

# **BOWRAL VETERINARY HOSPITAL**

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2008

## **FREE PET FOOD**

We are now stocking the Advance range of cat and dog food.

Advance is a premium pet food made in Australia and is recognised as highly palatable. There is a wide selection of diets in the range to cater for all your pet's needs, including senior, dental and sensitive skin. It is also available in a number of sizes up to 20kg for large dogs or multi-dog households.

As a trial we are giving away 1.5kg bags free with all full priced vaccinations in May and June or while stocks last.

## **Hospital Hours**

8.30 – 5.30

Mon – Fri

8.30 – 12noon

Saturday

## **Consultations**

8.30-10.30 and

4.00-5.30

Mon – Fri

9.00-12 noon

Saturday

10.00-11.00 am

Sunday

Phone 48611 444

## **CANINE COUGH**

There has been a fair bit of contagious canine cough about over the last few months. This disease is readily spread to other dogs through direct contact and aerosol and while commonly is spread in boarding kennels it can also be picked up by contact on walks, in off leash areas and through fences.

If your dog is likely to mix or come in contact with other dogs make sure its vaccination is up to date. Unlike other vaccinations, the kennel cough vaccine can begin to wane six months after it is given. During an outbreak, or if boarding your dog, it is advised you booster the vaccination every six months or prior to boarding. And while the vaccination does not protect against all forms of canine cough, it does protect against the more serious forms caused but Bordatella Bronchiseptica and Canine Parainfluenza.

In most cases of kennel cough the dog is well but has a persistent hacking cough. Young and old dogs are particularly at risk of it developing into more serious illness such as pneumonia. If your pet is at all lethargic or unwell it should be examined. Remember once in contact with canine cough your dog can be contagious to others even before it shows symptoms.

## **RUG UP YOUR PET**

Don't forget to rug up your dog this winter to protect against the cold and wet. Rugs can really help arthritic joints stay warm and reduce stiffness.

All coats are currently half price so come in a see if there a size appropriate for your dog.

## **ARTHRITIS**

We all know ourselves, or at least some of us, that the cold of winter can really exacerbate arthritis. It is no different for our pets. Over the next month watch out for the subtle signs of arthritis, including stiffness or difficulty rising, reluctance to exercise or difficulty completing the regular walk, cats no longer jumping onto favourite places or missing the landing. Increased irritability in older pets, particularly with moving or grooming them, often reflects the chronic pain of arthritis.

There are many treatments available to relieve the pain of arthritis and slow progression of the disease. This includes the natural products like fish oils and glucosamine. These products on their own or in combination with non steroidal anti- inflammatories and cartrophin can greatly relieve the pain of chronic arthritis. Good pain relief encourages the pet to remain active, keep muscles strong, reduce stiffness and continue to enjoy life into old age.

## **RAT BAITS**

We have had a few cases and heard reports of poisoning with rat baits in the last few months. This generally occurs because of the need to arrest an increase in the numbers of mice and rats. Unlike other poisons like snail bait and 1080, intoxication with an anticoagulant rat bait causes no immediate signs of illness. Unfortunately, this means many people who see or suspect their pet has eaten the bait assume the dose ingested was not dangerous and seek no treatment. However, these baits work by interfering with a Vitamin K enzyme which is vital to the activation of the clotting factors in the blood. This means signs are not observed until the body's supply of clotting factors has been consumed. When this supply is exhausted the blood will fail to clot as no new factors are activated.

If there are only small bleeds the animal will become anaemic and the owner may notice they are quiet and pale. They may have small bleeds from the nose or gums or have swollen joints due to a bleed into the joint. Sometimes large lumps or swellings called haematomas can develop under the skin in areas that are traumatised. If there is a large haemorrhage, for example into the lungs, death can occur quickly with little warning. A small bleed into the brain can result in dramatic neurological signs.

The Vitamin K deficiency of rat bait poisoning can be treated in the early stages by administering Vitamin K1. This is continued for four weeks or until a blood test confirms the blood is clotting adequately. This test can also be used to determine if poisoning has occurred in cases where the owner is unsure.

In acute haemorrhage or in cases of severe anaemia, a blood transfusion which contains the necessary clotting factors is necessary to stop the bleeding.

The bait can be consumed on one occasion or over several days. The baits available over the counter differ in their toxicity although all newer generation anticoagulants are unlikely to poison animals if they eat dead mice or rats.

Talon is the most dangerous. A dose as little as 0.4% of a dog's body weight, if ingested, can be lethal. Racimun and Bromokil, as a single dose, will require greater than 9% and 25% respectively to cause death

In summary, if you must use rat baits use the least toxic bait available and ensure pets have no access to the stored or planted baits. Always call the vet immediately if you think your pet has eaten some rat bait. If the pet is made to vomit up the bait soon after consuming it, it is unlikely to have a significant effect. If you are unsure whether a bait has been eaten, remember a blood test can help.

## **THIRSTY PETS ???**

Does your cat or dog have an excessive thirst? There are many medical reasons for an increased thirst. Like us it can be physiological eg after exercise, running a fever or hot weather etc. Our pets consuming mostly dry food will drink a little more. However, how do we know when it is too much? A rule of thumb is 100ml water per kilogram bodyweight consumed over 24 hours is excessive. ie if a 20kg dog drinks two litres in 24 hours it should be considered an excessive thirst and be investigated.

Sometimes the owners are only aware that the animal has become urinary incontinent. Animals drinking excessively can end up with very full bladders at night and leak some urine on their bedding. Therefore ruling out excess thirst is always important when investigating urinary incontinence.

The easiest first step is to collect a urine sample. If the sample is dilute it will confirm the excess thirst. If glucose is present it is possible the pet is diabetic. Any blood or cellular material may suggest kidney disease.

The next step is a full physical exam to look at the pet's weight, abdominal palpation, lymph node palpation and listening to the heart and lungs and checking the temperature. This may identify the cause, however in many cases it is necessary to then collect a blood sample. This will check out the kidneys, liver, glucose, calcium, white cells to indicate infection and red blood cells, PCV, which if low may suggest a chronic disease process.

The most common reasons for an increased thirst are diabetes mellitus, kidney disease, liver disease, heart disease and hyperadrenocorticism or 'cushings disease'. These are generally readily diagnosed after this initial workup.

While these conditions are often managed, not cured, knowing of their existence and treating appropriately, in the early stages in particular, can significantly improve and extend the quality of life of your pet.