

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2017. There's been so much happening at the practice over recent months, that we've struggled to get it all into this newsletter! So instead of a feature article, this issue brings you several shorter articles on pet health care, a voucher for arthritis treatment, a review of the most interesting pet-related products around, our usual Court Circular and exciting news of another prestigious award that the practice has received. As always, we hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative, and if you have any suggestions for subjects that you'd like us to cover in up-coming editions, do please let me know. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Sonya



Introduce a Friend and share £30

We know that more than half our new clients come to us because of a personal recommendation from a friend. As a thank you, we're launching 'Introduce a Friend', whereby if you introduce a new client to our practice, we will give **both of you £15** to spend at the practice. There is no limit to the number of friends you can recommend, so feel free to get sharing!

How does 'Introduce a Friend' work?

Recommend us to a friend, and when they register with us and have their first appointment with our vets, we will add £15 credit to both your account and theirs. The credit can be used for any appointment, but your friend must mention you when registering, or we won't know to credit your account!

Of course there are some conditions, but they're the obvious ones: the person being referred must be a new client to Darwin Veterinary Centre, only one credit per new friend, new clients must settle their account for the credits to be given, and deregistered are not eligible. Full T&Cs are available at the practice.

We want to show our appreciation of clients who recommend another pet owner to us. So if you like what we do, please tell your friends!

Don't break the bank! Is your pet insured?

Have you thought about insuring your pet? We'd like to encourage you to do so!

Advances in veterinary medicine mean that we can offer an incredibly high level of care to your pet, but sadly this does not come without costs, and some conditions - particularly those that require referral to a specialist - can be very expensive to treat.

Accidents such as broken bones, swallowing a toy or bone, poisoning and wounds can happen in an instant, and conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and infectious diseases always come when they're least expected.

The good news is that pet insurance offers pet owners the peace of mind that the most appropriate treatment can be considered for your pet, without cost becoming a major issue. Without pet insurance, it can sometimes be hard to afford unexpected vet bills, and making decisions based on economic considerations at a time when you're already worried about your pet is never ideal.



Did you know that pet insurance is the most claimed on type of insurance? Claims are typically paid for 2 out of every 3 policies taken out each year! So, that's a greater than 65% likelihood that you will claim on your policy if you have one - good odds! And with most policies also covering personal liability for claims against dog bites, jumping up incidents and accidents, pet insurance gives peace of mind in a culture where suing is sadly on the increase.

When insuring your pet, it's important to know that not all policies are the same. With well over 200 different policies currently on the market, ensuring your pet has an adequate level of cover can be challenging - but we're here to help! Our staff are entirely independent and have years of experience dealing with insurance companies, and will be happy to advise you on suitable policies for **your** pet.

As a general rule, pet insurance should ideally be 'life-long', so that regardless of how long your pet is unwell for, the insurance company will continue to meet your claims indefinitely. 'Yearly renewing' policies allow companies to exclude any pre-existing conditions at the end of each year.

Please contact a member of our team if you would like more information on the benefits of pet insurance - we're here to help you as much as we can.



Stenotic Nares

During the past few years we have seen a huge increase in the number of French Bull Dogs, Pugs and their first-generation crosses in our area. These breeds have huge, fun-loving personalities, adore everyone and have a real zest for life, making them great family pets and always a pleasure for us to see.

They do, however, bring with them a particular breed-related problem, known as 'stenotic nares'. Stenotic nares are defined as narrowed nostrils - see photos. This narrowing restricts the amount of air that can flow into the airways, and has been compared to us trying to breathe through our noses with a drinking straw in each nostril! Over time, dogs with this condition develop problems that further obstruct airflow, such as large, obstructive tonsils, and collapsed laryngeal cartilages. In the long term, the increased effort associated with breathing can put an increased strain on the heart, leading to heart disease and heart failure as possible complications.

Young dogs with a mild case of stenotic nares exhibit noisy breathing, especially with excitement, exercise and stressful conditions, all of which increase the demand for oxygen. Most will snort when excited and snore when relaxed or asleep. Severely affected dogs exhibit more pronounced airway noise, and tire easily or even collapse with exercise. Symptoms can also include coughing, gagging, retching and vomiting, and all symptoms are often worse in hot and humid weather.

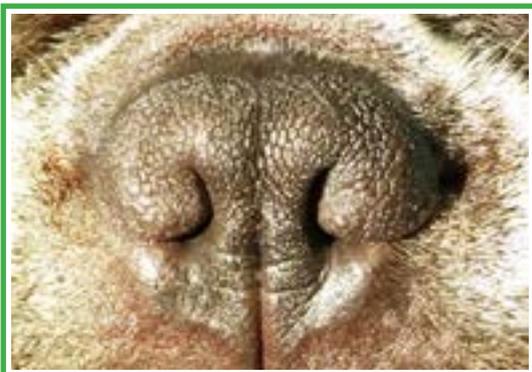


A healthy nose with open nares (nostrils)

The good news... is that weight control, avoiding over-heating and using a harness rather than a collar (which can restrict airflow) will all help Frenchies and Pugs. However, surgery is the treatment of choice for dogs with stenotic nares, whenever the anatomical abnormalities interfere with the patient's breathing.

We are now able to offer this surgery at the practice, negating the need for expensive referral. Surgery should be conducted as soon as the dog reaches maturity, at about 8 months of age - but always before the age of 2 years, by which time the secondary changes that further obstruct airflow will have already occurred. The procedure involves widening the nostrils to increase airflow (see photos below), is performed in a day, and can readily be combined with routine procedures, such as neutering, to avoid the need for an additional anaesthetic.

Although altering the shape of the nostrils can subtly alter the face of a dog, our Frenchie and Pug clients report a huge benefit to their pet and are always delighted with the outcome. If you would like to know more about stenotic nares or its management, please speak with any of our clinical team.



*Stenotic Nares
Immediately prior to surgery*



*Immediately after surgery
with red stitches in place*

Medical Pet Shirts

Medical Pet Shirts for both cats and dogs are now available at the practice. They make a great alternative to wearing a plastic surgical collar, and offer a less-stressful option for many pets with skin conditions or during post-operative recovery. The shirts are available in a wide range of sizes, are made of a fully breathable cotton/lycra fabric for comfort, provide protection and freedom of movement, are machine washable at 30°C, and are easy to fit. For more information, please ask any member of the practice team.



Too many teeth?

Did you know that cats and dogs can actually have too many teeth? Like humans, puppies and kittens have temporary 'milk' or 'deciduous' teeth, which they start to lose from about 10 weeks of age, and which have usually all been replaced by about 6 months of age. As the deciduous teeth are lost, they leave space for the adult teeth to emerge. However, it is not uncommon, especially in the smaller breeds of dog such as Poodles, Cavies, Cockers, Shih Tzu etc, for one or more of the deciduous teeth to be retained. Most frequently it is the large canine teeth that fail to be lost, but the condition can affect any tooth.

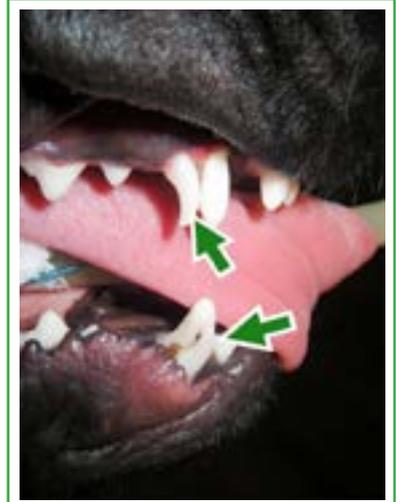
So why is this a problem?

Retained deciduous teeth commonly cause two problems:

- Gingivitis - food becomes trapped between the deciduous and permanent teeth, causing red, inflamed gums and premature decay of the adult teeth;
- Incorrect teeth alignment – The retained deciduous teeth can prevent the adult teeth from developing correctly and result in eruption in the wrong direction.

What can be done?

Regular health examinations can help identify retained teeth at an early stage, to enable extraction of the retained deciduous teeth. If needed extraction can be combined with another procedure, such as neutering. Removal of the retained teeth should rapidly resolve any gingivitis and allow the teeth to erupt in the correct direction. We are here to help, so if you would like any further information on caring for your pet's teeth, please just ask!



Arrows show extra teeth, causing food entrapment and inflamed gums

Court Circular

Terri's new arrival

If you've visited the practice recently, it will not have escaped your notice that one of our team is missing! Nurse Terri gave birth to baby daughter, Isla Rose, on 31st October 2016; Terri and her husband Paul, together with 'Baby Biddle' are all doing well. Terri will be hugely missed whilst on maternity leave, and we all look forward to her rejoining the team later in the year.



Sonya Miller-Smith

Sonya has recently undertaken a year's course in Cardiology, and will be out of the practice for a day a month throughout 2017, attending lectures, seminars and workshops. We hope that her huge commitment to this additional study will pay dividends for all our clients who have pets with heart conditions. Sonya has not yet told us whether she has decided to sit the higher professional examination in this subject, but if she does, it would bring to three the number of Certificate level qualifications within the practice: Internal Medicine held by Keri, and Ophthalmology already held by Sonya.

Katy Street RVN

With Terri on maternity leave, we are delighted to welcome registered veterinary nurse, Katy Street, back to the practice. Katy may look familiar to many of you, as she trained at Darwin Veterinary Centre several years ago, so it is marvellous to have her back with us again. Katy has a rescued cross-bred dog called Taz, and is particularly interested in in-patient care and in high-dependency and emergency nursing. Katy will remain a permanent member of the practice team when Terri rejoins us later in the year.



In the community

- A huge 'thank you' to everyone who contributed to the practice raising £178.66 for Children In Need.
- With your help we were once again proud to collect £40.76 for the British Legion's annual Poppy Appeal.
- The practice entered a tree in Biggin Hill's first Christmas Tree Festival, decorated with Bonios, cat bells, dog and cat baubles. We really enjoyed hearing how much you liked the tree, and hope to take part in this fun event again in 2017.

Free Arthritis Medication

Cold weather or increased exercise in warmer months can both trigger signs of arthritis. So, if your dog is stiffer to rise after rest or not flying upstairs as easily as they used to, or your cat is stiff or not jumping as frequently, they may well be experiencing the discomfort or pain of arthritis. For a limited period, we will be offering a free course of anti-arthritis medication for your pet to trial, to see if it can make a big difference to your pet's quality of life. To comply with prescribing laws, we need to have seen your pet within the past 6 months, but we're happy to discuss your concerns at any time. Just bring this voucher to reception to see if this medication would be suitable for your pet.

VOUCHER

Independent Product Reviews

Total Recall

Pippa Mattinson

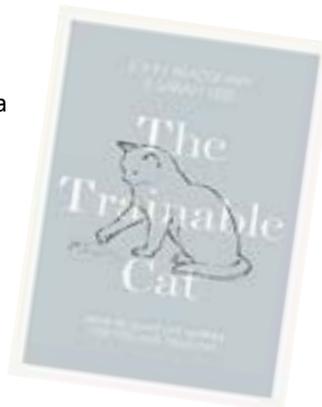
Ensuring that you can recall your dog, even when it is distracted, can be a challenging part of dog ownership for even the most experienced dog owner. Yet the recall command is probably the most important command, and one which is vital to ensuring your dog's safety. This book is a well-written and practical guide to teaching both puppies and older dogs, and their owners, how to achieve a reliable recall. The author has a degree in zoology, and a particular interest in animal behaviour, and reading the book, it shows. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to dog owners.



The Trainable Cat: How to make life happier for you and your cat

John Bradshaw and Sarah Ellis

The words 'training' and 'cat' may sound like an oxymoron, but this book gives clear and simple instructions to help cats be happy in a human world – a world which can be stressful for our feline friends. Each chapter explains why cats react as they do to hoovers, strangers, other cats, trips to the vets (to name but a few), discusses unwanted behaviours and then gives straightforward guidance on behaviour modifying techniques to help cats cope. It's not for everyone, but this book will really appeal to those with a strong interest in cats and their welfare.



SureFeed Microchip Cat Feeder

If you've ever had the problem of one cat eating another's food, then this product may well be what you've been waiting for. At around £70 it's not cheap, but it is a very well thought-out answer to a frustrating problem. The cat's food is placed inside the feeder, under a lid which will only open when triggered by a pre-selected microchip number. As soon as the cat moves away, the lid comes down, stopping access to the food by another cat. It's great if you're dieting one cat in a multi-cat household, or if one of your cats is on special food for a medical condition.



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We're delighted and proud to announce that our practice was recently re-inspected and re-accredited under the PSS for the 12th consecutive year!

The PSS, or Practice Standards Scheme, is a voluntary accreditation scheme for veterinary practices in the UK. It is run by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) to promote the highest standards of veterinary care. To become accredited, practices must demonstrate to an inspector that they meet stringent standards in a wide range of areas - and we did!

As the only practice in the area with this accreditation, we are delighted that the high standards we set ourselves for the care of your pets, continues to be recognised and rewarded by the RCVS, and we're proud to display the official accreditation award both in our waiting room and on our web page.

Insurance Forms

For many years we've resisted the need to charge for the completion of pet insurance forms, which is common practice at most vets. With rising postage charges, and the average insurance claim now requiring upwards of 40 minutes time to process, regrettably we have started levying a fee of £12 incl VAT. As always, we promise to process your claim form in a timely fashion, usually within 48hr of receipt, and we remain happy to 'do battle' with insurance companies on your behalf should you need assistance.

Cat Clinics

Whilst Terri Biddle is on maternity leave, Sonya will be stepping into her shoes to be the practice's Cat Advocate. This position is part of our Gold Cat Friendly Clinic



Award accreditation, which together with running cat-only clinics (Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings), and having both a fantastic cattery and state of the art cat-specific medical equipment, ensures that we give your feline friends the best veterinary treatment available.

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