



# AlphaPet News

Winter 2009

"Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet"

## Prac-tic Winter Campaign

As most clients will know, flea control is a year round process—not just during the summer. Following this last summer during which we have seen record numbers of fleas on pet animals, AlphaPet is making a special Winter Offer on Prac-tic flea and tick control to encourage clients to continue their flea control treatments through the winter and help to avoid the spring flare ups in flea problems on pets.



Prac-tic kills both fleas and ticks fast and will give your dog protection for a full month. It is an easy to apply spot-on preparation which remains effective even after bathing or multiple water immersions.

Ticks are becoming an increasing problem in this area. They jump onto pets and humans, when you are out walking together. They can be found throughout the year but are most common between March and November.

Ticks are more than just a nuisance. They can cause irritation and may be a health risk to your pet since they can transmit disease such as Lyme Disease (see page 2).

The incentive offer means that for every 6-pack of Prac-tic that is purchased, you will receive one **FREE** tube **PLUS** you will get a 25% discount off Milbemax wormers.

There is a cut out voucher on the rear of this newsletter. Please just fill in your name, your pet's name, the first line of your address and your email address (if you have one).



## Are You Lungworm Aware?

Are you aware that the lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is a parasite that infects dogs and is life-threatening? The parasite is carried by slugs and snails and problems arise when dogs either deliberately or accidentally eat these common garden pests when rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass, drink from puddles or outdoor water bowls or pick them up from their toys.

Originally confined to South Wales and the South West of England, more recently, lungworm has being reported more widely and appears to be on the increase. No one is quite sure why the disease seems to be becoming more common in the UK but some theories suggest it may be related to global warming. Foxes can also become infected with the lungworm and have been implicated in the spread of the parasite across the country. Dogs infected with lungworm spread the parasite into the environment, as the larvae of the parasite are expelled in the dog's faeces. This increases the chances of other dogs being infected.

Dogs of all ages can become infected but younger dogs seem to be at higher risk of infection. Lungworm can result in a number of different signs which may easily be confused with other illnesses. Signs can include breathing difficulties (including a cough and tiring easily), poor blood clotting (this can result in excessive bleeding from even minor wounds, nose bleeds, bleeding into the eye and anaemia), general sickness (including weight loss, poor appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea) and changes in behaviour (depression, tiring easily and even seizures).

Thankfully, treatment of lungworm infection is widely available and easy to apply as long as the disease is caught early. AlphaPet recommends that Milbemax wormer is used as part of your preventative control for this very nasty parasite.



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**Please let us have your email address!**  
 If we have your email address, we can send you this newsletter in colour straight to your inbox. This saves postage and printing costs as well as printing materials. Also, we can keep you informed of any specific health issues that may be likely to affect your pets including vaccination reminders  
 Please note that these are the **ONLY** reasons we would normally contact you via email and your data remains protected under the Data Protection Act.

## Money Saving Health Tips

In the recessionary times, we are all looking for ways to save money. Pet owners are no different and this can be a really good time to make some changes which will not only save you money, but could help to improve your pet's health.



Feeding high priced sachet and so-called "gourmet" type diets should be one of the first things to look at. Many of these diets contain excessively high levels of salt (used to increase palatability, as it was in human foods) as well as excessively high levels of protein. Just because your pet likes a particular diet, doesn't mean it is good for them. Most children would prefer to eat chocolate, iced cream, chips and quarter-pounders given free choice but, as responsible parents, we rarely allow them to make these the main part of their diet. So why do we allow this with our pets?

If your pet is overweight, feeding less food reduces their weight while, at the same time, saves you money. Keeping your pet at their optimum weight will improve their health and reduce your vet bills! What could be better?!

Start brushing your pet's teeth. We see so many pets every year with poor teeth that need extensive dental work. The best way to prevent this is to feed dry diets (not the sachet and "gourmet" type diets again!) and brushing their teeth. This costs you almost nothing, except your time, and could go a long way towards avoiding some hefty vet dental bills. If you are unsure where to begin, why not come in and speak to one of our nurses, who will be happy to get you started.

Finally, remember that flea control should be all year round, not just for the summer. So many of the flea problems we see in the surgery are simply down to a failure to treat pets regularly throughout the year—truly a FALSE economy!

## Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease that is caught from ticks. It can affect both dogs, cats and humans and is endemic in the UK, Europe and the USA. Increasing numbers of cases are being seen as awareness of the disease increases.

The organism responsible for Lyme disease is a bacteria called *Borelia burgdorferi* which is transmitted by certain species of ticks. Dogs (and occasionally cats) can present with rather non-specific signs of anorexia, fatigue and weakness, fever and paralysis of the facial muscles causing an inability to eat.

Potentially this is a fatal disease if it is not treated promptly with specific antibiotics. However, as with most conditions, prevention is better than cure. Ticks should be controlled with a suitable ectoparasiticide such as PracTic, but you should always check your pet over for ticks after going walking where ticks are prevalent such as the New Forest, the South Downs, in woods or in long grass.

If you have any queries about protecting your pet from Lyme Disease, please just ask us.

## Lucky Stoat

In May this year, a juvenile male stoat with a large laceration to its back leg was taken into Brent Lodge wildlife hospital. He had been found by a member of the public looking very forlorn outside the back door to their house.

He was immediately transferred to AlphaPet where he underwent surgery to debride (clean up) the wound and then suture it closed. Despite the size of the wound resulting in some tension on it, the operation was a success. However, this was a wild animal and it was not possible to immediately release him back into the wild with stitches in his leg.

So, for the next 10 days, he resided at Hotel AlphaPet where he quickly became a firm favourite with the staff and also proved himself to be very photogenic (see left)! Fed on a diet of chicks and mice, he gained weight and continued to grow in size rapidly.

As with all wild animals, no matter how cute they may appear, the prime goal is to return them to the wild as quickly as possible and so, after just over 10 days with us, we were happy that the wound had healed fine and then made arrangements with the finder to release him back to very close to where he had been found. Needless to say, once he got a whiff of freedom, he was off without a backward glance, but at least we have the photos to remember him by!



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## Staff News

There have been quite a few changes on the staff front. Firstly, many congratulations to Kirsty Pierce who has given birth to a healthy baby girl.

Maria Biedermann joined us last year on the vet side, but sadly became rather homesick and decided to move back to Germany. Replacing her is Nicky Bird, whose mother already works at the Kingley surgery on the reception side! Also returning after periods of absence are vets Nicole Nagel (maintaining the German links) and Claire Sawyer after maternity leave, although she will be leaving us again in January for another period of maternity leave.

On the nursing side, we are very proud that Nina Cheetham, Rachel Avery, Jennifer McFarlane have all passed their final veterinary nursing exams and are now qualified RVNs. Amie van der Hut joins us on the trainee nursing side while long term trainee Sam Seary left us to set up a pub in Worthing with her boyfriend. So, if you fancy a good meal and a pint, the Coach & Horses on Arundel Road at Worthing is the place to go!

Vet nurse Debbie Howe also left us briefly for a spell of nursing Down Under. She was due to be away until January 2010, but quickly realised her mistake and has boomeranged back to us at the end of October.

Welcome back also to Claire Holden, returning after maternity leave. Also to Natalie Pink, who left AlphaPet a good few years ago to raise a family, but now rejoins us as a trainee nurse and finally to Sue Howling, also rejoining us as a trainee nurse.

A warm welcome to two newbies to AlphaPet—Robyn Purvis joins us at West Meads reception and Amy Harrington joins the qualified nurse team after starting as a locum nurse.

## New X-ray & Endoscope at West Meads

As some clients will have noticed, there have been some changes going on at our West Meads surgery recently. These have all been to do with preparation for the arrival of some exciting new diagnostic equipment.

Our old x-ray machine has been a faithful diagnostic tool for the last 10 years, but technology has moved on. Additionally, the range of animals we are now treating that require diagnostic quality radiographs has increased significantly, so we have invested in a new state of the art main x-ray machine with digital processing to further improve our diagnostic capabilities.

In addition, we have purchased a digital processor for our dedicated dental x-ray machine which will allow us to identify dental lesions in all pet animals more efficiently.

Coupled to all of this, we have also invested in a new endoscope which is a piece of equipment that allows us to see down inside animal's stomachs. This is an increasingly useful tool for the investigation of dogs and cats with gastro-intestinal problems.

## Arthritis Again

It's that time of the year again when the cold and the damp start to play havoc with pet (and human!) arthritis. Sadly, many pets end up suffering needlessly in silence because either their owners don't recognise the signs of pain and discomfort, or they are simply unaware that modern veterinary medicine can offer a variety of treatments that can make these pet's lives so much more comfortable.

Any dog over the age of 7 years is at risk of developing chronic arthritis. It has a slow and insidious onset which often means that owners don't notice the gradual slowing down, stiffness on rising and reluctance to go for quite such long walks. Often, such signs are mistakenly just attributed to "Oh he/she is just getting old". Sadly, dogs rarely make a fuss or yelp out with arthritic pain. They simply suffer in silence—often unnecessarily. They have no idea that they can get relief from their chronic discomfort, so they just get on with life and accept their lot.

Fortunately, there is a whole range of possible treatments available depending on the severity of the condition. These may range from specialised diets and nutraceuticals, right up to anti-inflammatory pain killing drugs. However, one thing that everyone can do to help reduce the effects of arthritis is to make sure your pet is not overweight.

If you have concerns that your pet may be suffering from arthritis, please make an appointment to get them checked out. If your pet could talk, they really would thank you for it!

Vet Nicky Bird



Natalie Pink



Amie van der Hut



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## Prac-tic Winter Special Offer

To ensure thorough flea and tick control it is vital to continue Prac-tic applications all year round

Please complete this voucher to receive:

**1 FREE tube of Prac-tic when you buy a 6-pack**

AlphaPet will also email you a voucher to obtain

**25% discount off Milbemax wormer**

Offers valid until end of February 2010

Surname .....

First Line of Address .....

Pet(s) Name(s) .....

Email Address .....

Cut out, complete and present this voucher at any AlphaPet Clinic to claim your special offer

**Website: [www.alphapet.co.uk](http://www.alphapet.co.uk)**



### **Brent Lodge needs volunteer drivers**

*Brent Lodge is a local wildlife charity that relies on donations and volunteers to help treat wildlife in this area.*

*Unfortunately, wild animals in need of treatment are unable to transport themselves to Brent Lodge or to AlphaPet and so volunteer drivers are essential to help get these animals to where they can receive the care and treatment they need.*

*If you have a car and are able and willing to act as a volunteer driver for this very worthwhile cause, please call Brent Lodge on:*

**01243 641672**

### **Halitosis**

When was the last time you checked your pet's mouth? Do they still have sweet smelling breath or is there a bit of an odour or has it even got to the stage where you can't really bear your pet to come too close?

Halitosis (bad breath) is a sign that something is not right in your pet's mouth. The cause may or may not be serious. Sometimes, because pets do not brush their teeth daily, it may be just that the bacterial populations that occur naturally in all mouths have just got a bit out of hand. If this is the case then a mouthwash such as Nolvadent or Vet Aquadent (a solution that you mix in with their drinking water on a daily basis) may be all that you need to solve the problem.

On the other hand, if you open your pet's mouth and you can see brown deposits on the teeth, together with inflammation of the gum margins (gingivitis) then this is periodontal disease. If this is not treated, it will progress and will cause your pet discomfort and ultimately is likely to result in loss of teeth ..... In addition to increasing levels of halitosis!

Occasionally, halitosis can also be caused by a foreign body (eg a piece of stick being wedged inside the mouth) or even a growth (possibly a tumour).

In any event, halitosis is an indication that something is not right with your pet's mouth and demands investigation. If you cannot see what the problem is and effect a solution, then please feel free to book an appointment for a vet to give your pet a thorough check over.