

Welcome to our new Vet



Dr Shelley Halfon graduated earlier this year from Nottingham Vet School.

She has had a varied background before beginning her veterinary career; working at a seal rehabilitation facility in Ireland and reading Philosophy at Warwick University.

She is thrilled to begin her work as a Veterinary Surgeon and she particularly enjoys small animal internal medicine and cardiology.

This September, Shelley will be joining the Culverden Team and she is especially looking forward to meeting the practices' lovely clients and their pets!

In her spare time, Shelley loves the outdoors whether it be hiking, running or just walking her rescue whippet, Topsy.

Autumn Alert!



After hot summer days, the cooler Autumn weather can be quite a relief. It is also a great time of year to have pets; long walks through golden trees with the dog and cosy evenings at home with your cat, there is nothing better!

However, Autumn does come with a range of pet care challenges that we must be prepared for!

Firstly, It is easy to think that as the temperatures drop, so does the risk from parasites but actually the opposite is true!



Ticks thrive in the warm but moist conditions, especially in the grassy undergrowth our dogs love to explore. Ticks lie in wait for passing pets and will quickly latch on and feed on your pet's blood and can carry a range of infectious diseases (see box right).

The **Harvest Mite** is also prevalent and makes pets very itchy! It commonly congregates between toes and in ears and can be seen as tiny, bright orange dots.

Fleas also have a resurgence because once the central heating goes on, they move in! Our homes have everything they need; warmth, carpets and soft furnishings to breed in and a readily available source of food in our pets.

Ask us about how to protect against these Autumn invaders!



While you are out on your seasonal strolls, be on the look out for your dogs helping themselves to **windfall fruit!** A rotten apple can seem like a tasty snack but is likely to cause an upset tummy, especially if they eat quite a few!

Conkers and acorns are also very tempting but are actually toxic and can cause intestinal blockages.



Wasps and bees will be getting slower now and although their stings rarely cause serious issues, they are very painful. Swellings can quickly appear on paws if your pet has been batting them about, or mouths if they tried to eat them!

Seasonal Canine Illness is a rare, but serious, condition and is most commonly diagnosed between August and November. The cause is unknown but affected dogs become very poorly with sickness and diarrhoea soon after walking in woodland. Treatment is often successful but they usually need to be hospitalised and placed on a drip.



Antifreeze will also be making a comeback as the temperatures drop! It is highly toxic but sadly pets, cats especially, seem to find it irresistible. Make sure your bottles are well sealed and you clean up any spillages carefully if you top up your car.

And finally, don't forget the **wildlife!** Check bonfires thoroughly for sleepy hedgehogs and keep the bird feeder well stocked!

Tick-borne diseases

Ticks can carry and spread diseases which pose a health risk both to our pets and also to humans. Here are the main ones:

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.

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

Erllichiosis also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal.

Both Babesiosis and Erllichiosis are particularly prevalent in continental Europe, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

Prevention

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 disease risk. Additionally, pets should also be checked for ticks every 12-24 hours and any ticks removed with a special tick remover.

Spanish photo: Warren Photographic

Celebrating our Vet Nurses

'How long until you become a vet?' is a question commonly asked to Veterinary Nurses. This is because people don't quite understand the training that goes into Veterinary Nursing or their role in practice, though I'm sure human nurses are not asked how long it is until they become doctors!

Back in spring we celebrated a whole month dedicated to the work Vet Nurses do, for example you may notice we don't all wear the same uniform – this is to differentiate between the registered Nurses (in green), and the student Nurses (in green and white stripes). We are proud to be a training practice and we currently have three students with us; Kortnie, Amanda and Emma.

One of the many roles of a Vet Nurse include monitoring anaesthesia/recovery, clipping and preparing for surgery, inpatient nursing, medication administration, blood sampling, IV cannula placement, in-house laboratory testing, radiography positioning and nurse clinics to name a few so every day is different. We are a vets best friend and a pets best friend!

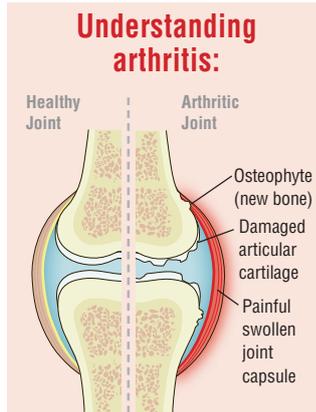


Arthritis - is your pet affected?



Anyone with arthritis knows that chills get in their joints, and the same is true for our pets. With 80% of older dogs and cats suffering with arthritis, it is important that as pet owners we know the signs to look out for when problems arise.

The joints most susceptible to arthritis are the ones permitting free limb movements – called synovial joints (see diagram right). Arthritis develops when the articular cartilage becomes pitted and cracked. These changes are commonly due to age related wear and tear, but can also be secondary to joint trauma and also conformational joint issues such as hip dysplasia.



Healthy Joint: The ends of the bones are covered by smooth articular cartilage and the joints are lubricated by synovial fluid, achieving pain free movement.

Arthritic Joint: The protective cartilage is damaged and worn away, resulting in exposure of the underlying bone causing pain and inflammation.

So what are the signs of arthritis?



These often include sleeping more, plus for dogs – difficulty in getting up after rest, slowing down on

walks and a reluctance to jump into the car. Cats may take extra time or effort to jump up onto surfaces, or show signs of toileting issues such as incontinence or missing a litter tray.

Arthritis is usually diagnosed on a combination of clinical examination (examining the joints for swelling, thickening, pain and range of movement), plus a history suggestive of changes compatible with the disease. X-rays can also be helpful, confirming the degree of bone changes.

Although arthritis cannot be cured, most pets will benefit from a wide range of treatment options. A key consideration is **weight loss** for any pets carrying excess weight, as this hugely impacts on the joints. Many pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory medication** to reduce the soreness and pain.

Dietary supplements (such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate) are often beneficial. Many arthritic pets struggle with long **walks**, so little and often is the key.

So – if your pet is showing any signs of arthritis – please come and see us for a check-up!

Chipping away!



Having your pets microchipped is absolutely vital! Even the most loyal of dogs and the most indoor of cats can go missing. Rabbits can hop off, tortoises can make a (slow!) getaway, and ferrets will find the smallest of holes!

Microchips are slightly larger than a grain of rice and contain a unique number which shows up on microchip scanners. This is held on a central database with all your contact details. It is important to register as many numbers and email addresses as possible, so if you can't get to the phone, another member of your friends or family can! Also, don't forget to keep the information up to date! Pet rescue centres have microchip readers to identify your pet should they go missing.

Microchips are placed with a needle – it is a very quick procedure and most pets barely notice it has been done! The only animals that are required to be legally chipped are dogs but we believe all pets should be chipped. If yours aren't yet, please ask us to help you!



Feline SOS!

Knowing when your pet needs to be seen as an emergency is an important decision for many owners. Generally, cats are good at keeping themselves out of trouble but occasionally serious problems do occur – here are a few things to look out for:

Road Traffic Accidents: Hopefully this is something that won't happen to your cat, but it is worth being aware that sometimes there may be no obvious injuries and you might just find them hiding away. A classic clue is that their usually clean and sharp nails may be shredded and dirty from scraping on the tarmac.

Poisonings: Cats are often poisoned because the toxins get onto their coats and are groomed off. **Lily pollen** is the most common but others include **engine oil** and road salt. Additionally, **permethrin flea treatments for dogs** are very toxic to cats, so make sure they are never accidentally applied to cats.

Blocked bladders: Cats can frequently suffer from cystitis, especially when stressed. In rare cases, male cats may produce crystals in the urine that block the bladder so they cannot urinate. This is a **true medical emergency** so it is always important to call us if you see your cat unusually straining whilst out in the garden, or in the litter tray.



We are here to help – so, if you are worried about your cat, always call us for advice!

Retriever and Cat photo: Warren Photographic

Appointment Times

Tunbridge Wells: 01892 520296

Mon to Fri: 9–11am, 2.30–4.30pm, 5–6.30pm

Saturday: 8.30–11.00am

Crowborough: 01892 661650

Mon to Fri: 9–11am, 2.30–4.30pm, 5–6.30pm

Saturday: 8.30–11.00am

Wadhurst: 01892 782382

Monday to Friday: 9–11am, 2.30–4.30pm

Monday and Thursday: 5–6.30pm

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