



# AlphaPet News

Summer 2010

"Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet"

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**ALPHAPET ANIMAL FUN DAY**  
**SATURDAY AUGUST 7TH West Meads Field**

**Why not come along and join in the fun?**

Fun dog Show; Agility demonstrations; Snowy Owl; Photo competition; Charity stalls; Tombola; Fun stalls for the kids.; Pets Corner; FREE Dental and Weight checks PLUS lots more .....

## Lungworm Alert

We need to alert our dog-owning clients to this serious new threat. Already this year, we have seen several serious cases, two of which have only survived as the result of emergency blood transfusions. For those clients not familiar with this disease, it has been in the country for many years but, until recently, has remained largely confined to the southwest of England and Wales. Unfortunately, in the last 18 months, we have started to see a significant increase in the number of cases seen in the Chichester and Bognor Regis areas.

The disease is caused by a parasitic worm, *Angiostrongylus vasorum*. The worm is transmitted to dogs when they eat slugs, snails and occasionally frogs. Ingestion of slugs and snails can happen when dogs eat grass, a very common occurrence.

Young dogs seem particularly prone to picking up the disease probably due to their curious nature and scavenging behaviour.

Once in a dog's body, the worm can cause a wide variety of clinical signs including heart and respiratory disease (notably coughing and pneumonia), a tendency to bleeding (this can be life-threatening) and neurological disease related to brain haemorrhages. Some dogs can remain without clinical signs.

For a variety of reasons, diagnosis of this disease can be difficult without prolonged and expensive tests. Unfortunately, there is no practical way to prevent dogs becoming infected—you cannot stop dogs accidentally eating slugs and snails! Therefore, the only way to try to prevent serious signs of the disease is to use regular treatment against this worm.



Fortunately, there is an effective monthly treatment called Advocate which is also a highly effective flea spot-on product.

For dogs that are at risk of picking up lungworm, AlphaPet now recommends the use of Advocate monthly against both fleas, lungworm and other roundworms.

If you are concerned about lungworm, please ask us for more information.



## Vetsure Insurance

Surveys suggest that each year 1 in 3 pets are injured or become ill and need urgent veterinary treatment. The cost of this treatment is rising due to medical advances in pet health, which is good for your pet, but a concern for you. Pet insurance protects against unforeseen incidents that can affect your pet and your pocket and insuring your pet in these financially challenging times undoubtedly makes a lot of sense.

The problem is which policy do you choose? Is cheapest always the best? Does it really save you money? Policies that only cover your pet for up to a year for a particular condition can leave clients with nasty surprises all too often. Hidden exclusions, inadequate thresholds and pages of small print mean that you often have no idea how poor your insurance policy really is until you come to try and make a claim.

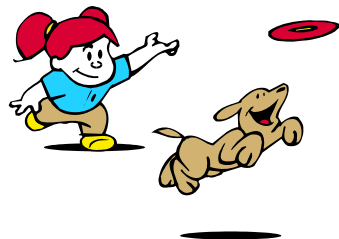
From AlphaPet's point of view, we obviously prefer to be dealing with properly insured pets. Firstly, and most importantly, it means that we, as veterinary surgeons, are able to offer and provide the very best veterinary treatment available for your pet rather than a compromise or even no treatment at all. Secondly, it removes the need for difficult conversations over what treatments can be afforded and even the need for us to perform euthanasia before it is truly necessary on financial grounds.

As a result of all of this, AlphaPet has decided to team up with Vetsure Insurance to offer a simple, no-nonsense insurance policy for your pet offering the following benefits:

- Veterinary fees up to £5,000 per condition per year for treatment following an accident or illness. This includes up to £750 for Complementary Medicine and £100 for therapeutic diet.
- Public Liability
- Emergency Boarding Kennel and Cattery Fees

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## Stick injuries



Many people throw sticks for their dogs, but most appear unaware of how potentially life-threatening this apparently innocuous act can be. As the dogs chase after the stick, it can bounce up awkwardly or they may just pick it up awkwardly at the run. Either way, they run the risk of the end of the stick jamming into the ground and the other end poking down the throat causing untold damage.

In recent months, we have seen a spate of serious injuries caused by people throwing sticks for their dogs and we implore clients to find alternatives to entertain their pets. If your pet is really unlucky, the stick can rupture an artery that runs along the roof of the mouth which can bleed so profusely that they may bleed out before they can reach us at the surgery. More commonly, the stick penetrates the soft tissues underneath the tongue or at the back of the throat. When the stick comes out, it often leaves small fragments buried deep in the tissues causing infections and foreign body reactions.

If you want to throw some thing to amuse you dog, why not use a suitably sized ball or better still a Kong toy or a Frisbee? They are far less dangerous but can provide just as much fun!

## Lumps & bumps— don't ignore them

If you notice a lump or bump on your pet, please do not ignore it. Whilst it may seem like a trivial thing, it may be something more sinister. Of course there are all sorts of causes of lumps and bumps ranging from inflammation caused by insect or tick bites, to various forms of cysts and a whole variety of benign cancers that require nothing more than keeping an eye on. However, a percentage of these masses can be more dangerous forms of malignant cancer and, as with all cancers, the best way to cure them is to cut them out as early as possible.

The most common form of skin cancer in dogs is something called a mast cell tumour. If these are caught early, then there is a good chance of cure. However, the longer they remain, the more likely it is that they will spread to distant sites in the body.

There is a very useful technique called a fine needle aspirate that can often determine if a mass is anything to worry about or not. It simply involves inserting a fine needle into the mass and sucking out some cells which are then sent to a laboratory for analysis. The technique can be carried out in the consulting room without sedation or anaesthetic and can really be a lifesaver because it allows early diagnosis.

One of the most frustrating things we see at AlphaPet are pets that are presented with masses that owners have ignored, mistakenly thinking them to be benign, only later to discover that they are in fact malignant and the chance for successful removal has been lost.

We recommend that you check your pets over for lumps at least once a month and anything you are not sure about, should be check by a veterinary surgeon.

## Vet insurance (cont from Page 1)

- Holiday Cancellation
- Theft or Straying
- Accidental Damage

and much more .....

To get a quote, you simply need to visit our website and click on the link.

There are 3 levels of cover available. The most basic simply covers accidents but keeps the premiums very low. The next stage up is the Premier policy which covers most conditions and the level of cover is designed to be sufficient for most conditions that can be treated at AlphaPet. The third tier cover is called Premier Plus which provides up to £5000 per condition per year for treatment following accident or illness and is designed to help cover fees that might be necessary if your pet has to be referred to a specialist centre for more advanced treatments or surgery than are possible at AlphaPet.

A big plus for these insurance policies is that we can accept direct claims for all conditions. This means that if your pet is unwell and needs treatment, you simply need to pay us your policy excess for eligible treatments and we will sort out the rest. No longer will you need to pay us and then wait weeks for the insurance company to send you a cheque.

*The most common form of skin cancer in dogs is something called a mast cell tumour*



## Staff news

A HUGE welcome back to Katie Rook who has rejoined us after a period away from veterinary medicine. Whilst she is currently easing herself back into general practice on a part-time basis, it just feels so right that she is back at AlphaPet where she was a founding partner!

A warm welcome to Amy Green as our latest trainee veterinary nurse. Sadly, we had to say farewell to our wee Scottish lass, Jennifer McFarlane who decided she needed to return home to north of the border. We are also sadly having to say a temporary farewell to receptionist Robyn Garner, but we are sure she will be back before too long!

Welcome back also to Kirsty Pierce who rejoins us on a part-time basis after completing her maternity leave.

We are please to report that Aimee Uren has passed her first year nursing exams and we are waiting expectantly for news of Emma Nolan's final nursing exams and Natalie Pink's year 1 exams.

Hearty congratulations to Rachael Keep (& Paul) on the birth of their first child—a beautiful baby girl. We look forward to seeing Rachel back with us sometime next year.

Congratulations to Sue Monro on passing her pet behaviour examinations. As part of her course, Sue carried out some very interesting research to demonstrate the benefits for puppies attending the AlphaPet puppy parties.

Nurses Debbie Howe and Natalie Pink, together with vet Nicky Bird are all set to take part in a sponsored sky dive to help raise money for the Animals Asia and the Moonbears on 25th July at Netheravon, Salisbury. Crazy, but all in a really good cause .... as long as they survive!



Katie Rook MA VetMB MRCVS

## Heatstroke

As we get into the Summer we remind all clients of the dangers of heatstroke. Even on a cloudy day, the temperatures can rise surprisingly quickly in cars, conservatories, homes and gardens. Pets can rapidly become overheated and dehydrated and may even die. Last year we saw many cases of heatstroke including several fatalities.

On hot sunny days, dogs are particularly at risk of heatstroke if they are exercised during the middle of the day and we strongly advise clients only to walk dogs in the cool early morning and late evening. This is especially the case if you have an elderly or overweight, long/thick-coated dog or one with heart or breathing problems.

Rabbits and guinea pigs should be placed in the shade with good ventilation.

Signs of heat stroke include excessive panting and thick salivation, anxiousness and distress, lethargy, difficulty rising, disorientation, collapse and loss of consciousness.

If you suspect your pet is suffering from the effects of heatstroke, move them immediately to a cool area. If cool water is available, douse them with water to assist the cooling process and contact the surgery immediately. Your pet can recover from heat stroke as long as it is recognised early and effective prompt action taken.

Even so, the best course of action is to prevent it occurring in the first place!

## Kennel Cough

Traditionally, Kennel Cough has been thought of as a disease that is confined to dogs that have been in kennels.

Increasingly however, we are seeing cases in dogs that haven't been anywhere near kennels. One of the reasons for this is the fact that there are a number carriers of the kennel cough causing bugs which do not show any signs of the disease. On the outside they appear perfectly healthy but they can pass the disease on to any susceptible dogs they come into contact with. This is the reason why vets and most responsible kennel owners recommend that all dogs going into kennels should be vaccinated against this disease. Additionally, the increasing number of dogs attending dog shows, training and agility classes are all potentially at risk. Consequently, the recommendation is that owners of such dogs should consider having kennel cough vaccinations at the same time as their routine annual vaccinations against Distemper, Parvovirus, Infectious Hepatitis and Leptospirosis.

If you have any queries about kennel cough or whether your dog is at risk, please ask us.

*We strongly advise clients only to walk dogs in the cool early morning and late evening*





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Lavant, Chichester. PO18 9AA  
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**AlphaPet Birdham Clinic**  
Northleigh Farm, Main Road,  
Birdham, Chichester.  
PO20 7BY  
Telephone: (01243) 513514

**24 hour Emergency Phone:**  
01243 842832  
**Fax:** 01243 842669  
**Email:** [info@alphapet.co.uk](mailto:info@alphapet.co.uk)

## FREE DENTAL CHECK-UPS

*During the months of  
September and January, FREE  
dental check-ups will be  
available at all AlphaPet  
surgeries.*

*Many of the pet dogs and cats  
we see have dental disease.  
Much of this disease can be  
improved or treated using simple  
techniques which our qualified  
nurses can demonstrate to you  
FREE OF CHARGE during these  
sessions.*

*Each pet seen will receive a  
FREE dental pack and all dental  
procedures arising and booked  
as a result of recommendations  
during these check-ups will  
automatically receive a 20%  
discount.*

*To book your pet in for a FREE  
DENTAL CHECK-UP, please call  
your usual surgery.*

## 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.

## New Look AlphaPet Website

Please check out our new look website. It has been re-designed to make navigation much easier and to help keep you informed about your pet from a veterinary perspective.

The News pages are updated monthly, with all sorts of topics covered together with links to other sites that clients may be interested in.

The site also acts as a reference, providing useful information on everything from how to apply eye drops to how to keep Bearded Dragons! And if you can't find what you are looking for, why not simply write into [info@alphapet.co.uk](mailto:info@alphapet.co.uk) and we will endeavour to find you the information you are looking for.

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

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## Coping with Fireworks, Moving House, Kennels & Catteries and Other Stressful Things

There are lots of things you can do to help reduce your pet's stress at these difficult times, including the new nutraceutical, Zylkene. A recent survey showed that 100% of cat owners found that Zylkene helped their cat manage stress during a cattery visit.

Why not ask us for an information sheet on how to help reduce the stress for your pet?

## NEW Vet Essentials Diet Range

Hills have just launched a brand new range of premium quality dog and cat diets.

Over the years, complete dog and cat diets have grown rapidly, but alongside that the different varieties and number of so-called life stage diets has grown even more and can become bewildering to the average pet owner. In most cases, the differences between these diets are marginal at best and essentially are simply a marketing ploy to appear different and more interesting.

The Vet Essentials range aims to simplify diets for clients with the cat range consisting of 3 diets: kitten (0-15 months), adult (15 months to 9 years) and mature cat (9 years plus) diets. Simple!

The dog range similarly consists of 3 diets with the addition of mini (small bite) for small breeds: puppy (0-15 months), adult (15 months to 7 years) and mature dog (9 years plus).

All Vet Essential diets offer advanced nutrition to promote weight control, clean teeth and joint health and vitality, with clinically proven antioxidants to boost immunity. They each boast the following key benefits:

- **Dental:** Unique kibble technology that provides a clinically proven cleaning action
- **Weight:** Appropriate levels of protein and fat to help maintain ideal weight
- **Skin & Coat:** High levels of omega-6 fatty acids help promote healthy skin and a shiny coat
- **Digestion:** Highly digestible proteins and a balance of fibres to support a healthy digestive tract
- **Vitality:** Precise balance of minerals and omega-3 fatty acids for healthy bones and joints