

BOWRAL VETERINARY HOSPITAL

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2009

IT'S HOT

It does seem that it is getting hotter. This is an important reminder to be aware of the environment in which your pet lives. Young and small animals like rabbits and birds are much more sensitive to the extremes of temperature. Ensuring they have plenty of shade and water in the hotter parts of the day is important. Be very wary of leaving a pet in the car, in fact don't do it. Also be sure they are in an area protected from the sun when you are not at home. Hyperthermia and dehydration can occur quickly and kidney failure can result in serious cases of heat stress. If you should find your pet

heat stressed immediately start to cool it down with cool, not cold water or wet towels. You do have to be careful not to get them too cold. It is surprising how quickly some dogs will go from hyperthermia (too hot) to hypothermia (too cold). Phone or visit the veterinary hospital to have your pet assessed if it has been heat stressed. If the pet is dehydrated it will be placed on intravenous fluids to rehydrate and ensure ongoing kidney function.

HEAD HALTERS

These are training aids used in place of a collar. They are especially useful to keep control of the direction of the dog's head and therefore line of sight when walking or training. They can aid in stopping a dog pulling on the leash and are a great help with strong dogs or dogs being led by children or the elderly. They encourage the dog to look at the owner for instruction and can be used to keep the mouth closed to stop barking and in some instances biting. However, if aggression is a problem a basket muzzle is much more appropriate as it can prevent biting. Head collars need to be fitted correctly. They apply pressure to the back of the head to help calm the dog and slight pressure over the bridge of the nose when the dog pulls. As soon as the dog stops pulling the pressure is released and the dog is rewarded for not pulling and

turning to its owner. When this is coupled to a positive reward such as a food treat or game the behaviour is quickly learned. Head collars need to be introduced in a positive, non-threatening manner. Like all training, starting this young is usually the easiest. However, we often introduce head collars to adult dogs as part of a behaviour modification program and generally have just as good success.

If you feel you need more control over your pet whether it is walking, in the home or while training, feel free to come in and get advice on the appropriate head collar for your dog. There are a few brands on the market and some are better suited to a particular breed.

CHRISTMAS GOODIES

Christmas and the holiday season are opportune times to remind us to be careful of what we feed our pets. Fatty hams, chocolate or simply indulging can all cause a gut upset or the more serious condition called pancreatitis. This is where the pancreas, the organ responsible for producing the enzymes which digest food, becomes inflamed. These enzymes can leach out of the gland and cause a local peritonitis. The condition can vary from mild, where the dog is inappetent and vomits to a serious life threatening illness with severe abdominal pain, ongoing vomiting and dehydration. Rarely pancreatitis can be fatal.

Hospital Hours

8.30 – 5.30
Mon – Fri
8.30 – 12noon
Saturday

Consultations

8.30-5.30
Mon – Fri
9.00-12 noon
Saturday
10.00-11.00 am
Sunday

Phone 48611 444

The best thing, as always in life, is moderation. A very small tid bit of ham as a reward or treat is unlikely to harm most pets. However, a ham bone or lots of leftovers will make most pets quite unwell. A dog that is lethargic and persistently vomiting needs to be checked by the vet sooner rather than later. A stay in hospital on intravenous fluids and pain relief will usually resolve the pancreatitis relatively quickly but never forget this can be a serious and very painful condition for some dogs.

As in people it can also present as a chronic recurring condition. So, if your pet is sensitive to a change in diet or has periods of inappetance with or without vomiting it would be a good idea to investigate him for chronic pancreatitis. This is now simple with a quick blood test.

FOREIGN BODIES

No, not aliens, but any object in the gut that should not be there.

When we talk foreign bodies we are usually talking about young dogs and cats that eat anything as they explore their environment.

Common objects for cats are strings from toys or material and for dogs it is cooked bones, balls, people's underwear, corn cobs and mango seeds. These objects are unable to pass through the gut and so the pet becomes obstructed and begins to vomit. Initially they are usually bright but as they dehydrate or the bowel becomes compromised and painful they become visibly unwell.

Often the foreign body can be felt by the vet.

However, some foreign bodies that are soft like clothing or foreign bodies in the stomach cannot always be felt. They may show up on an x-ray but not always. When there is a high index of suspicion for a foreign body often surgery, what we call an exploratory laparotomy, is needed to diagnose and treat the condition. The risk with all foreign bodies is the bowel may perforate. So, any pet that continues to vomit or is depressed must be checked. If an obstruction is found it should be removed as soon as the pet is stabilised.

SNAKES

With summer here and all the hot weather plenty of snakes have been seen sunning themselves. Snakes can be deadly to pets. Symptoms often appear within half to two hours and signs progress rapidly. While some venoms cause the blood to clot poorly the most common symptom around here is paralysis. The dogs often present with a very rapid distressed breathing pattern and difficulty walking, while cats generally are unable to get up or walk properly.

It is important if you see symptoms or think your pet has been bitten by a snake that you get them to a vet as soon as possible. Snake antivenom is very effective in reversing the signs in early stages of envenomation. Intravenous fluids and ventilation of the pet until the toxin has cleared the system are important aspects of treatment in more advanced cases. We now have effective multivalent antivenom which means identifying the type of snake is not essential.

If you are not sure if your pet has been bitten bring it into the house or if you are some distance from the veterinary hospital, into the clinic for observation, so it can be treated as soon as possible should symptoms develop.

Keeping your pets close to the house and keeping the yard clear of rubbish where snakes may find a home should reduce the incidence of snake bite. It is possible to get snakes relocated if they live too close to your home so phone for advice if you have any problems with snakes.

CHOCOLATE POISONING

We have had a number of enquiries about the amount of chocolate which is harmful to dogs. This varies with the type of chocolate. Dark and cooking chocolate is the most dangerous. Only 5g per kilogram of body weight can be lethal if ingested. Milk chocolate is less likely to be toxic as it takes 50g per kilogram body weight. This means a 10kg dog would need to eat 500g of milk chocolate to become unwell. Chocolate has effects on the gut, nervous system and heart. Pets present with hyperthermia, muscle rigidity, hypotension, weakness, cardiac failure and death within 12-36 hours of ingestion. If you think your pet has eaten too much chocolate contact the vet as soon as possible as it may be possible to make the pet vomit and reduce the amount of chocolate absorbed. Best practice is to keep all chocolate out of reach of your pets and keep the treats to a minimum. Obviously the smaller the pet the more at risk.