



VET mates

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT YOUR PETS

MAY 09



Above Cassie takes an interest in Rebekah's ears.

The new-look Vetmates

Here it is, close to three years since the launch of Totally Vets Ltd, the new-look VetMates has arrived.

As well as a flash new website (www.totallyvets.co.nz - have a look!) we have also revised and re-invented our newsletters as part of our continual goal to provide you with the best service possible.

So welcome to the new and improved VetMates! With the help of some of our clients, we have aimed to make VetMates more attractive and easier to read. You will still find all of the informative articles and FUN of the old VetMates but with a new and updated look. So read... and enjoy!

Kill the pests, not your pet!

A fair percentage of the emergency visits to our small animal clinic involve accidental poisonings with pesticides. These can frequently result in death and certainly cause distress to the animal and significant bills for the client! The two most common substances involved in accidental poisonings are rat bait and slug/snail bait.

RAT BAIT

Dogs that have eaten rat bait lose the ability to clot their blood and subsequently bleed into their lungs, abdomen, joints and/or muscles. The poison works by reducing the liver's ability to recycle Vitamin K - which is essential to the process of blood clotting. It takes two to five days for any symptoms to occur. There is a long list of symptoms that could indicate poisoning, the most common being very pale pink or white coloured gums, lethargy, bleeding from the nose, difficulty breathing, with a soft cough and/or lameness. If you suspect, or see your pet eat any bait, it is essential that we induce vomiting as soon as possible, before the poison is absorbed. The antidote to rat bait is logically Vitamin K - this treatment is effective but can be expensive and needs to be continued for two to six weeks. Dogs that have been poisoned and have bled extensively may require an emergency blood transfusion.

SLUG AND SNAIL BAIT

The most common and lower priced brands of slug baits contain metaldehyde in a blue/green pellet which also contains soya bean meal, apple, rice or oats. These contain a "bittering" agent but still remain attractive to cats and dogs. Signs of poisoning occur within minutes of ingestion. These can include vomiting, diarrhoea, an increased respiratory rate and drooling. As the signs progress there are muscle tremors, "frenzied" behaviour, hyperthermia (increased body temperature), loss of coordination, continuous seizures and death. There is no antidote to metaldehyde so we can only treat the symptoms and support the patient while they are affected. The sooner we start treatment, the more success we achieve - however, some animals will still die, even with intensive care.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT POISONING?

- Use "Quash" - a different and much less toxic pesticide
- Store your baits carefully
- Use bait sparingly, spread it out thinly and always put it away after you have finished using it
- Dog-proof your vegetable plot!
- Use bait stations that are dog-proof
- Check bait frequently for any signs of disturbance from your dogs
- Burn or bury dead rodents as dogs can be poisoned by eating them.



PICK OF THE LITTER Gentle Leader

Has someone in your family got an ATTITUDE problem?

The Gentle Leader could solve all your problems in just 10 minutes as it quickly controls jumping, pulling, barking, chewing and begging.

This is NOT a muzzle!

Your dog is free to eat, fetch and even bite while wearing the head collar. The Gentle Leader head collar features two soft nylon straps - the collar fits high at the top of the neck and the nose loop fits loosely and comfortably at the base of the muzzle. **We have voted this the best behaviour modification product we sell!** Stop in and see us at the clinic and we can fit one on your dog - stop the tantrums today!



Did you know...?

SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT CATS AND DOGS...

- If never spayed or neutered, a female dog, her mate, and their puppies could produce over 66,000 dogs in six years
- A group of kittens is called a kindle
- Dogs' and cats' nose prints are similar to a fingerprint of a human, each one is unique
- Dogs can be trained to detect epileptic seizures
- White cats with blue eyes are quite often born deaf
- All kittens are born with blue eyes. These start changing colour from seven weeks of age
- Cats can see six times better in the dark and at night than humans can
- Dalmatian puppies are born pure white and their spots develop with age
- The heaviest recorded dog was "Zorba", an old English Mastiff, who weighed in at 155.5kg in 1989
- Three dogs survived the sinking of the Titanic, a Newfoundland, a Pomeranian, and a Pekingese.

Arthritis

If your pet is having trouble getting up from lying down, is reluctant to run, climb stairs or jump into the car, they may be suffering from the pain of sore joints (arthritis).

Arthritis causes pain as the cushion-like cartilage in the joint is worn down faster than it is replaced. This process occurs through old age change, being overweight, after an accident has damaged the joints, through congenital or breed-related defects in joint structure, or after infection.

Many older animals suffer from joint disease to some degree. Regular health checks with your pet's veterinarian can help identify arthritis early in the process. This will optimise the management and treatment of your pet's joint pain.

After a veterinary check up, we may recommend one or more of the following treatment options.

Joint supplements contain one or more natural ingredients known to help lubricate, regenerate and repair joints. Supplements are available without a vet check and are safe to give long term. They are best used in pets showing early signs of joint pain.

Anti-inflammatory drugs are prescription medications your pet can start after consultation with your vet. They decrease inflammation within the joints, and are used in pets showing medium to severe joint pain. There are some risks involved for long term users, however in most cases the benefits outweigh the risks.

Disease-modifying drugs are prescribed injections which stimulate the body's own mechanisms to heal damaged joints, and are anti-inflammatory. Usually a course of injections is needed, and these drugs are ideal for long term use, or where daily dosing is unsuitable.

There are also several things you can do at home to help relieve the pain associated with arthritis.

Provide warm and soft padded **bedding**. Consider letting your elderly pets sleep inside at night. If this is not possible, make sure their bed is sheltered. A warm coat will also help keep your pet warm, especially at night

Adjust your pet's **diet**. As your pet becomes less mobile, they will tend to gain weight, putting more stress on their joints. Adjust or change their diet to maintain an ideal weight. There are also prescription diets available (after veterinary consultation) with high levels of omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, known to help aching joints.

Continue to **exercise** your pet. Moderate exercise daily will help loosen stiff and sore joints, and will help keep your pet mobile for longer.



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.



Nutro dog food PUPPY SPECIAL

Bring this voucher into Totally Vets Feilding, when purchasing Nutro PUPPY FOOD and receive

- \$2 off a 2kg bag
- \$5 off a 7.5kg bag
- \$10 off a 15kg bag

Valid from May 09 - July 09 and not in conjunction with any other offer.



Feline lower urinary tract disease - FLUTD

As winter approaches we see an increase in the number of cats with Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD). Many cats will be unwilling to venture outside into the cold so are avoiding toileting for as long as possible.

FLUTD is most apparent in middle-aged slightly overweight (or obese) male cats, but can be a problem in any cat.

You may notice your cat exhibiting pain, discomfort and straining while trying to urinate. They may look as if they are constipated. Sometimes they are passing small amounts of red stained urine and licking under their tail.

It is also possible that the bladder can become completely blocked. This leads to toxins building up in the blood causing acute kidney failure and finally a ruptured bladder which can be fatal. This situation requires emergency treatment which involves passing a catheter into the bladder to allow the urine to be drained. These cats often become lethargic, depressed and begin vomiting as well as straining.

In up to half of cats with FLUTD, a cause cannot be found. Stress, crystals or bladder stones and infection can be some of the contributing factors.

In order to make a diagnosis, we normally collect a urine sample for analysis and also

to test for the presence of bacteria, blood and crystals. We may also collect a blood sample to test for kidney disease.

If a cat becomes blocked several times we will consider doing surgery to enlarge the opening from the bladder. This involves the removal of the end of the penis as this is the most common site for blockages.

It can be very difficult to prevent the disease recurring. Ideally you need to encourage your cat to drink plenty of water and go to the toilet more often! This can be done by feeding moist food only and adding extra water to that food. All good quality commercial dry foods have been formulated to prevent the formation of crystals.

If you notice your cat straining, or looking subdued, please visit us sooner rather than later so we hopefully avoid this life threatening condition.





‘Dell’ - a very lucky dog!

Dell, a five year-old female Huntaway, presented at the Feilding clinic late one afternoon as she had suddenly developed a very swollen abdomen and was very uncomfortable.

The condition that first sprung to mind was a GDV (Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus). This is a fairly rare, but potentially fatal, condition where the stomach twists and becomes engorged with air and froth and usually occurs when a dog has exercised after eating a large meal. It is most

common in large, deep-chested dogs, such as Huntaway dogs and Dobermans.

The Totally Vets hospital team quickly jumped into emergency mode, establishing Dell on a drip and decompressing the stomach. This is done by passing a tube down the oesophagus and into the stomach, therefore allowing the air to escape. If a stomach tube is unable to be passed then the pressure must be released by putting a needle into the stomach through the side of the dog’s abdomen.

The next step is to perform emergency surgery to untwist the stomach. The longer the stomach remains twisted, the more likely it is that areas of the stomach itself will become necrotic and die off. The twist in the stomach also causes respiratory distress, damage to

the heart and cuts off blood supply to the vital organs in the body, causing irreversible damage and often death. The stomach wall is sutured to the abdominal wall to prevent it from being able to twist again in the future.

Even after surgery, the prognosis is often 50:50 as to whether patients will survive.

Dell came through the surgery well and remained in the hospital as an intensive care patient for two days following surgery.

This story has a happy ending and Dell is still here with us today due to her dad’s observation and quick thinking. If you notice your dog showing the same symptoms as Dell presented with, this could be a life or death emergency, so phone us at the Feilding clinic ASAP, so we can instruct you on what to do.

Rabbit calicivirus disease

Rabbit Calicivirus Disease is a disease that kills rabbits. It was illegally introduced into New Zealand in 1997.

Thirty to eighty percent of animals exposed to the virus will develop the disease. Almost 100% of infected animals die. It is unsure how the virus is transmitted, but it is assumed that rabbits acquire this highly infectious virus by breathing it in, ingestion, direct contact or through infected urine or faeces. Insects are also able to carry the virus, so isolation from other rabbits is not enough to prevent this nasty disease affecting your rabbit. The incubation period is one to three days and research has shown that rabbits younger than eight weeks of age are usually resistant to the virus.

THERE ARE THREE FORMS OF THE DISEASE

- 1 Death without any other signs
- 2 Depression, anorexia, difficulty breathing, shaking, and death within one to two days. Other signs may include a foamy or bloody discharge from the nose or anus, nervous signs or rapid death. Rabbits may appear to recover, then die several days later
- 3 Mild form - depression, anorexia followed by recovery. These animals become immune to re-infection.

The virus causes bleeding in the lungs, the windpipe, liver, spleen, kidneys and the heart.

Last year Totally Vets had approximately eight rabbit deaths in a two-week period. A post-mortem examination was carried out at Massey University and confirmed that rabbit calicivirus was the cause of all eight deaths. We would therefore recommend that all pet rabbits be vaccinated, as this disease can be prevented.



Rabbits can be vaccinated from six weeks old, at which age they will require boosters every three to four weeks until they are three months old. If vaccination commences at two and a half to three months old, they will not require another booster that year. In order to maintain immunity, it is recommended that all vaccinated rabbits receive an annual booster.

To make a vaccination appointment or for any more information about rabbit calicivirus disease, please phone the Feilding clinic to speak to one of our friendly receptionists.