



# POLDEN HILLS

## Veterinary Centre **NEWS**

### Opening Hours

Monday - Friday: 8.00am - 7.00 pm

Saturday: 8.00am - 1.00 pm

24 hour emergency cover

☎ 01278 722088

John and Margaret live on site which enables better care and attention of hospitalised pets and emergency cover.

**We are please to offer OAPs a 10% discount on Wednesdays.**

Join us for a coffee on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> Oct between 2.00 - 4.00 pm when we will be pleased to chat with you about any queries you may have regarding your pets health and well-being.

### Firework Frenzy!



With bonfire night approaching, it is important to prepare early to try and reduce the stressful effects of fireworks.

Here are some tips:

- Keep your pets inside at night during the firework period.
- Provide your pets with a 'den' to hide in such as behind the sofa.
- If your pet is showing signs of fearful behaviour, do your best to carry on as usual.
- We also recommend installing a DAP diffuser in or near your dog's den. This needs to be plugged in 2-3 weeks before the event.

As you can see, there are several steps you can take to help your pets during this stressful time, but planning ahead is also important if you intend to use a DAP diffuser. Please contact us for further information!

### Should I have my pet neutered?

ONE OF the many decisions facing pet owners is that of neutering. The good news is that apart from preventing unwanted pregnancies, there are several *other* benefits to having pets neutered as outlined below.

An unneutered female **dog** usually comes into heat (or season) roughly twice a year. During this time she will become receptive to the advances of the unneutered male dogs in your area. Both sexes are prone to roam in an effort to mate, with the associated risks of becoming permanently lost, involved in fights, or worse still a road accident.



**Cats** are incredibly efficient reproducers and during the breeding season (in the warmer Spring and Summer months), unneutered females may come into heat as often as every 2-3 weeks and will endlessly try to escape and mate with a local male (tom) cat.

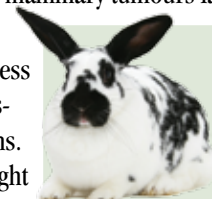


Unneutered tom cats will mark their territory by "spraying" objects with urine and are frequently involved in fights. Sexual contact and fighting also risks transmission of fatal viruses.

In females, neutering (or spaying) involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus under a general anaesthetic. The primary benefit of being spayed is that seasons are eliminated and unplanned pregnancies avoided! Spaying also removes the possibility of life threatening uterine infections (pyometras) and reduces the risk of developing potentially fatal mammary tumours later in life.

Neutering male cats and dogs involves removal of both testes under a general anaesthetic. Neutering makes your male pets less likely to stray and in dogs it can be of help in controlling excessive sexual drive and with certain types of behavioural problems. Neutered male cats are far less likely to urine spray and also fight (reducing the risk of acquiring fatal viruses), than entire males.

As you can see, there are many benefits to having your pets neutered. Please contact us if you would like any further information or call us to book your pet in for an operation.



**But what about rabbits?**

Just like dogs and cats, it is also possible to neuter male and female rabbits. Please ask us for further information!

### Welcome to our News Letter



We are pleased to announce the introduction of our Practice Newsletter. We hope you will find it interesting and useful.

If you have not already visited the Centre since completion of the building renovations we would welcome the opportunity to show you around and explain the improvements and upgrades that have been put in place. We would like pet owners to know that they are welcome to visit the Centre at any time.

Photos: Jane Burton



## Ear disease – an earie tale!

DID you know that ear problems are surprisingly common in pets? However unlike the condition in people, where “earaches” frequently involve the middle and inner ear, most ear problems in pets occur in the outer or *external* ear canals.

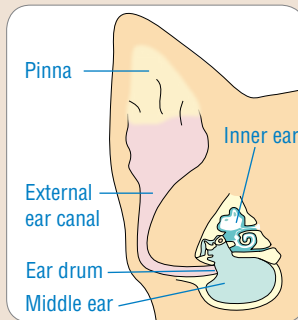
Anatomically, the ear is protected externally by a pinna (or flap). A narrow external ear canal carries sound down to the ear drum, where it passes onto the middle and inner ear.

In the healthy ear – see middle picture, the opening to the external ear canal is lined with smooth pink (or pigmented) skin with no evidence of any redness or discharge.

As mentioned above, most of the ear problems seen in pets occur in the *external* ear canal – a condition called **otitis externa** (sometimes called canker). Signs of otitis externa commonly include ear rubbing, head shaking, and red-dened, irritated skin lining the external ear canal. Additionally there is often a discharge which may be foul smelling.

There are several underlying causes of otitis externa. These include ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*) – see lower right photo, and trapped foreign bodies such as grass awns. Localised allergies affecting the skin lining the external ear canal are another cause, leading to scratching, which allows opportunistic bacterial and fungal infections to infect the external ear canal.

In common with many conditions, the key to success with otitis externa is *early diagnosis and treatment*. If your pet is showing any of the symptoms described above, please bring him in for a thorough examination since the sooner we can start treatment the better!



The ear in cross section. Most ear problems occur in the external ear canal



Healthy ear in a dog: view of the pinna and opening to the external ear canal.



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*) with a characteristic crusty brown discharge in the external ear canal. Inset: *Otodectes cynotis* (x 30), photographed down a microscope



Grass awn



## Autumn Alarm!

IT'S HARD to believe that the Summer is over and Autumn is upon us again. Although this time of year has a beauty of its own, it also holds many hazards for our pets:

**Fleas** are an ever present problem, so now is not the time to lower your guard against these little pests!

**Ticks** are another Autumn hazard, living in long grass and woodland areas. Ticks clamber onto pets, firmly attaching themselves and feeding on their blood. Worse still they can also spread a range of diseases including Lyme disease and Babesiosis.

**Harvest mites** are active in long grass at this time of year, swarming onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and the underside of the abdomen. They are easily identified as bright orange dots adhering tightly to the skin and are usually a cause of great irritation.

**Fireworks** are another hazard. It is always advisable to keep pets indoors on firework night, and this is especially important for those pets that are phobic about noise. These pets may benefit from medication to reduce anxiety; habituation to loud noises over a long period of time can also be helpful.

As the weather cools down **bees** and **wasps** become dozy and are easily caught by dogs and cats, but can still give your pets a nasty sting!

Keep your pets safe this Autumn! Let us advise you on keeping your pets parasite free, and fit and well during the firework season. Please contact us for further information.



Tick in situ



Microscopic view of a Harvest mite

## Arthritis – new life for affected pets



MANY of our pets lead very active lives in their early years and thankfully take normal joint function for granted. However arthritis is a relatively common problem in older pets, and in the majority of cases occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints. It may also occur as a result of joint trauma, or secondary to a malformation of the joint (for example hip dysplasia).

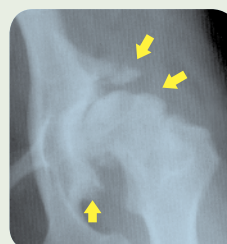
Arthritis is characterised by a breakdown of the joint cartilage and formation of secondary new bone around the joint. On an x-ray the fluffy new bone can often be clearly seen (see lower right x-ray). Arthritic joints are typically stiff, swollen and painful.

The signs of arthritic change are usually fairly obvious – pets show difficulty in getting to their feet after rest, dogs may show problems getting in and out of cars, and possibly a reluctance to go on walks.

The good news is that new forms of **medication**, together with **weight control**, can make a huge difference to the lives of affected pets. If you suspect your pet may have arthritis, come and see us for a check-up today – it really can make a difference!



Normal hip joint



Arthritic hip joint (in a dog with hip dysplasia). Note the fluffy new bone (arrowed) around the joint

