



# Drumahoe Veterinary Clinic

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## NEWS

SPRING 2018

### Spring Has Sprung



It is time to get out and about and enjoy the spring air and whatever sunshine we get, but watch out for lurking springtime dangers. It's great to exercise off the winter blues, but build things up gradually and avoid over-exertion as excessive exercise can result in injuries, for you and your dog! So rest any lame legs and get them checked out promptly. Avoid playing with sticks as they can cause throat injuries, that may require emergency treatment. Specially designed dog toys are a much safer option.

Remember to keep flea and tick control up to date (ask us for more advice on the best products available) as parasite numbers are building up now, and be aware that levels of pollens and plants that can cause allergic skin disease and itchiness are increasing too.

### We are pleased to be able to offer you our extended opening times:

#### Monday

8.45-10.00am  
1.30-4.00pm  
5.00-7.00pm

#### Tuesday

All day appointments!  
8.45am-5.30pm

#### Wednesday

8.45-10.00am  
1.30-4.00pm  
5.00-7.00pm

#### Thursday

8.45-10.00am  
1.30-4.00pm  
5.00-7.00pm

#### Friday

All day appointments!  
8.45am-5.30pm

#### Saturday

8.45am-9.30am  
1.00-2.00pm

**Sunday** Emergencies only

### Spring garden perils for pets



It's lovely to be out and about in the garden in the spring, but beware of unwittingly introducing hazards for your pets as some of the plants and products we commonly use in our garden can be very toxic to animals.

**Slug Pellets;** These commonly contain the chemical metaldehyde and are generally blue or green in colour. Metaldehyde is very toxic to pets and since many dogs will eat almost anything, slug pellets should only be used with great care, keeping pets away from areas where they are used and stored.



**Cocoa Shell Mulch;** This is also to be avoided if you have a dog. Many gardeners apply a thick layer of mulch to their flower beds in the spring and summer months. A little known, but potentially lethal hazard is the use of cocoa shell mulch. Dogs are attracted to these shells by their smell, but they contain theobromine which is very poisonous to dogs. As a result, it is safer to use an alternative such as tree bark.



**Spring Bulbs;** These are another seasonal hazard and can be fatal if dug up and eaten by your pets. Tulips and daffodils are toxic to dogs and cats, although all parts of the plant are toxic; it is the bulbs that contain the most toxins. Lilies are also very toxic to cats and pose a hazard in the garden and also all cut flowers.

As a general rule, when adding anything to your garden, ALWAYS read the label carefully regarding the hazard to pets.

Enjoy your Easter chocolate but DON'T share it with your pets! Chocolate (especially the plain varieties) can be very dangerous to pets and might necessitate emergency treatment.

Enjoy your spring safely and have fun!

### Don't get hacked off with Kennel Cough!



Did you know that Kennel Cough is a highly contagious cough that doesn't just develop from being in kennels? It can in fact be caught anywhere dogs meet – out on walks, at the beach, training classes, dog shows and of course boarding kennels! It can be transmitted through the air, on objects that have been in contact with an affected animal, and also by direct nose-to-nose transmission.

The condition can involve several infectious agents including viruses and a bacteria – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. Younger animals are particularly vulnerable, and any pet that is going into kennels or dog

training classes may be at greater risk. The symptoms commonly involve a harsh "honking" cough with white phlegm that is often coughed up, a high temperature and a sore throat. It can progress to nasal discharge, breathlessness, a loss of appetite and lethargy. Affected pets may cough for weeks and some will require anti-inflammatories to reduce the cough or even antibiotics if a bacterial infection develops.

To make sure your pet is protected, an intranasal kennel cough vaccine is available to reduce the risk of developing the disease and reduce clinical signs. This is given as an addition to your pet's standard vaccines. Please call us at the surgery for further information!



Kindly sponsored by Boehringer.

24 HOUR SERVICE FOR EMERGENCIES ☎ (028) 71 311448



## Gorgeous guinea pigs!



Guinea pigs make excellent pets since they are easy to handle, are very inquisitive, rarely bite and can be very 'chatty', communicating with a range of sounds. There are different

breeds of guinea pigs with many varieties of coat types, length and colour.

Guinea pigs are sociable animals and should be kept in groups or pairs; males reach sexual maturity at 9-10 weeks, females even earlier at 4-6 weeks so it is essential that the male, at least, is neutered to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Housing guinea pigs with rabbits is not recommended due to different nutritional requirements between the species, the risk of disease transmission and the risk of rabbits bullying guinea pigs.

Housing should be away from draughts, kept out of direct sunlight and guinea pigs housed outside must have access to shade. Housing should be as large as possible, with the enclosure being 1.2 x 0.6m, or larger (for each pair of guinea pigs), with permanent access to a 2 x 1.5m run.



Regular opportunities to graze and exercise are essential. Also, the run should be secure and prevent predators (dogs, cats, birds of prey) from entering the enclosure. Shelters

should be provided to allow areas to hide, provide enrichment and help them feel secure (boxes or pipes). Owners should also provide branches from untreated apple trees, willow or poplar to gnaw on. Please note that branches from cherry, plum, cedar, walnut and oleander are poisonous.



Guinea pigs require a high fibre diet, and grass hay must be available at all times. Guinea pigs also need approximately one quarter of a cup per adult guinea pig of a commercial pelleted diet, plus leafy green foods to provide vitamin C and other nutrients.

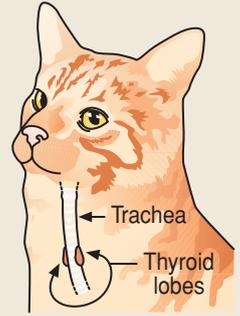
Guinea pigs instinctively hide any signs of pain and illness, therefore it is important to check them at least once a day. If appetite decreases and/or droppings become smaller and less frequent, or are not produced, then this is deemed as an emergency. Guinea pigs can get dental disease (overgrowth of incisors and cheek teeth) and gastrointestinal stasis as a result of an inappropriate diet or as a sequel to pain or an underlying illness. Nail overgrowth is also common in guinea pigs, especially in animals housed indoors. Guinea pigs are also prone to mites which can cause intense itching, crusting and scaling of the skin and hair loss.

We are here to help, so if you have any questions regarding your guinea pigs, give us a call today.

## Thyroid problems – is your pet affected?

Most of us have heard of the thyroid gland, but did you know that thyroid problems are surprisingly common in pets? The thyroid glands consist of two lobes, located on either side of the trachea (windpipe) in your pet's neck (see diagram). Usually they are not noticeable and can't be easily felt through the skin.

The thyroid gland produces thyroid hormone which regulates your pet's metabolic rate. Too much thyroid hormone (hyperthyroidism) speeds up the body's metabolism, whilst too little (hypothyroidism) slows it down.



**Hyperthyroidism** is a common condition in older cats. Most frequently they develop a benign growth (or goitre), which produces excess thyroid hormone. The symptoms of this include rapid weight loss despite a ravenous appetite, hyperactivity, drinking excessively and gastrointestinal signs such as sickness and diarrhoea. When the thyroid level is too high, it also puts pressure on the other body organs with associated high blood pressure, heart disease and kidney damage.

Diagnosis is usually based on clinical signs and a blood test. Once thyroid disease is diagnosed, medication can be started to allow your pet to put on weight and reduce the adverse clinical signs. Other treatment options include special diets, surgery to remove the affected glands and radioactive iodine at a specialist centre.

**Hypothyroidism:** Dogs can sometimes develop an under-active thyroid and some breeds may be more prone to hypothyroidism. Lowered production of thyroid hormone leads to a decrease in the metabolic rate, usually leading to weight gain (with no increased appetite) and generalised lethargy. Other signs often include coat problems, and recurrent skin and ear infections.

Diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be more tricky, but in confirmed cases, daily treatment with oral thyroid supplements can be very successful in treating this condition.

Once on treatment your pet may require monitoring blood tests and weight checks to make sure they are doing well. If you notice any of the symptoms in your pet, or if you are concerned your pet may be suffering from thyroid disease, please call us to make an appointment to examine your pet.



## Don't ignore lumps and bumps!

Lumps and bumps can come in a variety of shapes and sizes. If you notice a lump (also called a mass or growth) on your pet, it is important to make an appointment so we can check it.

If your pet does develop a lump, there are several underlying causes including: allergic reactions (such as an insect bite), abscesses (very common in cats), hernias (often seen in younger pets) and tumours.

Tumours are understandably the most worrying and are either *benign* – which tend to be slow growing and remain in one place, or *malignant* – which can be fast growing, invade the surrounding tissue and have the potential to spread to other parts of the body.

If you do find a lump on your pet, it is very important that we examine it as soon as possible. Speed is of the essence and a delay in appropriate treatment can be the difference between a small mass that is easily treatable and one that is far more difficult to treat.



Skin lump on a dog    Skin lump on a cat  
Lumps may vary considerably in appearance. Some are fairly obvious (such as the photos above), whilst others are much harder to detect.

Routinely grooming your pet is a great way to keep an eye out for lumps, bumps, ticks and any other problems. Just give us a call if you find anything unusual.