

WINTER 2011

AlphaPet News

Exceptional Care For The Life Of Your Pet



Thinking about a new pet?

As we arrive at another Christmas, we hope that the message "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas" is still foremost in our clients' minds.

Sadly, even though most people buy puppies more for the right reasons these days, there are people who are taking advantage of the desire to save money and often end up costing owners even more. We are increasingly being presented with new puppies and kittens that have been bought through the Friday Ads or the Internet from people who refuse to let the purchasers see either of the parents. We know of at least one rogue seller who regularly advertises in the Friday Ads and sells puppies from the back of his 4x4 vehicle in the Worthing, Littlehampton and Bognor areas. Many of these puppies come from puppy farms in Wales. They are often sold as "pedigree" dogs (which they are not) and are often alleged to have been correctly vaccinated (which they have not been).

Frequently, these dogs have been taken away from their mothers far too early (causing socialisation problems later on), then mixed with lots of other dogs before they have enough immunity to protect them from the many diseases to which they become exposed. A few days after you have bought them, you may find them getting sick and having to bring them to AlphaPet for treatment, wiping out any saving you think you have made.

PLEASE, only buy from breeders where you can see one (or preferably BOTH) parents, and where only one, or at most two, breed of dogs is present.

Buying from the back of a 4x4 may look like a good deal, but it is probably going to cost you dear later and you will also be responsible for helping to maintain and support puppy farming in the UK.

Merry Christmas to all our clients

We hope this newsletter finds you and your pets enjoying the Festive Season.

As usual, AlphaPet will continue to offer genuine 24-hour cover by AlphaPet vets. If you need us in an emergency, you will be able to speak directly to an AlphaPet vet who can give you appropriate advice. If we need to see you, our out of hours service is run from our West Meads surgery.

Our opening hours during the holiday period are detailed on the back page of this newsletter.

During this Season of Goodwill, please spare a thought also for all the local animal charities, particularly Brent Lodge and Mount Noddy, both of which AlphaPet has close links with. While times are hard for many of us, charities are finding it particularly tough, so if you can spare a can of cat or dog food, you could give a rescued dog, cat or hedgehog a special Christmas dinner too!

Beware illegal online pharmacies

For those clients using online pharmacies, please be careful to check out who you are dealing with. We have become aware of a number of illegal online pharmacies that are not based in the UK and illegally sell drugs (including POM-V drugs) into the UK.

It is illegal to sell and possess drugs that do not have a UK licence on the packaging. It is also illegal to buy and sell POM-V drugs in the UK without a written prescription. It is impossible to know the source of such drugs, if they have been stored correctly and whether or not they are fake which may or may not contain active ingredients. They may be harmful to your pet. Please be careful! Buy only from reputable UK-based sites.

Email addresses

Why not let us have your email address so we can send you digital newsletters straight to your inbox, keeping you better informed plus saving on paper, printing and postage costs. Your data remains protected under the Data Protection Act.





Staff News

We have yet more exam successes to announce: Huge congratulations to Aimee Uren for qualifying as a Registered Veterinary Nurse. Equal congratulations to Hayley Goddard for achieving her Animal Nursing Auxiliary (ANA) qualification.

We were sad to bid farewell to nurse Debbie Howe and to vets Tendo and Nicole who have both moved on to positions outside of general practice. However, we are very happy to welcome new staff Georgina Kendall (vet) and Emma Luxford (trainee nurse) as well as Emma Nolan returning from maternity leave early in the New Year.

Insurance issues

Under current FSA (Financial Services Authority) regulations, we are not allowed to speak to insurance companies about your pet or a claim relating to your pet without your written authority to do so. If you have not signed a Written Authority Form, please call in to one of our surgeries to do so. This means we can help you to process any claims you may submit. Many insurance companies are rejecting claims for inappropriate reasons, but unless we have your authority to speak to them, we cannot argue the case on your behalf.



New PET passport regulations

With effect from 1st January 2012, the PETS Passport regulations for dogs and cats coming in and out of the the UK will change and a blood test, to confirm that animals have sufficient immunity against rabies, will no longer be required. Instead, a single vaccination against rabies, administered at least 21 days prior to travel will suffice.

The requirement for tick treatment prior to entry back into the UK will also be removed. However, there will still be a requirement for all dogs and cats to be treated against tapeworm, by a veterinary surgeon in the country from which they are entering the UK 24-120 hours prior to entry to the UK. Whilst these are the new minimum requirements, we strongly recommend that clients use common sense in protecting their pet when travelling abroad. Even though there is no longer a requirement for tick control, ticks in foreign countries can carry potentially fatal diseases and we therefore recommend that all clients continue to practice good tick control which should be started around 1 week prior to travel.

If you are travelling abroad with your pet, please ask us about current recommendations for disease control where you are travelling through and to. You wouldn't travel to a foreign country yourself without making sure you had appropriate disease control medications in place (eg vaccinations and anti-malaria tablets), so don't forget that your pet needs protection too and not just against rabies.



Freddie the deer

Earlier this year, we were presented with a baby Roe deer. He was severely dehydrated and malnourished. No one is quite sure what happened to his mother, but he was critically ill and needed help.

He was on a drip for several days and Charlie Sampson provided him with 24-hour intensive nursing care over the next few weeks and months. Her skill and dedication were crucial to his survival and eventual recovery and now we have a great chance to return him back to where he belongs - in the wild.

Currently, he is being looked after in a secure location where he can be monitored and fed but can also learn to adapt to the wild.

Thanks to Brent Lodge, who also happened to have a rehabilitating deer, Freddie now has a friend! Recently, too, wild Roe deer have been seen jumping into their enclosure, so we are extremely hopeful that both these deer will make it back to the wild in the Spring. Well done Charlie and Brent Lodge!

You can follow Freddie on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/AlphaPetVets>

Microchips - update your details

We all know how important microchipping is for your pets - if they become lost, a simple scan can bring up your details and enable your pet to be returned to you. However, if you have moved, or rehomed your pet, don't forget to contact the microchip database (these details should be on your microchip registration certificate) to update the new details. Otherwise, you could end up in the same boat as a recent case at our West Meads surgery.

This particular cat was brought in as a stray from the Selsey area but the microchip said that he was owned by someone in the north of England. After some detective work, we finally managed to contact this person who reported that they had rehomed the cat to Selsey. Unfortunately, the failure to update the details meant that this cat had to spend 9 days in with us and was on the point of being rehomed again when the current owner finally made contact and we were able to reunite them.

Winter stiffness?

As we get older, we all start to get a bit stiffer, especially as we get up and particularly on cold and damp days. It's all part of ageing but we're the lucky ones - we can reach for the ibuprofen or the paracetamol and when it gets really bad, the doctor is always on hand to give us something stronger to keep us comfortable and able to continue to enjoy life to the full. But just a thought - how do those closest to you know that you are in pain? Maybe you tell them you're really feeling uncomfortable this morning or maybe they notice you are just walking a bit stiffly? Or maybe you just get your partner or neighbour to pop down to the shops for you to save you the discomfort of getting moving. But do you ever go down the street moaning and crying in pain? Probably not!

So what about your pet? What if they are in pain? How would you know? They can't speak to you and, like you, they are hardly likely to be screaming out in pain as they walk unless they are in truly excruciating pain. So what about your dog's stiffness on rising and what about their mild limping when they're out on their walks? What about your cat that is simply spending more time lying on the floor rather than jumping up onto their favourite chair? Have you noticed any of these signs in your pets? Do they indicate they are in pain? How do you know?

These are some of the issues we face each year with our pets. Sadly, they can't tell us verbally they're in pain and they can't reach for the painkillers themselves. Instead, they rely on us to watch for the signs that they are starting to get uncomfortable and then they rely on us to take them to the vets so they can be properly assessed and advice given as to how to keep them pain free, comfortable and still able to enjoy a great quality of life.

It is always incredibly sad for us at AlphaPet to see so many dogs and cats each year that have clearly been suffering in silence, often for many years and often for absolutely no good reason other than the fact that their owners either didn't recognise the signs or didn't think anything could be done for them beyond a bit of glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate. The fact is, there is a whole lot more we can do for pets in pain and we all have a responsibility to do the very best we can to ensure that our pets live long, happy and pain free lives.

So, if your pet is over 7 years old, cast a critical eye over them and see if they are looking a bit stiff or uncomfortable because now you know that there is something positive you can do for them.

NB: Ibuprofen and paracetamol SHOULD NOT be used in dogs or cats. Paracetamol is highly toxic to cats.



Seasonal toxins

Raisins and grapes can be toxic to dogs and cats by causing kidney failure. No one is quite sure of the mechanism and some dogs seem to be much more susceptible than others. Our advice is that you should avoid giving your pet access to grapes and raisins (including Christmas cake, mince pies and Christmas puddings). If they do manage to get hold of them and start to show signs of being unwell, you should contact us immediately. Macadamia nuts are also toxic and can cause weakness, tremor, vomiting, depression and stiffness in dogs.

Onions, leeks, garlic, shallots and chive can all cause toxicity even when cooked and can cause gastrointestinal signs followed by anaemia.

Mouldy foods (walnuts, bread, cheese) can contain toxins that cause convulsions, tremors and vomiting.

Xylitol is an artificial sweetener often used in home cooking but which can cause liver failure and low blood sugar in dogs.

Christmas trees are considered to be of low toxicity, but ingestion of the needles may cause a mild gastrointestinal upset, including vomiting and diarrhoea.

Ingestion of batteries by pets is common at this time of year as they are found in many things under the tree, particularly children's toys. While most batteries will pass through the intestine, they often contain either strong acids or alkalis and many have significant metal content so ingestion may result in local burns and or corrosive injury to the throat and stomach.

Please also be careful with the antifreeze you use in your car. This is highly toxic to cats and, for some reason, they also find it very tasty. Therefore, it is vital to clear up any spillage when you are filling your car radiator and also ensure that any leaks from your car radiator are stopped and cleared up asap. Sadly, we still see fatalities due to this toxin.



Small furies kept outside

As we move into winter proper, if you have rabbits and guinea pigs housed outside, please spare a thought for the following: Rabbit and guinea pig hutches are often not made of the thick, insulating wood they used to be. Some have only thin plywood sides and these are simply not warm enough if we have a severe winter. Please insulate outside hutches with old carpet or builders insulation with a foil cover (vermin don't like to chew that!). You can also get "hutch huggers" these days to go over the hutch but you will need to ensure you maintain good air flow (but no drafts) to prevent mould, mildew and respiratory disease.

Bottle huggers to prevent water freezing in drinking bottles are also available.

Make sure that they have ample bedding materials available in the hutch and put a cardboard box into the sleeping quarters with a doorway cut into it as this lowers the ceiling and makes it even more cosy!



The Unexpected

AlphaPet is here for you and your pet 24 hours a day, every day of the year!

Unfortunately, despite even the best preventative healthcare, we cannot prevent the unexpected. Both in normal hours and out of hours, we have qualified staff who are able to give advice on the unexpected, whether this be accident or illness.

Such incidents can happen when least expected, and can be an anxious time for owners, but take comfort that AlphaPet is here to care for your poorly pet. With the constant advances in modern veterinary medicine, we are able to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions that may previously have been incurable. However, such treatments can often incur expensive procedures and the last thing you need is the added worry of costs. So it is advisable to consider life-long insurance for your pet to avoid having to worry about the financial expense of tests, operations and treatments. If you need advice about pet insurance, please talk to one of our staff.

Saving with the AlphaPet online shop

Did you know that you can save 10% on a wide range of goods, including diets, toys, collars & leads, dental products, diet supplements and treats when you shop at the AlphaPet online shop.

Because we don't have to keep goods in stock, we can offer them at discounted prices.

You can arrange to pick them up either from your preferred AlphaPet surgery at a time to suit you or have them delivered to your door.

Check it out - you may be surprised what you find and how much you can save!

Loyalty Cards

We have now extended our loyalty cards to include prescription diets, so you can now make additional savings when you purchase these from AlphaPet. If you haven't yet got your Loyalty Discount card, please just ask at any AlphaPet reception and start saving!

Christmas & New Year Opening

	West Meads (Bognor) Surgery	Birdham Surgery	Kingley (Lavant) Surgery
23rd December	Normal hours	Normal hours	Normal hours
Christmas Eve	8.30am - 4pm	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
Christmas Day	Emergencies only	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
Boxing Day	Emergencies only	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
27th December	10am-1pm & 5-6pm	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
28th December	Normal hours	Normal hours	Normal hours
29th December	Normal hours	Normal hours	Normal hours
30th December	Normal hours	Normal hours	Normal hours
New Year's Eve	8.30am - 4pm	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
New Year's Day	Emergencies only	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
2nd January	10am-1pm & 5-6pm	Closed - go to West Meads	Closed - go to West Meads
3rd January	Normal hours	Normal hours	Normal hours

Website: www.alphapet.co.uk

West Meads Surgery

11-17 The Precinct, West Meads

Bognor Regis PO21 5SB

Telephone **01243 842832**

Kingley Surgery

Oldwick Farm, West Stoke Road

Lavant, Chichester PO18 9AA

Telephone **01243 528899**

Birdham Surgery

Northleigh Farm, Main Road

Birdham, Chichester PO20 7BY

Telephone **01243 513514**

