

Have a Cough Free Winter

Pre-planning for your dog's vaccination requirements will save time if you are arranging to board your pet over the Christmas holidays. To ensure they remain happy and healthy during their stay in kennels, we advise that you include protection against a debilitating disease called Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis (Canine Cough). Canine cough can spread like wildfire when dogs are in a close environment and can be very unpleasant for your pet if it is not protected! It is highly contagious, affects the respiratory tract and is easily passed from dog-to-dog by airborne droplets (coughing or sneezing) and direct nose-to-nose contact. In fact, a single infected animal is enough to cause a whole outbreak within kennels! No dog is safe, whatever its age, unless protected. Signs include a harsh, dry, whooping-type cough which can last for several weeks.



In some cases, more serious complications can arise, such as pneumonia, which could prove fatal in old, weak or very young dogs. However, protection is at hand. Our practice uses a vaccine which will safeguard your pet and offer immunity for a full 12 months – so you can protect your pet for the summer holidays and Christmas in one visit! The vaccine is easy to administer - just a few drops gently trickled into one nostril – and gives immunity in just 72 hours! Ideally your dog should be vaccinated at least two weeks before arrival at the kennel, leaving you free to prepare for your winter break.

Winter has arrived!!

As winter settles in, here are a few tips to remember to ensure a healthy season. As most pet lovers know, winter can be a challenge for our pets.

Antifreeze (Ethylene Glycol)

This is actually a winter and summer potential problem. Cats and dogs are attracted to the sweet smell and taste of antifreeze, and will often sample some if left out in a container or spilled on the garage floor. Antifreeze is highly toxic - it is rapidly absorbed (initial signs appear approximately one hour post-ingestion), and there is a high mortality rate. Other sources of this deadly chemical are: heat exchange fluids (sometimes used in solar collectors), some brake and transmissions fluids as well as diethylene glycol used in colour film processing.



Spadge in the snow © The Silver Penguin on Flickr

Acute cases (within 12 hours of ingestion) often present as if the animal was intoxicated with alcohol: stumbling, vomiting and depression are common signs. The kidneys are most severely affected, and even if the animal seems to improve initially with treatment, they may succumb shortly after to kidney failure.. Success of treatment is dependent upon quick treatment. If you suspect that your animal has come into contact with antifreeze, **contact your vet immediately**.

Arthritis and Winter

Cold, damp weather aggravates arthritis in dogs and cats. Arthritis can appear in young pets, but is most common in the middle aged and geriatric pets. A fracture can also make the animal susceptible to arthritis after the injury has healed. Overweight pets suffer from arthritis more than their normal-weight counterparts. If your pet is having trouble getting up or laying down, navigating the stairs, or has started to snap or cry when picked up, a visit to the vet is in order. Many new arthritis treatments are available, both natural and medicinal. **NEVER** medicate your dog or cat with human prescription or over-the-counter medications without consulting your vet! One Paracetamol™ tablet can be fatal to a cat.

The Outdoor Pet

If your pet is housed outside, make sure that adequate shelter is provided -- to shield from wind, moisture and cold. Take extra care to ensure that your pet is comfortable and can get into and out of their housing easily. Several pet and feed stores carry safe heated floor mats or non-electric warm bedding. Deeply bedded straw is another good insulator. **Pets need to have fresh water at all times - make sure the water is not frozen during this time of year.**



Heated pet bowls are a solution for frigid temperatures. These bowls are very handy to have during the cold winter months, and are available in stainless steel or plastic. If you don't have one, ordinary plastic bowls are better than metal as tongues may stick to cold metal bowls. Pets that live outdoors may need additional food (calories) to sustain body temperature as well. Please contact the practice if you think your pet needs extra nutritional intake.

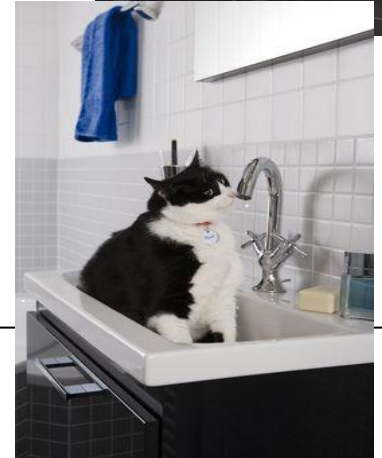
Could your pet be diabetic?

It is believed that there are millions of people living with undiagnosed diabetes all over the world. Proportionally, could there be a similar number of undiagnosed diabetic pets?

Dogs and cats can suffer from diabetes mellitus ('sugar diabetes') in the same way as people do. It is thought that approximately 1 in 300 dogs and cats have diabetes – making this one of the most common hormonal diseases in pets. Like other diseases, early diagnosis and treatment is beneficial so it is important to look out for signs of diabetes in your pet. An increase in their drinking is usually the first sign seen (although this is hard to spot in outdoor cats). Other signs to watch out for include weight loss despite a hearty appetite, increased urination and lethargy.

Not all diabetic pets show all these signs however, so if you're worried that your pet may have the condition, please let us know. A simple urine or blood test is usually all that is required to confirm if your pet has the condition. If your pet does, we can treat this disease successfully with insulin.

If you'd like further information on diabetes or would like your pet checked for the condition, please contact us at the practice.



Heart Smart for Dogs

Do you know what heart disease looks like in your dog? Knowing the early signs of heart failure can make a big difference to your dog's life. It means that you know when to seek medical help for possible heart failure signs and that we can start effective treatment early in order to achieve the best results. Heart failure is a condition that affects the pumping mechanism of the heart. It often results in fluid congestion in the lungs and as a result it is often referred to as congestive heart failure (CHF).

Signs and symptoms to look out for:

- Coughing, especially at night
- Reluctance to exercise
- Poor appetite
- Laboured or fast breathing
- Weight loss
- Enlarged abdomen (due to fluid accumulation)
- Weakness
- Fainting/collapse (often associated with exercise)



If your dog is showing one or more of the above signs, it is important to contact the practice to make an appointment with the vet to have your pet examined. Some breeds are more at risk of heart disease than others and being over the age of 7 increases all dogs' risks.

Valve Disease

- Cavalier King Charles
- Schnauzer
- Poodle
- Chihuahua
- Fox Terrier
- Jack Russell Terrier

Cardiomyopathy

- Doberman
- Cocker and Springer Spaniel
- German Shepherd
- Boxer
- Great Dane
- St. Bernard/Irish Wolfhound



Your vet will make a diagnosis of heart failure through a history, clinical examination and a number of tests. Listening to the chest with a stethoscope, looking at the heart on an X-ray, assessing the rhythm of the heart on an ECG and/or watching the heart at work using ultrasound

Treatment can be very successful. Medication will help the heart's efficiency and the pet's quality of life but is not a cure and will be required for life.