

# practice news...

## Special 'Credit Crunch' Offer for 2010

For the second year running we have frozen our vaccination prices for 2010/2011. Pet Vaccinations will be kept at the 2008 prices. Discounts apply for multiple pets. We have also frozen our neutering prices which remain at 2009 prices.

Please speak to our Reception team on 01608 730501 for more information.

## FREE SENIOR PET HEALTHCARE CHECKS

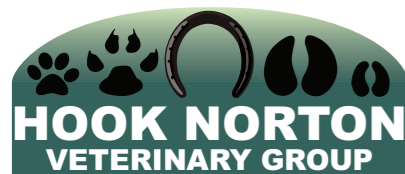
The practice offers FREE Senior Pet Health Care Check-Ups for all cats and dogs over the age of 9 years which are otherwise well. The check up will give us the opportunity to examine your pet and pick up on any potential health problems early which can result in more effective or successful treatment. Check-ups will take place at our Hook Norton surgery where your pet will be seen first by a qualified Nurse who will test a urine sample (dogs) or take the blood pressure measurement (cats). A blood sample (at a reduced cost of £11.75 including vat) will be taken to get a fuller picture of your pet's kidney and liver function. The Vet will then perform a full physical examination and discuss any findings along with any of your questions.

For more details and to book your pet's Senior Health Check-Up please call the Hook Norton surgery on 01608 730501.

## ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is performed by two of our companion animal vets. Pauline Tolhurst at the Charlbury surgery and Jan Guilbride at the Hook Norton surgery, both of whom have completed the approved veterinary course and are members of the Association of British Veterinary Acupuncture recognised by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Acupuncture sessions involve a 20 minute consultation so that the pet can be examined thoroughly, and the needles left in for the appropriate length of time (generally 10 - 20 minutes).

Please contact reception on 01608 730501 to make an appointment.

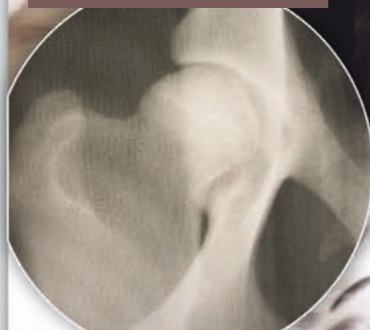


For further information please visit [www.hooknortonvets.co.uk](http://www.hooknortonvets.co.uk)

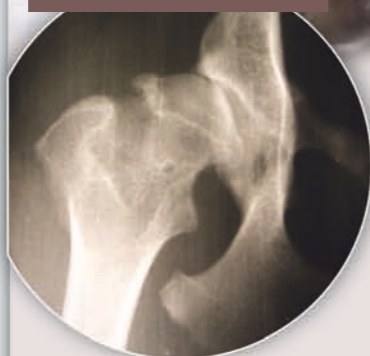
by Tim Hutchinson,  
Larkmead Veterinary Group



A normal hip joint



A hip with severe arthritis



# Arthritis in Dogs

Arthritis is one of the most common disease conditions seen in dogs and is frequently becoming recognised in cats too.

Whereas in people the most common forms of arthritis are related either to old age (wear and tear of a normal joint over time) or primary inflammation (such as rheumatoid arthritis), in dogs arthritis is most commonly the result of abnormal wear and tear of a joint due to an underlying conformational problem.

For instance, in a dog with hip dysplasia the normal shape of the ball and socket joint fails to develop so that the edge of the socket wears against the surface of the ball. This results in damage to the cartilage and sets up a vicious cycle of degeneration that will continue throughout the dog's life.

Arthritis cannot be cured and arthritic changes cannot be reversed, but steps can be taken to slow the progression of joint disease and to alleviate the symptoms associated with the condition. The three most important aspects of treating arthritis are:

**1. Pain relief** - by the use of anti-inflammatory drugs. Initially this may be intermittent to combat pain from flare-up episodes, but may need to become long-term treatment as the condition worsens. Fortunately the modern range of such drugs are extremely safe and efficacious for our patients.

**2. Weight loss** - recent studies have confirmed that the majority of dogs in the UK are overweight! Force-plate studies at Universities have shown that the peak force transmitted

through a joint for a dog trotting beside its owner is up to five times its bodyweight. A small weightloss can therefore make a big difference to the degree of force - and ongoing damage - put through a joint.

**3. Exercise modification** - exercise is beneficial for diseased joints, because it improves blood-flow, strengthens supporting muscles and maintains the pliability of the thickened, stiffened tissues that surround a joint. However the type of exercise is important: controlled regular exercise is almost always beneficial, but high impact exercise such as ball-chasing can be very damaging. An appropriate exercise regime needs to be tailored to each individual patient and may need to change in response to flare-up episodes of joint pain and inflammation.

There is wide interest in various supplements and alternative treatment modalities. Results from these are often conflicting at best, so the above 'Holy Trinity' of arthritis management should always be in place before other methods are considered. Basic massage and physiotherapy techniques are easily learned and can be very useful in certain cases.

Regular checks with a vet who knows your pet and its joints well form the cornerstone of treatment and will allow the vet to advise appropriately on subtle changes in your pet's condition.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

# Small talk



SMALL ANIMAL NEWSLETTER

All the Latest News from your XLVets Practice...

Arthritis in dogs...



# How long can 9 lives last...



Because of better diet and better healthcare, a cat's nine lives are lasting even longer

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**I**n this Autumn edition of Small Talk, we will be considering some of the conditions that our pets may suffer from as they become older. Ageing itself is obviously an inevitable consequence of advancing years, but it is important that we do not overlook treatable conditions that may adversely affect the quality of life of our aging pets. Your dog has become much slower on his walks and you are now having to wait for him - could it be that he has developed heart disease, or joint problems such as arthritis? Management of such conditions may make walks more enjoyable again for both you and your dog. Your elderly cat is losing weight - this could be an early warning of kidney disease or an overactive thyroid.

Don't assume that you can't help your pet - managing many of these conditions will allow them to grow old gracefully and in comfort.

## How long can 9 lives last?

by Gareth Harries, Wright & Morten

**C**ats have long been recognised as having an amazing capacity to recover from some of the insults that life throws its way and in these days of better diet and better healthcare, a cat's nine lives are lasting even longer. With advancing years, cats do tend to develop a number of problems and with some conditions in particular, the earlier the problem is identified, the more that can be done to influence the progression of the disease. Kidney failure is the most worrying of these conditions. We very rarely know exactly what causes the damage, but this damage results in a failure to filter the blood adequately so products accumulate that effectively poison the body. The initial signs are an increased thirst which can be obvious as most cats actually need relatively little to drink. Cats should produce very concentrated urine and a urine sample can quickly reveal a problem but it is not always that simple to collect! Combining this with results of blood tests helps us identify kidney problems and then we can use specially designed foods to limit the production of the main substance that causes problems 'Urea', along with a number of other products which we introduce when required to help with the knock on effects of anaemia, loss of appetite, protein and vitamin and mineral losses. This is not a condition we can cure. Humans have regular hospital visits for filtration of their blood, but in cats such technology is not available, and nor is the ultimate treatment of a kidney transplant. Nevertheless, we can very often keep these cats happy for many years.

High blood pressure may develop in some cats with or without kidney problems, just like in many humans. The old adage of prevention being better than cure is especially appropriate with a problem that can suddenly leave your cat blind without any apparent warning. You may wonder how on earth we measure a cat's blood pressure! It is not so different to that experienced by many of us owners.

One common condition seen is Hyperthyroidism. These cats are sometimes described as Morris Minors which turn into Porsches!! Thyroid hormone controls the speed of the metabolism so increases

in the circulating level results in many changes in many organs. Cats lose weight despite eating everything in sight, their behaviour changes and we find that their heart rate rises because of changes to the heart muscle. Once we have confirmed this using blood testing, control involves daily medication, surgery, or radioactive iodine treatment, just like their owners would receive. However, cats must be hospitalised and treated as actually being radioactive for a few weeks so they have to stay in specially designed isolation accommodation.

Arthritis and old age are certainly words that you would put together and despite not showing the sort of changes that we may be familiar with in dogs, or even in humans, it is actually far more common than most people would expect. A recent survey of cats over 7 years old found a staggering 75% of them to be affected. Because we don't drag them out for walks, or throw a ball for them, we often don't notice.

Generally we mainly spot that cats will change their behaviour and the changes have been referred to as the 'Four faces of feline Pain'. They become less active and avoid using their cat flap, sleep more, groom less and can often begin to look quite scruffy. Recently introduced cat specific pain killers can take years off the way their legs feel and whilst they won't revert to being kitten, they'll certainly avoid the need for a stair lift!

**Remember** Not all cats will reach their pension age, but we do all hope to give them a thoroughly enjoyable life for as long as we all possibly can.



### DID YOU KNOW...

The heart consists of 4 chambers and 2 main vessels

The heart functions as a pump in the circulatory system, it helps to circulate blood firstly to the lungs to receive oxygen. It then receives the blood back and pumps it around the rest of the body to provide the organs with nutrients and energy.

by Gary Jennings, Hook Norton Veterinary Group

# Heart disease...

The heart consists of 4 chambers and 2 main pipes (vessels), there are also valves to direct the blood flow. Later in life heart disease can affect dogs and cats due to a variety of reasons:

#### Types of heart disease

- **Valve disease** - often in older pets valves can become diseased
- **Heart muscle disease** - often later in life the muscle can start to fail (cardiomyopathy)
- **Rhythm changes**

#### How do I know if my animal may have heart disease?

There are various signs to look out for, although these signs can also be due to other causes. It is always best to contact your vet practice as soon as you detect any problems.

Lethargy, slowing down on walks, coughing, swollen abdomen - often due to fluid accumulating, pale gums, collapse, lack of appetite, breathing difficulties.

#### What your vet can do

Your vet will work with you and discuss the history including the signs you have noticed, a full clinical examination of the entire body is very important, using a stethoscope to check

the heart. The vet will be able to check the heart rate and rhythm, the pulse, and the chest. There may be a murmur present (this is a change in the heart sounds which can suggest heart disease).

#### Heart tests

Various tests are available including blood tests, ultrasound scans, x rays, blood pressure, electrocardiogram (ecg). The ecg is a piece of equipment which checks the heart's rhythm (it produces a graph on the screen or paper similar to heart machines used in human hospitals).

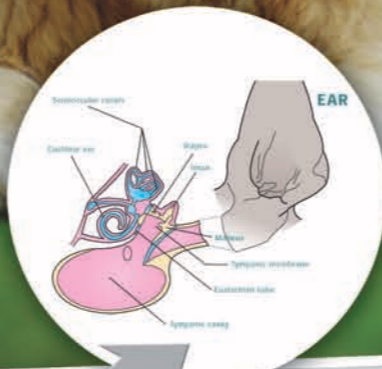
From the tests the vet and owner can establish what the cause of the heart problem is and also use this information to decide on the best treatment plans.

#### Treatment

It is very important that the vet and owner work together to check that the daily routine is correct in a dog with heart disease. The weight of the dog, type of diet and type of exercise are all important.

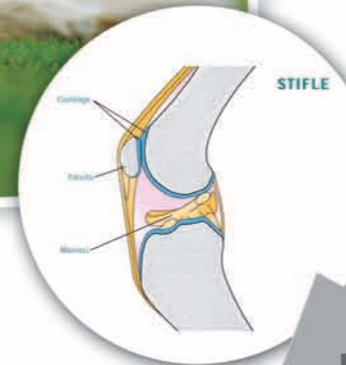
Medicine is mainly in the form of tablets, they are designed to work on the cardiac muscle, or the vessels, diuretics are also used to remove fluid which may accumulate in the abdomen or chest.

**In some rare cases surgery is needed.**



#### Eyes and Ears

- Infection and wax
- Ageing changes



#### STIFLE

#### Skeletal and Muscles

- Lameness/Stiffness
- Muscle wastage

#### Behaviour

- House Soiling
- Senility

#### Mouth

- Bad breath
- Dental Disease

#### Skin

- Dandruff/Itching
- Coat changes
- Lumps/Bumps

#### Chest and Heart

- Coughing
- Heart Disease/Exercise Tolerance
- Blood Pressure

#### Abdomen

- Pain/Discomfort
- Abdominal lumps
- Kidney Disease/Increased thirst
- Digestive Disorders

## IS YOUR DOG OR CAT READY FOR ITS MOT?

by Lindsay Grant, Northvet Veterinary Group

**O**ften the first sign of ageing in our pets is a general decrease in activity levels, a tendency to sleep longer and a loss of interest in the goings on in the home. Senior pets are more susceptible to health problems and behavioral changes.

**Digestion** can get impaired in old age.

The diet should be light but nutritious. Good quality senior foods are recommended which contain the correct nutritional contents to meet the needs of the older pet.

**Dental disease** affects around 85% of dogs and cats over the age of 3 years. This disease is a very underestimated and common disease that can severely affect our pets health and wellbeing. Not only does it affect the mouth, the huge quantities of bacteria found in plaque and tartar can enter the blood stream

causing problems in the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and even the brain.

**Arthritis** is another common problem in senior pets. They can start to feel stiff and suffer pain in their joints. There are many products available which can help. Don't accept painful joints as part of ageing - let us help you give your pet the quality of life they deserve.

**Heart and circulatory disease** Signs of heart disease may include coughing, lethargy and reluctance to exercise. Good management and medicines can slow the progression of cardiac disease and give your pet a longer, more comfortable life.

**Thyroid disease** is common in older cats. Weight loss but with an enthusiastic appetite, hyperactivity and a fast heart rate are all symptoms. A simple blood test can diagnose this condition.

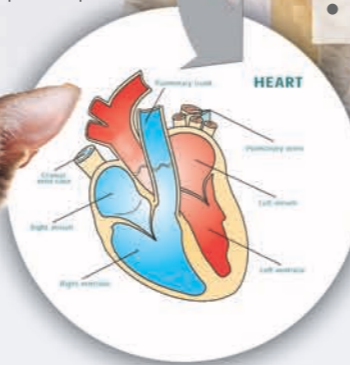
**Kidneys** are vital for life and kidney failure is seen in as many as 18% of the UK cat population. Kidney disease is a slow process and early

detection will enable you pet to receive diet or treatment to slow the progression of the disease. Signs include weight loss, lethargy, increased drinking and urination, vomiting and bad breath.

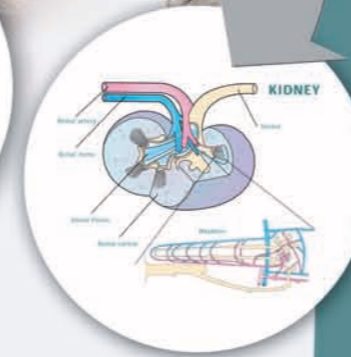
**Diabetes** can give similar symptoms to kidney problems. A urine test can detect the first signs of diabetes and a blood test can confirm the disease. Diabetes cannot be cured but simple routine and good management and in some cases medication, will allow your pet to continue his senior years with very little change.

**Growths** can appear on your pet as they get older. Most of these lumps are nothing to worry about but your vet should be made aware of any growths you find on your pet.

**Sadly we cannot stop our pets from getting older but pet owners can delay the signs of ageing with good management and regular health checks. Make an appointment for your senior pet health check up and help your pal grow old gracefully.**



#### HEART



#### KIDNEY