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Windsor Veterinary Surgery

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Culcheth Veterinary Surgery

487 Warrington Road, Culcheth,
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Maple Veterinary Surgery

95 Maple Crescent,
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Arthritis – is your pet affected?



Arthritis (also termed degenerative joint disease) is a condition that sadly affects pets and owners alike. The joints most susceptible to arthritis are those permitting limb movements – called synovial joints. The ends of the bones which meet at these joints are covered by very smooth articular cartilage. The joints are also lubricated with synovial fluid allowing friction free movement.

In pets with arthritis, this protective cartilage is damaged and worn away, resulting in exposure of the underlying bone, causing pain and inflammation. Secondary new bone is commonly deposited around the joint and may be seen on x-ray (see arrows). Affected joints commonly appear stiff, swollen and painful. Pets may have difficulty in getting up after rest and may be reluctant to walk or jump onto chairs or into the car. Additionally, the symptoms are made much worse by cold damp weather.

In the majority of cases arthritis occurs following a lifetime of wear and tear on the joints. It may also occur following joint trauma or as a consequence of joint malformation (e.g. hip dysplasia), resulting in an unstable joint with increased wear and tear on the joint cartilage (see lower right x-ray).



Although arthritis cannot usually be cured, the good news is that we now have an expanding range of treatments to help your pet. For pets that are carrying a few extra pounds, losing weight can make a huge difference.

Many pets also benefit from anti-inflammatory pain relief medication and food supplements containing glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate. Many arthritic pets also struggle with long walks, so little and often is the key.

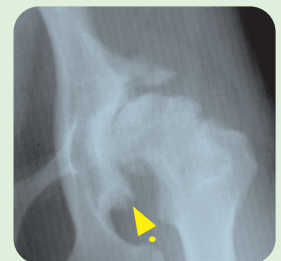
If you are worried that your pet may have arthritis, please come and see us for a check-up!

X-rays and arthritis

Radiography is commonly used to investigate joint problems



X-ray of a **normal hip joint** – note the perfectly formed “ball and socket” joint of the hip joint



Arthritic hip joint in a dog with hip dysplasia. Note the very shallow ball and socket joint and the secondary new bone around the joint (arrowed in yellow)

Autumn weight alert!



The shorter Autumn days can really interrupt the usual routine of longer walks. So now is a great time to take a look at your pet, and check whether he or she is carrying a few extra pounds! Being over-weight can predispose to a range of health issues including diabetes, arthritis and heart disease to name just three!

Recognising if your pet is overweight is the first step to a healthier life. Can you feel his or her ribs? Does your pet have a ‘waist’ when viewed from above? Or are your pet’s ribs buried deep while the body shape curves out from chest to tail? Why not make an appointment and bring them in for a weight check. If they are overweight we can help by advising on what to feed and how much to give, and how to improve exercise, fitness and stimulation. We can also provide regular weighing sessions to help maintain enthusiasm! So don’t delay – if your pet is looking a little portly – come and see us for a check-up!



Autumn hazards!

The shortening days and the cooling weather herald the end of summer and arrival of Autumn. With the trees turning to glorious golds and the weather turning crisper, Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year.

However, Autumn does come with a range of pet care challenges that we must be prepared for. Firstly, It is easy to think that as the temperatures drop, so does the risk from parasites but actually the opposite is true!

Ticks thrive in the Autumn and are covered in more detail in a separate article (right). **Harvest Mites** are a problem in the late-summer and Autumn. These very seasonal parasites are picked up in woodland and long grasses and swarm onto passing pets where they tend to congregate on the ears, eyelids, feet and the underside of the abdomen. They are identified as tiny bright orange dots adhering tightly to the skin and are usually a cause of great irritation with itchy, crusting lesions developing.

Fleas, although a year round problem, also have a resurgence because once the central heating goes on, they move in! Our homes have everything they need; warmth, carpets and soft furnishings to breed in and a readily available source of food in our pets.

So – make sure you regularly check your pet’s coat for any signs of parasites and let us advise you on the best treatments for your pet.



While you are out on your seasonal strolls, be on the look out for your dogs helping themselves to **windfall fruit!** A rotten apple can seem like a tasty snack but is likely to cause an upset tummy, especially if they eat quite a few! **Conkers and acorns** are also very tempting but are actually toxic and can cause intestinal blockages.



Wasps and bees will be getting slower now and although their stings rarely cause serious issues, they are very painful. Swellings can quickly appear on paws if your pet has been batting them about or mouths if they tried to eat them!



Antifreeze will also be making a comeback as the temperatures drop! It is highly toxic but sadly pets, cats especially, seem to find it irresistible. Make sure your bottles are well sealed and you clean up any spillages carefully if you top up your car.

Additionally, don't forget the **wildlife!** Check bonfires thoroughly for sleepy hedgehogs and keep the bird feeder well stocked!

Finally, enjoy the Autumn and please get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.



Lost without it!

It's all too easy for our pets to go missing, and without a reliable way to identify them, many are never reunited with their owners. Happily, microchip implants offer a far more reliable method of identifying your pet than the traditional collar and tag.

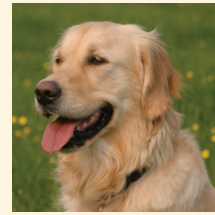
Many pets can be microchipped including dogs, cats, rabbits and horses. It is a legal requirement to have any dog over the age of eight weeks microchipped and also to keep your contact details up-to-date. It is now also compulsory in cats by the time they are 20 weeks old.

This law is only applicable to England at the current time, but we recommend that you get your cat microchipped regardless of your location. Cats can easily go missing as a result of road traffic accidents and, when found, are often taken to a local charity or veterinary practice. Currently 8 out of 10 stray cats are not microchipped.

Veterinary practices, the police and animal charities have microchip scanners and routinely scan strays. Should your pet go missing and be handed in as a stray, a microchip will give them the best chance of them being reliably identified and returned to you.

Microchips are easy to implant and only need a routine appointment. The chip itself is the size of a grain of rice and is usually implanted between the shoulder blades. If you need your pet microchipped or have any questions please don't hesitate to ask a member of our team.

Autumn tick alert!



As the Summer turns to damper Autumn weather, now is not the time to drop your guard against a whole host of pesky

parasites! In fact, whilst ticks are most active from March to October, the Autumn is the peak time for ticks!

Ticks are generally found in areas of woodland, heathland and grassland, waiting for an animal or human to brush past them so that they can jump on and feed. They attach using their mouthparts and will feed on blood from their host for several days before finally dropping off.

The main issue with ticks is that they can carry diseases in their saliva which they can potentially transmit to pets and humans. These include:

Lyme disease is the most common tick borne disease. It can affect dogs *and* humans, and is carried by a small percentage of *Ixodes* ticks. Affected pets often have lameness that involves multiple joints, fever, lack of appetite and lethargy.

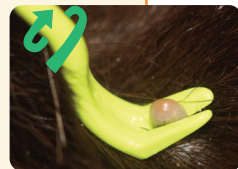
Babesiosis is a tick-borne disease that can affect dogs (but not humans) travelling to and from mainland Europe. It is caused by a tiny blood borne parasite (*Babesia canis*) which destroys red blood cells, leading to anaemia and also dark red urine.

Ehrlichiosis is another common tick-borne disease in mainland Europe and can cause fatal anaemia. If you take your pet to continental Europe it is essential to protect them against ticks.

So – how can I protect my pet?

- We recommend checking your pet every day, especially after walks, to remove ticks before they can attach and feed. If they have attached, then we suggest immediate removal with a special tick removal tool as current evidence suggests that tick-borne diseases take many hours after tick attachment to be transmitted. We are always happy to assist you with tick removal and to discuss future tick prevention.

- **Chemical tick protection** – using a product that rapidly kills or repels ticks will help to reduce the risk of these diseases. Please ask us about our range of **veterinary licenced** spot-ons, collars and tablet products, offering you a wide variety of very effective options. These are far more effective than the ones you can buy in pet shops and supermarkets.



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes. Below: Harvest mite down the microscope

