an appointment. Because of the infectious nature of the virus we may ask you to leave your dog in your car until time for his or her appointment to reduce risk of spreading the disease to other dogs in the waiting room.

**REMEMBER PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE - VACCINATE YOUR PET!**

## LOOKING FOR A NEW FAMILY MEMBER?

If you are looking for a new furry family member there are several places where you can start your search.

**HOBART DOGS HOME:** If it is a new puppy or dog that you are looking for it is worth while starting your search at the Hobart Dogs Home. Located on Scotts Road in Risdon Vale there are always many dogs and puppies that are looking for new families to love them. The Hobart Dogs Home is open 10am to 5pm daily and can be contacted on 6243 5177.

**RSPCA:** The RSPCA has many various types of animals looking for new homes. Dogs, puppies, cats and kittens are available for those people looking to add a new family member. Contact the RSPCA on 6244 3033 or visit them at Pass Road, Mornington. They are open for visits between 10am and 4pm daily.

**CATS HOME:** If you are looking for a new feline to share your life you will find many cats and kittens at the Cats Home who are looking for homes. Open daily from 10am to 2pm the Cats Home can be contacted on 6278 2111 or by visiting 12 Sels Point Road, New Town.

The places mentioned above have many needy animals looking for a new family to be a part of. Animals of all ages and all breeds are available. If you are looking for a pedigree animals you should contact one of the places below.

**TASMANIAN CANINE ASSOCIATION:** For purebred dogs. This association is able to give you the contact details for registered breeders of any particular breed of purebred dog that you may be looking for. They are contactable between 10am and 2pm on 6272 9443.

**CAT ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA:** Looking for a purebred cat? Call 6228 0049 or visit [www.catinc.org.au](http://www.catinc.org.au) to get the details on the particular breed that you are looking for.

## CATS & ARTHRITIS



Is your cat jumping up less? Sleeping more? There was a time when we believed that cats did not get arthritis, but really it was just that cats didn't used to live long enough to show signs of arthritis! With longevity comes joint troubles.

The main places that cats get arthritis is their elbows and their lower back. The main symptom of spinal arthritis is the cat will no longer easily jump up onto high places - they can get onto a bed but not onto a tall chest of drawers. They also are no longer flexible enough to get around to lick and groom the lower spinal area. This means that little 'tufty' knots start to form as the dead hair clumps because the cat can't reach back to remove it.

The main symptom of elbow arthritis is the cat does not like to jump down from places, and is often slower going down the stairs. Since it is often older cats who get arthritis, the symptoms seem just to be of a cat getting older and 'lazier'. Because they move around less, they also tend to put on weight as well. Younger cats can 'slip a disc' in their spine and show similar symptoms, but more often will suddenly complain about their owners trying to touch their back.

In days gone by, there were no really good drugs to help cats with arthritis - aspirin, ibuprofen (Nurofen) and paracetamol kill cats by destroying their kidneys and liver. It was not until recently (5 - 8 years ago) that really good painkillers became available for cats, and now it is possible to see how much of a cat's 'laziness' is due to pain. There are also quite a few good supplements available to help make your cat's life easier.

Once on medication, many cats start to run around like kittens again, and start jumping up again, so it is nice to think we can relieve what used to be an 'invisible suffering'. It used to be hard to know what a cat in pain looked like. Now that there are very effective medications to alleviate the pain, it is really nice to see the improvements it makes in a lot of cats' lives. There are also supplements such as Seaflex, Joint Guard and Fish Oil that can help.

If you think your cat may have arthritis please phone us on 6234 7044 to make an appointment to see your veterinarian.



## SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR PET HAS IT'S TEETH CLEANED?

You may be advised by your vet after a consultation that your pet needs to have its teeth cleaned. Dental hygiene is an important part of your animal's complete wellbeing. Toxins released from a dental infection can have an affect on their overall system, especially the kidneys and the heart.



An anaesthetic is required for this procedure so arrangements will be made to admit your pet on a weekday morning. The receptionist will inform you of the admission time for your pet and the requirements with regards to fasting.

On the day of the admission to hospital your pet will be given a thorough health check to be able to provide the best nursing care before, during and after the anaesthetic process.

During this health check some pets will have some blood taken to have a pre-anaesthetic blood test run - this checks the health of the kidneys, liver, etc. This is particularly important for any pets over the age of about 7 years to make sure that their anaesthetic is made as safe as possible.

Most patients will also require intravenous fluid therapy to maintain the safest possible anaesthetic and recovery, especially if over the age of 7 years or if they have particular medical conditions.

Your pet will then have a sedative to relax them before their anaesthetic induction and dental procedure. Once your pet is anaesthetised excess calculus deposits are removed with specialised hand tools, then the teeth are cleaned with an ultrasonic scaler, which removes any remaining plaque above and below the gum line. Some teeth may need to be removed. Larger teeth such as molars may need to be divided into smaller sections to remove them, using a high speed burr to minimize the risk of retaining roots.

Excess debris is removed by flushing the mouth area with air and water then the remaining teeth are polished to smooth the surface and make them resistant to additional plaque formation. During the course of the anaesthetic your pet is closely monitored by the surgical nurse who keeps a record of heart rate, O<sub>2</sub> saturation of the blood, breathing rate and temperature.

Injections of antibiotics and pain relief are given and then your pet is placed in a warm, secure recovery bed where they can be closely monitored after their anaesthetic before being returned to their hospital bed until their discharge

Once your pet has fully recovered from the anaesthetic they will be discharged by one of the nursing staff.

The nurse will go through the procedure with you and give you a sheet which entails their ongoing care over the next few days.

This may include any medications that need to be given - either antibiotics or further pain relief depending on the extent of the dental work that has been done.

A follow up appointment is usually scheduled for 2 weeks after the dental procedure to check that everything has healed properly and to talk about future dental care for your pet.



## FEATURED BREED: THE STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER



KRYPTON

**BACKGROUND:** The Staffordshire Bull Terrier was brought into existence in the early 1800s and is a cross between the bulldog of the day and the old English Terrier – a breed which is now extinct. It was produced with the sole purpose of obtaining a dog with a longer, broader head than the bulldog and also able to combine strength and agility. The early dogs did not have very specific pedigrees because the importance was a game-fighting dog. The miners and ironworkers of Staffordshire began to foster the breed and the qualities of gameness, intelligence and loyalty were developed.

**AVERAGE LIFESPAN:** This dog can live up to 14 years of age.

**AVERAGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT:** Staffy's are between 36cm to 41cm and weigh around 11kg to 17kg.

**BREED PERSONALITY, CHARACTERISTICS & TEMPERAMENT:** You must never forget the Staffordshire Bull Terriers' past as a fighting dog is still present in most Staffys today. Always be a responsible Staffy owner and never have your dog off lead in a public place.

**COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PETS:** Staffordshire Bull Terriers live happily with other pets provided that they are trained and socialised from an early age. Puppies can be easily trained to obey house rules and obedience training can be an excellent avenue to provide socialisation with other animals. Obedience is a fun way to develop a close bond of friendship and respect with your Staffy. They love to be with you and take great delight in pleasing you.

**CARE REQUIREMENTS:** The Staffy is a low maintenance breed, the short coat requiring little more than a regular brushing and the occasional bath. Depending on the amount of exercise your dog has on a hard surface will determine if the nails need clipping to keep them short.

**IDEAL OWNERS:** Staffordshire Bull Terriers are a dog that very much needs to be a member of the family. They are not a dog that can be left alone in the backyard to amuse themselves.



## WINTER WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

When it comes to winter animals are no different to humans - everything slows down! The bitter chill of the outside air leads to decreased physical activity and we experience a reduced metabolism. If food consumption increases during this time it could lead to weight gain.

Some breeds of dog are more prone to weight gain than others, and winter can be the time when this starts. Arthritis as well as other medical conditions can play a part in other weight gain issues, making pain management and veterinary support important.

North Hobart Veterinary Hospital offers a tailored program to all of our patients that need nutritional advice or support with weight loss. Call us today to make an appointment with your veterinarian to help your pet get back on the road to a healthier and happier life!

## STAFF PROFILE: DR BEC SMITH



Bec graduated in Perth in 2005, before heading off to the UK for 2 years, working as a small animal vet.

In 2008 she went to the Cook Islands for three months as a volunteer vet looking after dogs, cats, pigs and goats. Coming back to Tassie, she joined us in February 2009.

Bec loves the variety offered in her position as a veterinarian at North Hobart Vet and has a crossbreed dog called Ozzy, who lives with her parents.

When she is not at work, Bec can be found studying Psychology at Uni.