

Coombefield veterinary hospital

Firework Alert!



Fireworks night is fast approaching, which can mean nights of worrying for our pets. Loud bangs and flashes cause anxiety, and, even in some seemingly relaxed pets, yawning, panting, restlessness and hiding may all be signs your pet is suffering from anxiety.

Preparation is key! Coping with fireworks takes planning and preparation before and during the event.

Many pets will benefit from calming supplements, such as plug-in diffusers or daily tablets. These should be started at least 48 hours (longer if possible) before fireworks are due to start.

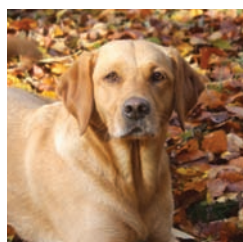
In severe cases, anxiety relieving sedative medicines can be used, to reduce a pet's fear response and help them to be calm and settled.

Noise desensitisation programmes are available free on the Dogs Trust website and these can be effective if started well in advance.

Shut out the chaos! On the night, keep dogs inside and walk them earlier in the day. Cats should be kept inside too, to help prevent them getting injured or lost. Small furries should also be brought inside and given extra bedding to hide in. Building a safe haven or den where your pet can hide can be helpful. Closing the curtains and playing calming music, or keeping the television switched on may also be helpful. Encourage calm behaviour with praise but try to avoid getting agitated or rewarding nervous behaviour.

We are here to help, so please ask us for further information on options for keeping your pets stress free at this trying time of year!

Troublesome ticks and tick-borne diseases



Ticks love the autumn weather! However, unlike fleas – which largely cause skin irritations in both pets and their owners, ticks can also carry a range of serious infectious diseases.

Ticks can be found in long grasses and wooded areas, especially where there is wildlife such as deer and hedgehogs.

Here they wait for an animal or human to brush past them so that they can jump on and feed. They attach using their mouthparts and will feed on blood from their host for several days before dropping off. Ticks can cause problems in two ways:

- **Local tissue reactions:** Firstly, they can sometimes cause redness and swelling at the attachment site.
- **Disease transmission:** ticks can spread diseases which pose serious health risks to both pets and humans. The major ones are:

Lyme disease, also called borreliosis, is spread by ticks; affected pets (and also humans) can develop swollen joints and stiffness. They can also develop a fever, anorexia and lethargy. In some cases the disease causes life-threatening kidney disease.

Babesiosis (caused by *Babesia canis*) is an emerging tick-borne disease, destroying red blood cells and causing acute signs of anaemia in affected dogs.

Erlchiosis also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal. Both Babesiosis and Erlchiosis are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

Current evidence suggests that tick-borne diseases take many hours after tick attachment to be transmitted. Using a product that rapidly kills or repels ticks will help to reduce the risk of these diseases. No tick product is 100% effective however, so dogs should also be checked for ticks every 12-24 hours and, any found, removed with a special tick remover. So please let us advise you on keeping your pets safe from tick-borne diseases.

Tick Prevention

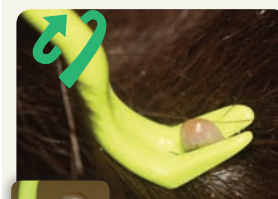
Our best source of protection against tick-borne disease is prevention. There are many tick repellent or tick killing products. These can come in a variety of tablets, collars and spot-on products. It is very important you speak to us about the best protection we can offer your pet.



Attached ticks with buried mouthparts are often found whilst grooming your pets

Additionally, if you see a tick, you must never just pull it out! The tick's body will detach but the head will stay in the skin and can cause nasty reactions. Always use a special tick removal tool. We can provide you with these and show you how to use them.

Specially designed v-shaped tick removers that remove ticks by rotation are very effective at removing ticks. A simple twisting and pulling action is all that is required to remove the tick whilst minimising disease risk.



The tick is carefully removed complete with its mouthparts

Anal gland problems – is your pet affected?



If you have ever seen your dog scooting their bottom along the floor or nibbling at their tail, they may have blocked anal glands.

Your dog or cat has two small sacs that sit to the left and right of your pet's bottom, called anal glands. These glands produce a brown liquid, which has a distinctive strong and fishy scent. Your pets express small amounts of this liquid to mark their territory when going to the toilet, and this is why our pets often greet each other nose to tail! The glands drain upwards, which can mean that in some animals they may struggle to empty and become too full. This is not usually a problem, but some pets may start 'scooting' due to the irritation, chew at their tail or seem uncomfortable. This can be a sign these glands need emptying by a veterinary professional.

Some pets have to visit us on a regular basis for expression. We sometimes recommend trying a diet change or stool hardeners (fibre) to help. If you need any more information, please just call!

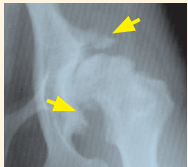
Alabama Rot – an emerging disease



Autumn Alert!

Autumn is a fabulous time of year and with the warm weather fading, many people feel it is a better time of year for their pets, but that doesn't mean we can take our eye off the ball when looking after them.

Autumn joint alert! Older pets will often feel the cold in their joints; becoming sluggish and stiff. Don't ignore these signs, since arthritis is generally the underlying problem. This causes significant pain but our pets are often very bad at letting us know just how sore they are.



Arthritic hip joint in a dog. You can see fluffy new bone (arrowed) typical of arthritis

There are many ways we can help them, so if your senior citizen is slowing down in the autumn, speak to us about how we can put the spring back in their step!

Parasites are still a big issue! **Ticks** and **harvest mites** both enjoy the cooler, moist conditions and while **fleas** are in decline outside, they are quite happy to live in our centrally heated homes! Keep up with your regular protection and do check with us that it covers all the right beasties!



These tiny orange harvest mites are very itchy!

Poisonings are also a concern at this time of year, so keep an eye on what your pet is trying to eat, especially dogs on walks! **Conkers, acorns** and **rotting fruit** are plentiful on the ground but can cause upset tummies. Also be vigilant for **anti-freeze**, it is highly toxic but tastes very sweet, so cats in particular will readily lick it up.

Wasps and bees are coming to the end of their summer lives and are often pretty slow, which makes them irresistible playthings for dogs and cats but they can still sting, which is painful and causes nasty swellings. These are usually easily treated with injections and the sooner we see your pet the better!

So – enjoy the autumn weather, but make sure your pets stay safe! Please call us if you would like any more information.



You may have heard about a new disease in dogs called 'Alabama Rot'. Although it is very serious, it is extremely rare. We don't know what causes Alabama Rot, or how dogs catch it. However, there appear to be some 'hot spots' around the UK and Ireland where

affected dogs have been walked and it appears to be more common in the winter and spring.

Typical presenting signs include ulcerated and abnormal lesions on dogs' skin, especially the lower legs, paws and face. It can, in rare cases, cause acute kidney failure by producing multiple small blood clots within the tissue, leading to kidney cell death, which is of course very serious.

Despite ongoing research, it is still not known what causes the illness, and diagnosis is usually very challenging. In suspected cases, dogs are hospitalised and placed on a drip with treatment aimed at supportive kidney care. Skin treatment such as dressings and antibiotics are also helpful. Currently there is no guideline for prevention and there are no areas that have been identified as a greater risk.

Alabama Rot has now been confirmed in around 160 cases in the UK since 2012, plus a small number of confirmed cases in Ireland, so it is still very rare. Additionally, most skin lesions will not be related to Alabama Rot; however, if you notice any unusual skin patterns on your dog's skin and need any advice please contact us straight away at the surgery.



Typical photo of a suspected case of Alabama Rot with skin lesions and associated evidence of kidney failure

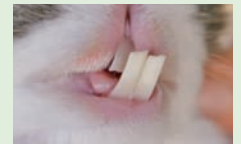
Rabbits – what's up doc?



Rabbits are becoming increasingly popular due to their cute and loveable nature. They do, however, need a lot of care and commitment. They are best kept in neutered pairs to provide companionship, enrichment and grooming. They should have a run where they can stand up fully and run at least five large hops or more. Some rabbits may become sexually active as early as a few months of age, so please speak to us at the surgery to discuss neutering.

Feeding: Rabbits have evolved to eat large amounts of fibre; this provides mental stimulation, keeps their large stomach system working consistently and makes sure their teeth grind down properly. Rabbits have constantly growing teeth, so diets heavy in pellets (and low in fibre) can cause teeth to misalign and your rabbit to require dental surgery. Feeding your rabbit a balanced diet is one of the best ways to keep them healthy. They should have large amounts of hay plus you can also provide a small daily portion (tablespoon sized) of pellets and a handful of fresh veg but make sure once these are finished, they are not replenished until the next day.

Rabbits have constantly growing teeth and dental problems are not uncommon



Misaligned and overgrown incisor (front) teeth

Intestinal problems: Stress, pain and disease may cause your rabbit's intestines to slow down suddenly, making them very unwell. It is very important that you monitor how much faeces your rabbit is producing and what it is eating daily. Diarrhoea can cause a dirty bottom, encouraging flies to lay their eggs and can lead to a serious condition, known as flystrike.

Flystrike is a particular problem whenever the weather is warm and flies are around, typically in the spring, summer and autumn. Flies are very attracted to rabbits if they have soiled bottoms – here they lay their eggs which rapidly hatch out into flesh eating maggots. It is important to check bunnies' bottoms on a daily basis and call us at once if you are worried.

Infectious diseases: We can vaccinate against two deadly diseases: myxomatosis and rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease. **Myxomatosis** is spread by flies and fleas. It causes progressive swellings, leading to blindness and often is not successfully treated. **Rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease (RVHD)** is often a silent killer, producing few clinical signs except for sudden death. There are two strains of RVHD, known as RVHD1 and RVHD2; both strains are lethal. Happily, annual vaccination provides bunnies with protection against these deadly diseases.

If you would like any further information on caring for your rabbit or you are concerned about their general health – please contact us today!