



Firework Fear!

As firework night draws nearer, it's worth thinking about how to keep your pets safe and calm, as many pets are afraid of loud noises.



The key to helping them is preparation: on the days when you know fireworks might be used, make sure you give dogs a good walk to tire them out, but are home well before dark. For cats, shut the cat flap and provide a litter tray, so you know they will be safe indoors.

Shutting the curtains and turning on the TV or radio will muffle the bangs to some degree and cut out the flashes. You should also make a den where they can hide and feel safe. Try to avoid reassuring your pet excessively, as this can feed into their distress.



Calming pheromones (Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats) can really help to reduce anxiety. These come as plug-ins, sprays (great for spritzing dens) and collars (for dogs), which give them constant security. These products should be started 2-3 weeks before the event.

In addition, we can advise on supplements like Kalm Aid and Zylkène that can help animals to be less anxious; or if they become particularly stressed, sedative tablets.

In the longer term, specially designed noise phobia CDs can be used. These work by playing firework sounds at low levels over long periods, gradually reducing your pet's sensitivity to loud sounds.

If you are worried about your pets and fireworks, please come and have a chat about how we can help!



Is worming a bit of a battle?

Does worming your pets seem like a constant battle? Unfortunately you can't vaccinate against worms, so regular worming treatment is the only way to ensure your pets stay worm free!

So what are the major types of worms that we need to be aware of?

Roundworms such as *Toxocara* live in the intestines of cats and dogs. Puppies and kittens are commonly infected with roundworms, ingesting roundworm larvae via their mother's milk. In the small intestines, adult worms shed thousands of tiny eggs which pass out in the faeces and contaminate parks and gardens. The eggs become infective within a few weeks and pets can become re-infected by unwittingly eating the eggs, often whilst grooming. Additionally the eggs can pose a risk to humans and can be accidentally ingested from soil, food or from pet's coats.

Tapeworms also live in the intestines and shed small *mobile* segments that pass out in the faeces and are often found around the tail areas of cats. As the segments break down they release eggs into the environment. These eggs may be eaten by *intermediate hosts* – these include **fleas** and **small rodents** such as mice and voles. As a result cats which are "mousers" will commonly have tapeworms. Similarly pets swallow fleas as they groom, and so re-infect themselves with tapeworms.

Lungworm: As well as being a menace to your garden, slugs and snails can carry lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) and dogs may be infected with lungworm if they eat slugs and snails. Whilst some dogs like to eat them, they may also be accidentally ingested when dogs lick or eat grass. Infection



can be serious and potentially fatal as it can lead to bleeding, and lung and heart disorders. While preventing dogs from eating slugs and snails is difficult, your dog can be protected by regular use of a specific wormer licensed for lungworm prevention.

Regular prescription worming treatments for your pet, flea control, picking up of dog faeces, covering up of sand pits when not in use, thorough washing of fruit and vegetables and good hand hygiene will all help to keep you and your pet safe. Please ask us for worm control advice.

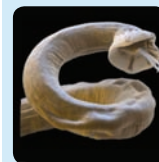
Rogues gallery of worms!



Typical Roundworms
– in this case
Toxocara canis



Tapeworm segments
– e.g. *Taenia taeniaeformis*



Electron micrograph of an adult lungworm

Lungworm photo: courtesy Bayer. Cat photos: Jane Burton.



Is your pet drinking more than normal?



Increased thirst is commonly seen in older pets and whilst warm weather may sometimes be a factor, it is an important symptom that shouldn't be ignored, as it may be a sign of a serious underlying disease. Pets may appear relatively normal or show a variety of other symptoms.

Increased drinking may point to a range of problems including: kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, and hormonal conditions such as Cushings disease in dogs and an over-active thyroid gland in cats.

As well as giving your pet a thorough clinical examination, urine and blood tests are usually very helpful in making a diagnosis. Once we have made a diagnosis, the good news is that although there is no cure for old age, we do have treatments for many of the conditions mentioned above which will hopefully ease the symptoms and prevent or slow the progression of the disease.



Microchip Alert!

Did you know that microchipping of **dogs** is already required by law in Northern Ireland and will become compulsory in England, Scotland and Wales from April 2016?

However it's not just dogs that will benefit from being microchipped! The good news is that microchipping is a *permanent* method of identifying your cat, dog, rabbit or pretty much any other pet (including birds and fish!)

So how are microchips implanted? A microchip is hardly bigger than a grain of rice and just takes a few seconds to implant. Like a normal injection, it is inserted under the skin at the back of the neck, and once there, lasts a lifetime.

Should your pet go missing and is found, veterinary practices, the police and welfare organisations all have special microchip scanners and will routinely scan stray pets. So – don't take any chances – get your pets microchipped today, and of course it is rapidly becoming a legal requirement for dogs in all parts of the UK.

Arthritis – is your pet affected?



The cooler Autumn weather often unmask arthritic disease and joint stiffness, so keep an eye on your pet's mobility and comfort.

Arthritis is a common disease in dogs and cats, and generally worsens with age. In most cases, it results from

wear and tear to the surface of the joints, but can also occur as a result of joint trauma or as a consequence of a joint malformation (for example hip dysplasia).

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 smooth articular cartilage and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid.

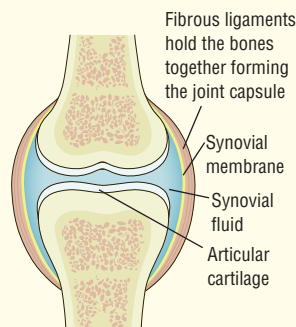
In pets with arthritis, the smooth cartilage covering of the bone ends becomes roughened, irregular and damaged, the joint fluid becomes less shock absorbing, and the joint capsule becomes swollen, (see diagram) resulting in stiffness and pain on movement.

Affected pets typically show signs of lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising, and problems negotiating steps. They may also become slower, less active, and more grumpy, and may show obvious signs of pain such as crying out, whimpering, or avoiding contact with painful areas. X-rays can be helpful, confirming the degree of bone changes and allow assessment of the joints affected.

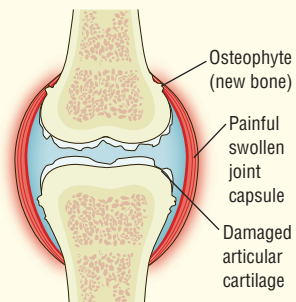
So what can be done? **Weight loss** can make a massive difference to many affected pets, as they are often overweight. Reducing food, and splitting meals into several smaller meals can aid weight loss. **Regular gentle exercise** is also important, and it helps if it is consistent (i.e. the same amount of exercise twice daily every day, and no unusually long walks on the weekend!) whilst physio exercises can aid mobility. **Joint supplements containing glucosamine** may be helpful, but the majority of pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory pain relief medication**.

Ask us for more information if you think your dog or cat may be showing signs of arthritis, and let us help you get the spring back in their steps!

Joint Anatomy



Healthy synovial joint with smooth articular cartilage



Arthritic synovial joint with damaged articular cartilage

Autumn hazards!



As temperatures drop and the nights draw in it's great to get out and active in the Autumn, but there are some factors that still need to be considered to keep our pets fit and well. With this in mind, here are a few topical tips:



The bright orange mites often cluster together and are commonly found between the toes

Harvest mites are a problem in 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.

Ticks are particularly active in the Autumn months, living in long grass and woodland areas. Ticks clamber onto passing pets, firmly attaching themselves and feeding on their blood. Worse still they can also spread a range of infectious diseases such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis.

Fleas are more of a year-round problem, and unlike the parasites mentioned above, fleas love central heating and will make themselves comfortable in your home and on your pet!

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.

Around the house and garden, keep a wary eye out for toxins at this time of year. Pets are very attracted to **ethylene glycol (antifreeze)** which is easily spilt when topping up radiators. It is very sweet tasting and extremely toxic to pets, causing kidney failure and often death. In the garden, try to ensure pets don't eat **fermenting apples** and also **conkers** – both of which can lead to digestive upsets and a visit to the vet!

Enjoy the Autumn weather and take care!



Harvest mite down the microscope



Harvest mite photo: courtesy Cat Henstridge