



VET mates

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT YOUR PETS

MAY 2014



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Filled with stories, pictures and links to great articles, keep up-to-date with what's happening in our Companion Animal Hospital.



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Pee problems in cats

Sally Browning

Our feline friends seem to attract more than their fair share of urinary problems – from kidney disease to bladder tumours to blocked urethras. Working out the cause can be tricky but most problems are treatable.

Cats can be quite demonstrative about their urinary problems – peeing on the toaster or in your shoes is a sure fire way of getting attention. Sometimes inappropriate urination is a behaviour problem but a physical cause should be eliminated before this assumption is made. Crying, straining, frequent attempts to urinate, licking the genitals repeatedly and bloody urine should all get your immediate attention and concern. Likewise, a previously house trained older cat that suddenly starts to urinate in the wardrobe is likely not just "being naughty", but has a health problem.

A veterinary examination is the first step – and usually we will want to obtain a urine sample. Vets take a special interest in urine, and a sample can tell us so much about many systems in the cat's body. We look at the colour, concentration and pH, and look for the presence of blood, bacteria, glucose or crystals in the urine.



In younger or middle aged cats the main culprits are crystals irritating the bladder, or stress-related cystitis. In older cats we are concerned with infections, diabetes, kidney disease, thyroid issues, and the list goes on!

The phone call that gets our immediate attention is the MALE CAT THAT IS CRYING IN PAIN OR STRAINING TO URINATE. The usual subject is one who is a little overweight, likes dry supermarket food and hates to go outside when the weather turns cold and wet. He may have a urinary blockage caused by crystals in the urine, which clump together forming a plug in his urethra – this is life-threatening.

DO NOT DELAY SEEKING ADVICE IF YOU ARE CONCERNED YOUR MALE CAT COULD BE BLOCKED – be assured, we will take this as seriously as you telling your doctor you have chest pain!

INTRODUCING ACANA dog food

Totally Vets is now proud to supply ACANA, made by award-winning Canadian pet food company Champion. ACANA is a premium food for any dog; however it can be particularly good for dogs with skin issues, as there is a grain free variety, no additives, and only natural preservatives (vitamin E). This food is also recommended by holistic veterinarian Dr. Liza Schneider for general

health as well as skin health. This is what Champion has to say about their ACANA brand:

“Biologically Appropriate™ ACANA represents a new class of foods that mirror the high and various inclusions of fresh, whole meats that dogs and cats would encounter in their natural environment – meats they are naturally evolved to eat. Worlds away from conventional pet foods, Biologically Appropriate™ ACANA is rich in protein and low in carbohydrates and features an unmatched variety of poultry, meat and fish that are fresh, preservative-free and bursting

with goodness that nourishes completely.”

- Biologically appropriate. Your pet has specific dietary needs that ‘Mother Nature’ cultivated
- Fresh regional ingredients. When we say fresh, we mean it. Never-frozen and preservative-free ingredients
- Never outsourced. Because food worth eating, the truly nourishing food, should never be provided by the lowest bidder
- No water added. We gently steam-cook our foods in their own natural juices

We have a small supply in store and can also order by request.

Socialisation period – what is it?

Rebekah Willink

Ever wondered what we mean when you hear us talking about a puppy’s socialisation period? Here’s the answer...

Between approximately 3 and 14 weeks of age a puppy will go through it’s critical socialisation period, and this is the time that puppy will develop up to 90% of its attitudes towards people, other animals and their environment. During this important time you can help shape your puppy’s future temperament, character and behavior habits. In the first half of this period a puppy will learn vital social skills from its mother and littermates, and socialisation in the second half is up to you. This is why there is a specific age-range in which puppies are eligible (and encouraged) to attend Puppy Preschool classes.

There is ample scientific evidence proving if a puppy is not socialised in a positive way to certain stimuli, in this time period particularly, it may develop a life-long fear of that stimulus. So let’s get socialising – and stop fear before it starts.

Chickens – not a poultry affair

Helen Ryan

What do the words Ancona, Australorp, Barnevelder, Faverolle and Sebright mean to you?

Well for those with no idea (apart from the obvious hint of the title and picture) you can join the majority of the population who are not abreast (chicken joke) with the wide variation in breeds of our trusty egg layers, that are available in New Zealand.

As a fledgling (yes another bird reference) vet nurse I avoided all contact with chickens because I found them somewhat alien. However as more people prefer their eggs free-range, the providers of these eggs are once again living in their back gardens.

So how do you choose a healthy chicken? They should have a bright eye, a pink and upright comb (bright red when laying), dry nostrils, shiny feathers and be a good weight for their breed (you should not be able to feel the keel or breast bone but they also shouldn’t be too fat – fat chickens do not make good layers). They should also have clean feathers under the tail and be active and alert.

So, you should not choose a chicken that is fluffed up, has a runny nose, is standing around



hunched, has a pale comb, has raised scales on the legs (this could indicate mites), has dirty feathers under the tail or has lice (brown, raw sugar-sized, fast moving insects around back end). These parasites are easily treatable though, so if everything else looks good then the chickens should still be ok.

Be aware when purchasing several birds and/or bringing new birds into a flock, that hens have a strict pecking-order which gives a hen the right to peck and bully anyone below them. I have been reassured though that this is not all out war (maybe the odd lost feather), and they soon sort themselves out.

We have chicken-lovers aplenty at Totally Vets, so if you have any further questions just ask away – we’ll be happy to help.



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Staff news

Vet nurse **Kayla** married BJ on 22nd April at BJ's family property in the Hawkes Bay.

Debbie and **Helen S** were part of the bridal party, **Charmaine** had the all-important role

of MC and a large contingent of the Feilding clinic were there to share in a very special day. Congratulations Kayla and BJ.

We have a new addition to the vet nursing team. **Tasha** made such a good impression on the Feilding team during her practical placements at Totally Vets in 2013, and she started working with us earlier this year.

Julie C from the Feilding reception team is off on maternity leave and we are eagerly awaiting news of the arrival of the latest little McNeill baby.

Charmaine recently represented New Zealand in the NZ Hockey Masters team. Charmaine says it was an amazing experience and if given the chance she would do it all again in a heartbeat. Congratulations on being selected for the team Charms – what an achievement!

Sally has taken on a pet-project in the form of a tiny kitten from the SPCA, who she has named Biscotty, or Scotty for short. He was a bit worse for wear when he first arrived but with lots of TLC (and his own personal vet) he is making good progress, and resident cat Minnow is (very) slowly starting to accept the new addition.



SPECIAL CASE Lucky Luke

Debbie Asplin

It was Thursday 13th February when we first met Mr Luke, the one and a half year-old gorgeous grey tabby cat.

His owners had found him unable to walk on Wednesday night and he had a wound on his right side, close to his spine. He had no pain responses in his hind legs or tail, no anal reflex and an enlarged bladder. The first thoughts were that he had some type of spinal damage and that he had likely been bitten by a dog. Christine admitted Luke for x-rays of his spine, to assess how bad the damage was. While Mr Luke sat in his bedroom waiting for his turn he was quite calm and un-nerved – it was the staff that were a bit anxious for him, with these injuries.

Christine and her vet nurse took Luke through to the x-ray room and much to everyone's

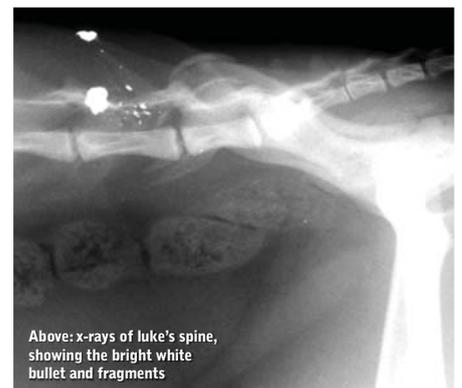
surprise the x-rays showed that Luke had been shot, and there was a slug pellet and fragments sitting in and around his spine! After discussions with Luke's owners and one of the Massey University specialist surgeons, and a few more checks for pain responses (which were now present), we elected to see how Luke progressed over the weekend.

Luke had several different pain relief medications and antibiotics prescribed and we offered him a variety of tasty foods, to try and tempt him to eat (he was feeling a bit sorry for himself by this stage, as you would). His bladder was expressed two to three times a day and the promise of an enema was also coming.

Mr Luke lived in hospital with us for five days. Over this time he started to eat by himself, take his medication well, have some gentle physiotherapy and was very compliant with his bladder being expressed. He also seemed playful when he rolled round his cage, and continued to gain some degree of movement in his hind limbs each day.

Fast forward one month: Luke is wobbling along at home, in essence being a three-legged cat. His owners are still having to express his bladder, he is able to be carried out to the paddock and make his way back inside, and is very happy in himself!

We wish Luke and his family all the very best for his continued improvement and hopeful return to his normal cheeky self.



Above: x-rays of luke's spine, showing the bright white bullet and fragments

Dog safety for children

Rebekah Willink

Why dogs bite – an article for your children...

With more and more dog attacks being made public news it is especially important for children to learn why dogs may bite, and what to do to keep themselves safe. Dogs may bite for one or more of the following reasons:

OVER-EXCITEMENT

The noises and movements you make when you play are very exciting to dogs. When dogs play with other dogs, they often play roughly with their sharp teeth and claws. Sometimes dogs forget that they can't play the same way with you. Because dogs don't have hands, they use their mouths to grab things. A dog can hurt you by accident, just by being too excited.

What you should do:

Play gently and calmly. If a dog gets too excited, freeze until it calms down, then walk away. Take some time out before returning to play to give you both a chance to calm down.

FEAR OR SURPRISE

Quick movements and sudden or loud noises can be scary for a dog, and they may try to bite to protect themselves. If a dog thinks you might be going to hurt them, and they can't get away, they may try to bite.

What you should do:

When you are around any dog, move slowly and be quiet. Always ask a dog's owner for permission before you pat it and if the owner says you can, reach out slowly with the palm of your hand facing down – let the dog come to you and sniff you. Try and stand side-on to the dog and always pat the dog under the chin first. If a dog is sleeping, leave it alone and come back when it is awake. If the owner is not there, do not pat the dog.

PAIN OR SICKNESS

When a dog is in pain, they don't understand where the pain is coming from. If you touch it, the dog may think you are causing the pain and could bite you to try and make it stop.

What you should do:

If a dog is acting like it is sick or hurt, leave it alone. Tell an adult and then together get help for the dog.

PROTECTING PROPERTY

A dog may protect anything that's important to it – toys, bedding, food, people, territory, even its car! If you come near something that the dog feels is off-limits to you he may try to bite you to make you leave the thing alone.

What you should (or should not) do:

Never go into a yard where there is a dog you don't know. Don't reach through a car window or a fence to pat a dog you don't know, don't pat a dog that is tied up or confined and don't touch a dog's property.

WARNING SIGNS AND COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Watch and listen for the warnings that a dog will give you to let you know when it is upset. If its ears are laid back against its head and the legs are stiff this is probably a warning that the dog is feeling threatened and will protect itself if need be. If the hair on the back of its neck is standing up on end this can be another warning. If a dog is growling, barking, showing its teeth and/or staring at you this may also mean it is ready to bite.

If you feel like a dog is about to bite you:

- Stop moving and look at the ground
- Count to five, slowly and silently
- Move away very slowly, sideways or backwards
- If the dog jumps on you, act like a rock by curling up into a ball and covering your face with your arms

What you should NOT do:

- Don't stare at the dog – this means "Go on, I dare you to bite me!"
- Don't run, jump or wave your arms around
- Don't scream
- Don't throw anything at the dog, or hit it

DID YOU KNOW?

- Most dogs don't actually like cuddles – tight hugs or face-to-face contact can make a dog feel scared
- A wagging tail does not always mean a dog "likes you" or is "happy to see you"

Body language of fear in dogs

Contrary to popular belief, it is extremely uncommon for a dog to "bite without warning".

The images on the right gives a great visual example of subtle signs of fear that dogs commonly display, which can also be their way of warning before a bite. A warning sign can be as simple as a yawn, so learning as much as you can about dog body language and communication is vitally important.

Images by Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

| The Art and Science of Animal Behavior
| www.drsophiayin.com

