



# Dier & Johnston, VETERINARY SURGEONS

SPRING 2009

The Well House Veterinary Clinic  
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# NEWS

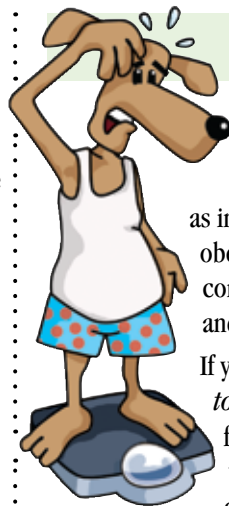
## Practice News

You may have noticed a few new faces in the practice over the last few months. Julie Watson has joined us as Practice Manager. Julie has previously worked as a Dental Practice Manager and has spent the last few months getting to grips with how a Veterinary Practice functions. We are also pleased to announce that one of our long-standing team members Angela Hayselden has agreed to take on the role of Head Nurse. Angela trained with us as a student and we are pleased that she has developed into this role. Lucy Walker one of our qualified nurses has left us, as she wants to expand her work experience by joining a practice which treats larger animals. So Hai-ley McCloy has joined our team as our animal care assistant and will take care of your pets when they need care in our hospital area.

I am sure you will be pleased to know that some of the old faces still remain. I know many of you will have met Aloma who does our administration and processes your pet insurance claims. Helen our receptionist has extended her hours so you will see her cheery smile on a more regular basis. Our student nurses, Bell and Vicki are still here assisting the vets with your pet's day to day care.

## Topics in this issue:

- *The battle of the bulge!*
- *Nurse Clinics*
- *The heart of the matter!*
- *A word in your ear!*
- *Down the microscope!*



## The battle of the bulge!

THE long winter months are often a time of inactivity and weight gain for many pets. However, keeping our pets fit and trim is just as important for pets as it is for ourselves, since obesity is known to cause or *worsen* a number of conditions including **arthritis**, **heart disease**, and **diabetes mellitus** – to name just three! If you suspect that your pet has become a little *too* “cuddly”, the first thing to do is to arrange for us to weigh him or her. We will also give your pet a thorough physical examination to check for any *medical* conditions that can also



X-ray of an arthritic hip joint in a dog. The symptoms of arthritis are often much worse in overweight pets.

result in weight gain (such as hypothyroidism – see panel right). Although conditions such as hypothyroidism can be an issue for some pets, in the majority of cases there are no underlying medical problems and here we can advise you on the best form of weight loss programme for your pet. So, if your pet is looking a little podgy get in touch since weight loss can make a huge difference to your pet's health!

## Hypothyroidism

The thyroid glands, found in the neck, produce thyroid hormone which regulates your pet's metabolism.



*Under* production of thyroid hormone is called **hypothyroidism** and is a relatively common condition in older dogs. Lower levels of thyroid hormone result in a *decrease* in the metabolic rate, usually leading to weight gain and generalised lethargy. Other signs often include coat problems and recurrent ear and skin infections.

Diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be tricky, but in confirmed cases, daily treatment with oral thyroid supplements are usually very successful in treating the condition.

## Nurse Clinics

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT about how our veterinary nursing team can help you care for your pets? At Well House we are very proud of our nursing team and the services that they provide. Not only do they support the vets when carrying out operations or caring for your pet during their hospital stay, they also provide preventive care and advice for your animals.



The nurse's have specific appointment slots in the afternoons or on Saturday mornings to help you care for your pets and stop them developing problems. They will help by **clipping your pet's nails**, which is particularly important for cats that do not go out very often, as their nails grow longer, curling into the pad of their feet causing infection. The nurses can **groom and clip coats** for your pets—this can be useful if your pet does not like to be groomed or they have a long coat which gets easily matted. Angela, Bell and Vicki will also **administer flea and worming treatments**, which can be quite tricky to do if your pet is not very cooperative or dislikes tablets and just keeps spitting them out! Our nurses run **weight clinics** where they regularly monitor your pet's weight and provide you with diet advice. If you have a new pet our nurses will provide advice as to how to care for it and highlight any thing you need to look out for. In particular the nurses run **puppy socialisation parties**, which teach your puppy how to interact with other dogs in a friendly way.



*If you would like your pets to benefit from these services please contact Helen our receptionist.*

# The heart of the matter!



DID YOU know that the heart is the most vital muscle in the body? The key function of the heart (see box right) is to pump de-oxygenated blood to the lungs where it is reoxygenated and pump reoxygenated blood back to the tissues of the body – delivering oxygen and vital nutrients for life. Whilst most of us (and our pets!) thankfully take all this for granted, heart disease is nevertheless surprisingly common; around 10% of older

dogs suffer from heart disease and it can affect younger dogs and other pets as well.

Any loss of normal heart function is called **heart**

**disease**, and this can be gradual or sudden in onset. There are many possible causes of heart disease, however the two most common causes are due to either **heart valve** problems, or a problem with the **heart muscle** itself.

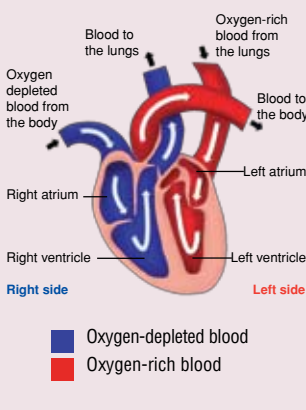
Heart disease is commonly associated with a range of symptoms including:

- Reluctance to exercise
- Tiring more easily
- Coughing
- Laboured breathing
- Pale or blueish gums
- Fainting or collapse

If you are concerned that your pet is showing *any* of these signs, please come and see us for a full clinical examination – as with many illnesses, early detection is the *golden* rule!

## The heart as a pump

In a healthy heart, the right side of the heart receives deoxygenated blood from the tissues of the body. As the chambers of the right side contract, they pump the blood to the lungs where the blood is reoxygenated. The oxygen rich blood then flows back into the left side of the heart. As the chambers of the left side contract, the blood is then pumped to the tissues of the body. This is illustrated diagrammatically below. As the heart muscle squeezes and pumps, valves within the heart prevent back flow of blood.



The good news however is that new methods of diagnosis and novel forms of treatment are now transforming the lives of many pets with heart disease.



## Down the microscope!

IT'S A worrying thought that there are a large number of parasites just *itching* to live on your pet! Here we look at a few of them:

**Fleas** are 2-3mm in length and need little introduction to most pet owners! They feed on your pet's blood causing intense irritation and sometimes allergic skin reactions.

Moving down in size, **fur mites** (*Cheyletiella*) are just about visible with the naked eye, but require microscopic examination for positive identification. Sometimes called creeping dandruff, these mites infest dogs, cats and rabbits. They cause a varying degree of irritation and (like fleas) may also bite owners of affected pets.

**Ear mites** (*Otodectes cynotis*) affect dogs and cats, infesting the external ear canal – see article left. The mites are visible to the naked eye and lead to excessive wax production and great irritation.

Moving down further again in size, **Sarcoptes scabiei** is the mite which causes mange in dogs and foxes. In contrast to *Cheyletiella*, this is a *burrowing* mite – living *below* the surface of the skin where it causes very intense irritation.

Please contact us if you would like any further information on any of the parasites mentioned above. Finally, with the warmer spring weather here (at last!), it is essential to keep one jump ahead of fleas! Please let us advise you on the best form of flea control for *your* pets!



## A word in your ear!

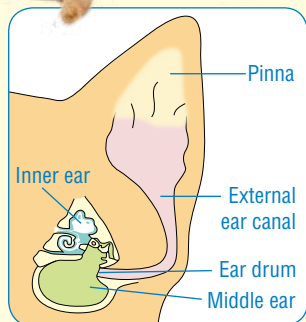
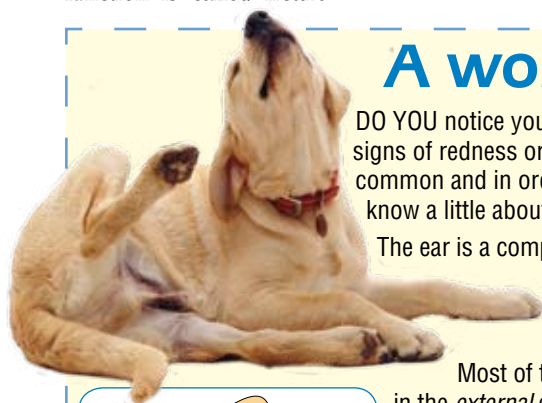
DO YOU notice your pets scratching their ears? Are there any signs of redness or discharge? Ear problems are surprisingly common and in order to understand them better we need to know a little about the anatomy of the ear.

The ear is a complex structure 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.

Most of the ear problems seen in dogs and cats occur in the *external* ear canal – a condition called **otitis externa** (or canker). Symptoms commonly include **ear rubbing**, **head shaking** and **reddened skin** lining the ear canal. This is often accompanied by a **discharge** which may be foul smelling.

There are several underlying causes of otitis externa including **ear mite** infestation (common in puppies and kittens – see article right), trapped **foreign bodies** (such as grass seeds) and localised inflammation of the skin lining the ear canals – often seen as part of a more generalised **allergic skin** condition.

The key to success with otitis externa is *early* diagnosis of the underlying cause and effective treatment. Please come and see us if you are at all worried about your pet's ears.



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