



VET mates

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT YOUR PETS

FEBRUARY 2011



Above Squirt and his brother Daniel

Congratulations puppy preschool graduates!

Rebekah Willink, Sandy Fitzgerald & Kayla Houghton

We would like to say a huge well done to all of the recent puppy preschool graduates and their families, and a few special ones in particular.

'Squirt' Bish the Fox Terrier was "a bit of a character" at puppy preschool but his family put such an amazing amount of effort into his training that he has gone on to win first prize at the Tararua Allbreeds Dog Training Club in the basic obedience class - we are so proud!

'Toby' Curtis the Bichon Frise came second in the same class as Squirt and 'Jet' Turner the Miniature Schnauzer competed more recently and came second in the basic class then went on to come first in the intermediate class - well done!

Congratulations to these and all of our "babies" - you have all done an amazing job! We look forward to seeing you all again soon and hearing of your success stories at 'big dog school'.

Hidden dangers in the rubbish bin

Sally Browning

As we all know, dogs seem to love eating things that they shouldn't and, to a dog, the most revolting substance can become a gourmet snack!

Here at Totally Vets we have treated several dogs suffering from extreme symptoms after eating mouldy, spoiled food. A potent mycotoxin present in mouldy dairy products, bread or nuts is the culprit. This toxin acts very fast and causes profuse vomiting, muscle tremors, seizures and a dangerous rise in body temperature.

All of the dogs presented to our clinic were displaying severe and life-threatening symptoms within 30 minutes of eating mouldy food. In some cases, only a very small amount of food had been ingested, which goes to show just how potent mycotoxins can be. In three instances, more than one dog in the household had been affected and sadly one elderly dog did not recover from her illness.

There is no antidote to any of the 20 different toxins that many mould species can produce. Treatment involves trying to reduce exposure

to the toxin by inducing vomiting (if ingestion was recent) or by giving activated charcoal, a substance which prevents the toxin from being absorbed into the system. However, we can only do these things if the animal is not seizing. We would also establish an intravenous drip and, if the animal was overheated from severe seizures, attempt to cool down the body by using ice packs and laying wet towels over the animal. Seizures can cause brain damage if they are not brought under control quickly and, in the cases that we have treated, it has been necessary to place our patients into induced comas to help control ongoing seizures.

The effects of the toxins can last for 24-48 hours so treatment is intensive and can be costly. Once the toxin is cleared from the body recovery is usually complete after a period of hypersensitivity to noise, light and touch.

Many dog owners are completely unaware of the dangers present in mouldy food. The foods eaten have ranged from mouldy bread or cheese in the rubbish bin to scavenged food scraps intended for pigs - it is important to be aware that these toxins would have also affected the pigs.

All mouldy food should be considered risky and disposed of in dog-proof rubbish bins. If you notice your dog eating or suspect they may have eaten any mouldy substances then please contact your veterinarian immediately - while treatment is often rewarding it can have fatal consequences.





PICK OF THE LITTER

The Entertainzee Puzzle and Treat Balls

Bored dogs can easily get into mischief and there's no better toy to keep dogs busy and amused than an Entertainzee Puzzle or Treat ball. Simply insert a treat and watch as they try to get the goodies out! This is the toy that makes dogs think and work hard for their reward. You won't hear a peep out of them for ages!

Available in a range of sizes and priced from just \$9.90 (incl. GST) - come and pick one up today, your dog will love you for it!

Changes to our puppy vaccination policy

Christine Moloney

We would like to take this opportunity to advise you that there has been a change in our puppy core vaccination policy (parvovirus, distemper and hepatitis). Until recently, our policy stated that a puppy could receive its last primary vaccination at ten weeks of age or older. It has recently been reported that a very small percentage of puppies have not responded to the vaccination at this age and have gone on to become infected with canine parvovirus. Here at Totally Vets we have had three such cases in the last two years and a study at Massey University found seven such cases. The World Veterinary Health Organisation now recommends that the last primary vaccination be given to a puppy at **fourteen weeks** of age or greater, and we will be following this recommendation. This means that puppies will once again be given three primary vaccinations if they come to see us for the first time between six and eight weeks of age. This is simply due to the vaccines becoming much more effective and producing higher maternal antibodies in puppies for longer. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Feilding clinic, we will be happy to help.

Breed Profile - The Norwegian Elkhound

Helen Ryan

The Norwegian Elkhound, or 'moose dog', is the national dog of Norway. It is a strong and hardy breed which enables it to deal with the sub-zero climate and challenging terrain.

Despite the name, the Elkhound is not a hound dog but comes from the Spitz family of dogs. They are a medium-sized dog, ranging from 18-27 kilograms in weight when fully-grown. Their role has been as a hunter, guardian, herder and defender. They are extremely intelligent, independent and alert, bold and very playful.

The Norwegian Elkhound is very loyal and they make an excellent family dog as they are generally very gentle and are good with children. They do however require a lot of attention and need to know their place in the family. They are an 'outside dog' at heart

(preferring the cold weather) and require lots of exercise every day to keep them happy and healthy. If feeling neglected they may develop social problems and be destructive.

They can be a challenge to train and require an owner with confidence who can establish clear dominance in the owner-pet relationship. They can have a tendency to take themselves off on adventures if a gate or door is left open and can be good at ignoring calls or commands (having what we lovingly refer to as 'cloth ears').

Due to the breed's origin, the Norwegian Elkhound has a thick double coat. They require brushing every day, especially when they moult, to avoid their oil glands becoming plugged and to help them stay cool in the summer. In the warmer climates they will shed hair throughout the summer, leaving hair everywhere. Some owners have been known to save the hair from brushes and combs, spin the cleaned hair into yarn and crochet or knit with it! The resulting fabric is soft and warm.

A rare breed in New Zealand, Totally Vets has only one Norwegian Elkhound under its care - 10 month old Tedey, owned by Des and Shirley Richards who have provided us with these gorgeous pictures. Tedey's pedigree name is Dankia's Ruggan of Graena and he is one certificate away from becoming a New Zealand champion!





Congratulations!

We had such a hard time choosing a winner for our Christmas colouring competition that we chose nine! We have selected three first, second and third place-getters...

First place

Tom Bryant age 12,
Samara Avery age 8,
Ben Grace age 5

Second place

Jada Emms age 10,
Angus Little age 6,
Emily Smith age 4

Third place

Sammy Robson age 10,
Kelly Corbett age 7,
Greer Bagley age 3

Congratulations to our winners and thank you to everyone who entered. We had some wonderful entries and it really was a very tough decision.



NEW... Kitten Kindy!

Rebekah Willink

The newest addition to the Totally Vets range of wellness and training programmes is Kitten Kindy. If you have a new kitten or are soon to be the proud new parent of a four-legged bundle of fur then this is the class for you! Anyone who has a kitten that is six months old or younger is eligible to attend.

An informal one-off information evening, Kitten Kindy is designed to give new kitten owners all the information they need regarding kitten care and training. The kittens themselves don't actually attend the class, it's just for the mums and dads, and even those who have owned cats before might learn something new!

The class will run from 6pm until 7pm-7:30pm on a Tuesday evening and will be conducted by Helen Sheard, one of our companion animal veterinarians, with behind the scenes help from vet nurses Rebekah and Sandy (who run the Puppy Preschool classes).

We will cover all aspects of owning a kitten, including nutrition, litter tray training, behaviour problems, health care and even



helpful ways to introduce a new kitten to your existing pets. We will also have time to answer any questions you have about cats, kittens and your new kitten in particular.

The class costs just \$40 for the session - what great value, and just wait until you see all the goodies you get to take home!

We are generously sponsored by Masterpet, Merial Ancare and Bayer who are giving away goodies valued at over \$50! You will receive an Iams Kitten Necessities Pack (containing a litter tray, kitty litter, kitten food, toys and more), a Frontline Plus flea treatment, a Drontal worm treatment as well as the Totally Vets Kitten Kindy information folder and all the knowledge and expertise from our dedicated companion animal staff.

We need to have at least five people attending each class and we will initially be running the class once a month but will increase the frequency of classes depending on how popular they become.

We can't wait to get this new service underway so for more information or to sign up, simply talk to one of our receptionists who will give you an enrolment form to fill in. If you are visiting us for a consultation, your vet will also be able to give you all the information you need. We will then contact you by telephone to let you know when the next class will be held.



Cholecalciferol Toxicity

Suzanne Lane

Buzz's story is a cautionary tale to keep pest baits and toxins locked safely out of reach of our companion animal pets.

Buzz - a 7-year-old male neutered Labrador, affectionately known as 'Buzz Lightyear' by the veterinary staff at Totally Vets Ltd - was brought to the clinic with suspected cholecalciferol poisoning after ingesting 'Kiwicare - No possums gel bait®'. Although Buzz was a picture of innocence, the evidence was stacked against him with the discovery of a half-chewed packet of bait, and green faeces.

Cholecalciferol (Vitamin D3) is used as a possum or rodent poison in products including Kiwicare®, Feratox® and Feracol®, and acts by increasing calcium and phosphorus absorption from the gut, mobilising stores of calcium from bone and decreasing excretion of calcium from the kidneys. Sufficiently high levels of calcium (hypercalcaemia) can result in calcium deposits throughout body tissues - heart, blood vessels, kidney and lungs. In severe cases, untreated pets can die of heart failure or kidney failure.

Signs of poisoning can include a lack of appetite, vomiting, dehydration, constipation, drinking and urinating lots, blood in the vomit and/or faeces, slow or irregular heart rate, difficulty breathing due to bleeding in to the lungs, and neurological signs (twitching, depression and less commonly seizures). In patients who are not showing any clinical signs the prognosis is good, but in cases like Buzz, who was showing clinical signs of vomiting, lethargy and a slow heart rate, the prognosis is guarded. Treatment can take several weeks as cholecalciferol remains in the body for a long time.

Blood samples confirmed Buzz had an elevated blood calcium level. Buzz was admitted to hospital to begin immediate treatment with a diuretic (furesomide) and fluid diuresis (an intravenous drip). At twice his normal fluid maintenance, he required 3 litres of fluid a



Above Buzz, in his younger days!

day with a compound that was specifically lacking in calcium (0.9% NaCl). Buzz was also given activated charcoal, which binds to toxic compounds and makes them inactive. His diet needed to be calcium restricted - so there was cooked mince or chicken and pasta on the menu.

Blood tests repeated 48 hours later showed elevations in kidney parameters and a further rise in calcium levels. Clinically Buzz had started to vomit in earnest, likely as a result of progressing kidney disease. As well as continued diuresis therapy, Buzz was started on anti-vomit and gut-protectant drugs, and corticosteroids to prevent uptake of calcium from bone, reduce intestinal calcium absorption and promote kidney excretion of calcium.

The breakthrough came with sourcing Pamisol® (Disodium pamidronate). This hard-to-obtain drug works by preventing calcium stores from being mobilised from bone. Within 24 hours of administration, Buzz's calcium levels had returned to normal.

Buzz remained in hospital for a total of 12 days to manage his kidney disease and concurrent gut bleed that had developed despite the vet team's best efforts. However, after appearing to be on the mend, he re-presented to the clinic in a state of near collapse from vomiting and dehydration. Repeat blood tests indicated both liver and kidney damage. Buzz was referred to Massey University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

(MUVTH) for ultrasound analysis of his liver, as this was an unexpected turn of events given that cholecalciferol toxicity has not been documented to cause liver damage. A complete work-up concluded he may have had a drug reaction as a side-effect to the life-saving drug cocktail he had received.

Buzz has continued to improve clinically following further supportive care, and regular blood tests show improved liver and kidney function. His journey has not been devoid of further hiccups however, with a recent urinary tract infection followed by an uncommon allergic reaction to the prescribed antibiotic.

Although not out of the woods yet, we are quietly hopeful that Buzz's liver and kidney parameters will continue to improve. We join his owners in being big fans of Buzz - although they joke that he is no longer eligible for his inheritance - and hope his mischievous Labrador nature doesn't get him into any further trouble.

Special thanks to Buzz's owners Herb and Shelley for their commitment and devotion, to medicine residents Joanna White and Alison Stickney at MUVTH, to Vicki Anderson at Propharma for helping us source Pamisol® and to all the nurses and other team members at Totally Vets Ltd for their dedication and care of Buzz during his stay with us.