



# VET mates

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT YOUR PETS

AUGUST 2014

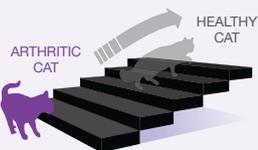
## Some subtle behavior changes you may notice in your cat



Arthritic cats might use a chair to help them jump onto a table



Arthritic cats play less frequently and spend more time sleeping



Arthritic might be hesitant to climb stairs



Arthritic might be hesitant to jump off a table

Images provided by Boehringer Ingelheim

## Does your cat suffer from arthritis?

Sally Browning

Arthritis is a degenerative joint disease which is primarily caused by 'wear and tear' of cartilage within joints over time, leading to inflammation, pain and decreased quality of life.

Unfortunately, arthritis in cats remains largely undiagnosed and untreated. Cats naturally disguise pain and discomfort, so they do not show obvious signs - unlike our canine companions. As the privileged caretaker of your cat you can play an important part in identifying arthritis by recognizing subtle changes in your cat's behaviour.

You may notice that your cat uses a chair to jump on the table now when they used to levitate up there with the greatest of ease. They may not play anymore, spending most of their day sleeping in the sun, or they may hesitate to climb stairs or jump off the bed. Your nimble athlete has become ground-bound and slow. They may no longer maintain their coat in perfect condition as twisting and stretching to groom is now difficult. In some cases they find it difficult to use the litter tray or cat door and toilet training is no longer perfect. Some cats will become grumpy or aggressive with owners or other pets, and no



longer seek out affection. In short all the traits that make cats so loved are slowly diminishing. Often this happens so slowly that we just think that our pet is old and that the changes are a normal part of aging - this is not always true and we can help.

A visit to Totally Vets is a great place to start - after a thorough history taking and clinical exam we may agree that arthritis is an issue for your cat. We may also need to further check their health with blood or urine tests and x-rays, as older cats can have multiple health issues.

Treatments can include non-steroidal anti-inflammatories. Metacam® oral suspension for cats is an easily administered liquid that is very effective in the right patient. I used this in my old cat Borris for several years, to improve his quality of life during his twilight years. We may also recommend weight loss, glucosamine supplements or a prescription food for arthritic cats.

So take another look at your old puss - in their unique cat fashion they may be telling you that life is harder for them than it needs to be.

**Check out this website:**  
[www.catswitharthritis.com](http://www.catswitharthritis.com) for more information about arthritis in our feline friends, how to recognise the signs and what your vet can do to help you and your cat.

# Pet dental trivia - did you know?

- Up to 80% of dogs and cats over three years of age show some signs of dental disease
- Dental disease can lead to liver, kidney or cardiac disease due to the spread of bacteria from the mouth into the bloodstream

- Cats and dogs are experts at hiding dental disease, and without a regular mouth examination the degree of disease can often be irreversible before it is detected
- You can clean your pet's teeth at home, just as you would clean your own!
- Adult dogs have 42 teeth and cats have 30 - wow
- Your pet's teeth are like icebergs - only 1/3 of the tooth is visible and 2/3 is "hidden beneath the surface", or in this case underneath the gum-line

## SPECIAL OFFER

August is National Pet Dental Month. So ...

Totally Vets is offering a 20% discount off all dental procedures performed during the month of August 2014.

To take advantage of this great offer, simply give us a call at the Feilding clinic on 06 323 6161 and one of our friendly reception staff will help you make an appointment.

## Clinic news

At the time of this newsletter going to print we are preparing to farewell **Eliza** as she heads off on maternity leave and **Carley** (just temporarily!) as she and husband Darryl head off on a 4 month-long world adventure. Vet nurse **Kayla** is also preparing to take maternity leave in October and until that time you will find her smiling face at the Feilding reception.

At this time we also welcome two new faces to the Feilding reception team, **Heidi** and **Megan**. Heidi has come on board as Sales and Reception Manager and Megan is in a part-time business support role. With the establishment of a customer service centre at the Feilding clinic, taking all incoming phone calls and enquires for both the Feilding and Palmerston North clinics, there are bound to be even more new faces pop up - watch this space!

At the beginning of August we welcomed new vet nurse **Jessica**, who is replacing Kayla in the Feilding small animal hospital.

Our companion animal Facebook page is gaining momentum with increasing followers daily. If you haven't done so already, check us out at

[www.facebook.com/TotallyVetsCA](http://www.facebook.com/TotallyVetsCA)

## SPECIAL CASE

# Ollie the Border Collie

Debbie Asplin

It was a dark Tuesday evening when first I met Miss Ollie the Border Collie. I saw Ollie's mum before I saw her - she was looking a bit dazed and I soon understood why.

Ollie and her mum had been on their nightly walk at Timona Park when Ollie suddenly let out a squeal. Returning to her mum Ollie's front legs were covered in blood and she was limping. It was not known what exactly she ran into, but Ollie had injured herself very well indeed!

Suzanne and I started 'clipping and cleaning' Ollie's front legs, looking for the source of the bleeding.

She had several wounds - puncture wounds on her left shoulder and right elbow, skin pulled off her right front toe, multiple scuffs and bruising on both of her front feet. We could also see that she had de-gloved her lower jaw, pulling the lip away from the gum. She had also loosened a few teeth but luckily her jaw was not fractured. We didn't 'poke and prod' Ollie too much, not wanting to cause her any more discomfort - we knew Ollie was going to need some surgery, and that we could check



her wounds more thoroughly under anaesthetic but first we needed to treat her for shock. She was started on intravenous fluids, given antibiotics, and lots of pain relief. Once we were happy Ollie was settled, we left her in ICU (on a princess bed of course!) for the night.

Wednesday was Ollie's surgery day - her toes were x-rayed to make sure there were no fractures and her various skin wounds were flushed and sutured. The main concern was the extent of Ollie's mouth injury. Suzanne could see that she had severely de-gloved her lower jaw, lost a canine tooth and there was some fragments of bone to remove, along with a few loose incisor teeth. After copious amounts of flushing, her gum/lip was sutured back together as best as possible.

Late that afternoon Ollie managed surprise us all and wander outside to the toilet, and even have some chicken for tea!

This photo shows the beautiful Ollie doing what she does best - an agility superstar!



Totally Vets prints **Vet Mates** on paper using FSC certified mixed source pulp from Well Managed forests and other controlled sources. The paper is produced under an environmental management system ISO 14001.



# The marvel of healthy ears

Helen Sheard

Did you know that a healthy ear has its own self-cleaning mechanism? It's one of nature's marvels.

Cells from the middle of the ear drum migrate down the ear canals, carrying out wax and

debris to the external ear where it can be shaken loose.

If an ear is inflamed or infected, the self-cleaning mechanism shuts down, and wax and fluid builds up in the ear canals, making the inflammation and infection worse. Once the infection has been treated, the self-cleaning mechanism can still take a couple of weeks to kick in again. During this period there is a risk that the infection may recur. Your vet might recommend regular ear cleaning during this time to reduce the risk of infection recurring.

Recurring ear problems can be frustrating... and costly! Infections can recur for a number of reasons; the drops may not be penetrating into the ear canal, which can be the case in dogs that have inflamed, narrowed ear canals, or that won't sit still for administration; or there may be an underlying problem such as allergies. The lining of the ear canal is essentially an extension of the skin, so any allergic skin disease can also cause inflammation in the ear. Food and environmental allergies are two of the most common allergies in dogs that can be associated with ongoing ear problems.

# Chew, chew, chew

Sandy Fitzgerald

Attempts to eradicate chewing entirely are unlikely to be successful as this behaviour is both natural and instinctual - it feels good to the dog.

Chewing is internally driven and internally rewarding - it releases endorphins which are anti-depressant hormones to make the dog feel happy. Chewing is a way for a puppy to investigate its world - everything goes into a dog's mouth because they don't have fingers like humans do... think about the way babies and toddlers have to touch and pick up everything around them. Chewing is a compulsive action performed when puppies are teething and is also compulsively performed during times of stress and anxiety as the previously mentioned release of endorphins helps to alleviate the dog's mental state and make them feel better.

You can address chewing by teaching your dog what is appropriate to chew, and by providing and encouraging access to at least two or three of these items rotated around, to help keep your dog "interested in the game". To help reinforce the chewing of these items you can make them more desirable, perhaps by smearing a layer of peanut butter or cat jellimeat onto the toy at the beginning. This is



helping to build a positive association to that item in particular: "if I chew this toy, I get something yummy!"

You can use a calm, clear verbal cue (such as "Ah ah") when your dog is about to chew something inappropriate - this will be enough to break their focus and provide you with an opportunity to redirect the urge to chew onto something more appropriate.

Be sure to remove valuable items from your puppies reach - slippers, underwear, TV remotes and the like. Your dog can not learn to chew inappropriate items if they have never been given access to them. Additionally, for valuable items that cannot be removed (the couch etc.) deterrent sprays may be of help, although some dogs do not find these enough of a deterrent. Control of the environment is important and may mean the dog is required to be crated or kept in an area where it is impossible to chew on anything inappropriate when you cannot supervise them.

You must ensure that your dog is being provided with adequate mental and physical exercise on a daily basis, to fulfil their breed requirements. Exercise should not only be provided in the form of a daily walk but also in the form of "brain games", such as the provision of a meal inside a food-dispensing toy - so your dog has to work for its food and enhance its problem-solving skills. Games like this will help to alleviate boredom by keeping the dog mentally occupied, therefore less likely to "get into mischief".

You can never stop a dog from wanting to chew; you can only instigate management tools, control the environment, and teach your dog what is appropriate to chew and what is not. Chewing is usually a behaviour that lessens over time (i.e. as the dog "grows up") and in the case of the dog that never stops chewing, there is often an underlying cause for the behaviour.

# The nose knows!

Rebekah Willink

At Queen's Birthday weekend Rebekah, Kayla and Sandy attended the Association of Pet Dog Trainers NZ annual conference in Wellington, on the fascinating topic of K9 Nosework®.

Presented by Jill Marie O'Brien, the co-founder of the American National Association of Canine Scent Work LLC® (NASCW™), the conference was an amazing opportunity to learn more about the many possible applications and uses for nosework within the veterinary and dog training worlds.

## THE SCIENCEY BIT

Did you know? A human has approximately 5 million olfactory receptors and a dog has upwards of 220 million, and about 30% of

the dog's brain comprises of the olfactory lobe (the part of the brain involved in interpreting odours).

## WHAT IS K9 NOSEWORK®?

Nosework, or scent work, is the term used to describe the canine scent detection activity which has been developed to give companion dogs and their owners a fun and easy way to learn and apply scent detection skills for fun and enrichment.

## WHO CAN SNIFF?

ANY dog! While some breeds of dog (i.e. bloodhounds) may have an especially heightened sense of smell, every single dog has an amazing nose and can "sniff" - no previous experience required!

## SOME OF THE MANY BENEFITS OF NOSEWORK

- A way to burn mental and physical energy
- Dogs engage and tap into a naturally-occurring behaviour
- No prior training is needed and no obedience is needed
- Shy or fearful dogs build confidence

- Elderly or physically compromised dogs can still be mentally fulfilled
- Reactive or boisterous dogs have an outlet for their energy
- The dog and handler bond is strengthened and owners learn how to observe and understand their dogs behaviour and body language
- Searches can be performed anywhere - the whole world is a search environment; you can be as creative as your mind will allow!
- Dogs who are recovering from surgery or who have exercise restrictions in place are given ample amounts of mental exercise instead

In the companion dog world K9 Nosework® is primarily a fun activity and in the working dog world it can be used to help train drug detection dogs, search and rescue dogs police dogs and more.

The emphasis of K9 Nosework® is on creating learning experiences for the dog while supporting its independent problem-solving skills - celebrating the dog and its amazing abilities!

# Helping a child come to terms with the loss of a pet

Article provided by Gribbles Veterinary

The loss of a family pet, be it a goldfish, rabbit, cat or dog, may be your child's first experience of death and your first opportunity as a parent to teach them about coping with the grief and pain that inevitably accompanies the joy of loving another creature. While it is impossible to shelter children from the loss of a pet, you can help them deal with it in a positive way by the manner in which you handle the grieving process.

One of the most difficult aspects of the entire process is how to break the news to your child. Try to do so one-on-one in a place where they feel safe and comfortable, and where you are unlikely to be interrupted or distracted. As with discussing any difficult issue, try to gauge how much information your child needs to hear based on their age, level of maturity and past experience.

If your pet is very old or is coming to the end of its life due to illness, consider talking to your child before the death occurs. If death occurs suddenly, talk to your child about the loss in an open, honest manner, and share your own feelings as a way of encouraging them to share theirs. Pretending that the animal ran away or "went to sleep" can leave a child feeling even more confused, frightened and betrayed when they eventually find out the truth. If you've opted for euthanasia, explain why the choice is necessary and give the child an opportunity to spend some special time with the pet and say goodbye in his or her own way.

Like anyone dealing with a loss, children generally feel a variety of emotions besides

sadness following the death of a pet. They may experience loneliness, anger if the pet was euthanased, frustration that the pet couldn't be cured, or guilt about occasions when they were mean to or didn't care for the pet as promised. Help your child understand that it's natural to feel all of these emotions, that it's OK to not want to talk about them immediately, and that you're there for them when they are ready to talk.

After the initial shock of the news has faded it is important to help your child heal and move on. It can be particularly beneficial for children to find special ways to remember their pet as this has been shown to help them express their feelings more openly, thereby helping them with closure. Many families hold a ceremony to bury their pet, or just share stories and memories of fun times they have all had together. If possible, give your child an opportunity to create a lasting memento of the pet, for example a special photograph, a cast of the animal's paw print, or something that belonged to the pet such as a collar or favourite toy.