



Lowesmoor News

The newsletter for Lowesmoor House Vets



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Summer
2017

Watch out forGrass Seeds

It's that time of year when we regularly see dogs with grass seed problems. As you can see from the picture on the right, grass seeds are shaped like tiny darts. Their bristly arrow-like fibres allow them to easily cling to your dog's hair, while their pointed shape allows them to pierce the skin and burrow into the tissue. Grass seeds cause pain, inflammation and infection. If left undetected they can track through the body, in some cases tracking as far as the chest!



Common signs:

- Head shaking, excessive scratching at the ears and rubbing the head and face on the ground could indicate that a grass seed has gone down into the ear, causing much discomfort, particularly if it's resting against the ear drum.



- Continually licking a particular part of the body could suggest a sore or wound. You may notice a swelling in the area, and possibly a small puncture hole where the seed has entered.

- Lameness or hobbling are one of the most obvious signs that a grass seed has penetrated the skin in between the pads of the foot, (see left)

- A seed in the nose may cause your dog to sneeze, rub its nose, and may result in

some nasal discharge

If a patient is co-operative and the grass seed hasn't travelled too far into the body then it can be removed during a consultation, however for some dogs it will require sedation to locate and remove. This can be not only painful for your dog but also expensive.

Prevention is the key:

- Keep fur on paws and ears trimmed short during summer and autumn.

- Check your dog routinely after a walk. As well as ears and feet remember to check eyelids and lip folds which can also be problem sites.

- Brush your dog's coat regularly to ensure no seeds or burrs are caught up in the fur.

- All dogs are at risk from grass seeds but long haired, long eared dogs like Spaniels, and dogs with hairy feet such as Westies are especially susceptible.



The importance of vaccinating your pet

Vaccinating your pet is an important part of being a pet owner and protecting their health. Vaccines help lessen the severity of diseases and certain vaccines can prevent infection altogether. A vaccination appointment is also an ideal opportunity for you to discuss any concerns you may have.

Your pet will need an initial vaccination course which normally starts when they are a puppy or kitten although it is never too late to vaccinate. Following this your pet will need a regular booster (every year) for continued protection. Keeping up to date with vaccinations is very important as immunity is reduced once the date for the repeat vaccination has passed.

Dog vaccinations protect against these diseases:

Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza Virus and Leptospirosis

Cat vaccinations protect against these diseases:

Cat flu, Feline Enteritis and Feline Leukaemia (available as an additional vaccine)

And Rabbits?

Just like cats and dogs you should also vaccinate your rabbit. Rabbits need to be vaccinated against Myxomatosis and VHD (Viral Haemorrhage Disease) yearly.

At Lowesmoor House Vets, the cost of vaccination includes a clinical health check and weight check for your pet.



Star Pet—Jess

When Jess came into us collapsed, her blood tests indicated that she had Addison's disease.

What is Addison's disease?

Dogs who have Addison's will not produce enough of a hormone called cortisol. Cortisol helps Jess to respond to stress, fight infections and regulate the body's metabolism; but too much or too little of it can cause problems.

What causes Addison's?

Causes for Addison's disease are still not known although it is thought that it occurs when the animal's own immune system, which normally fights off infections, becomes overactive and damages the adrenal glands (this is known as an 'immune mediated' disease). Studies have found that 70% of dogs with Canine Addison's Disease are female and the dogs most often affected are between 4 and 7 years old. Some breeds seem to be affected more commonly than others. These breeds include Great Danes, Portuguese Water Spaniels, Rottweilers, Standard Poodles, West Highland White Terriers and Wheaten Terriers.

What are the symptoms?

It can be hard to recognise the symptoms of Addison's disease because they can be a quite vague and non-specific. These include reduced appetite, lethargy and weakness, vomiting, diarrhoea, weight loss and tremors. The severity of each symptom can vary and are often interspaced with periods of good health. Many dogs are not diagnosed with Addison's disease until like Jess they have an "Addisonian crisis". These are typically dogs that present to their veterinarians acutely ill; they are severely dehydrated, lethargic, weak and potentially in heart failure. Sometimes these patients have had a history of having a "sensitive stomach," however, Addison's disease was not apparent at that time.

Diagnosis

Addison's will normally be suspected after performing a routine blood test. These will show elevated levels of potassium and decreased levels of sodium and chloride, as was the case with Jess. In order to confirm this we carried out a specific blood test, called an ACTH stimulation test. The test is relatively simple with the vet taking an initial blood test to check cortisol levels. The dog is then injected a synthetic version of the hormone, ACTH which encourages the adrenal glands to produce the much needed cortisol. An hour later a second blood sample is taken to measure the response of the adrenal gland. In Addison's disease, cortisol levels will hardly rise at all.

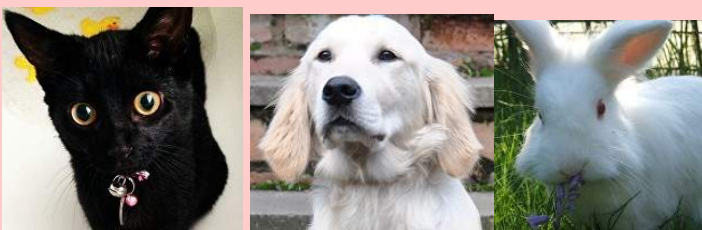
Outlook

Dogs with Addison's disease will need lifelong treatment, either through an injection called Zycortl or through an oral medication called Florinef. Some dogs may also require regular administration of Prednisone. Once prescribed it is very important to monitor the dog to check the effects of the medication; a routine blood test is normally carried out to monitor your dog's progress by measuring it's electrolyte levels (this checks potassium, sodium and chloride levels).

Jess is doing really well!!! She is on medication and most dogs with Addison's have an excellent prognosis after proper stabilisation and treatment.



Don't forget to catch up with Purdy, Rikki & Selma's blog on our website at www.lowesmoorvets.co.uk



Opening times:

Mon - Fri 8:30am - 7pm

Sat 9am - 12pm

Consultations by appointment only.

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For regular updates and info check out our Facebook page.

