

# practice news...

Congratulations to Alison Russell and Helen Gibson who passed their final nursing examinations and are now qualified Veterinary Nurses.

Welcome back from Maternity Leave to Janet Elstone after her second child. Good luck to Kate Harrington who has left on Maternity Leave also for her second child.

Welcome to Kelly Ward who has joined us as a Nursing Assistant. She has previously worked at Pets at Home.

We're sorry to have to report that Alasdair Stuart, one of our vets based at Salisbury Road has been involved in a car accident. As a result Alasdair and his wife Louise, also one of our small animal vets, will be away from the practice for some time. We are all thinking of them both.

Our new out of hours vet system is working well, with either Bill or Kathryn available to see your pet out of hours having not worked during the day as well. Our newly qualified Veterinary Nurse Emma Tate, who will be predominantly working nights, has started with us. Emma and our existing nursing staff, on a new night rota, will be providing care for your pet 24 hours a day based on site. We are pleased to provide this additional service for all our clients and their pets.



The Minster Veterinary Practice  
Salisbury Road, York YO26 4YN  
Telephone: (01904) 643997

Copmanthorpe Branch Surgery  
Telephone: (01904) 705701

Haxby Branch Surgery  
Telephone: (01904) 769917

Willow Grove Branch Surgery  
Telephone: (01904) 766060

Crocky Hill Branch Surgery  
Telephone: (01904) 655444



www.minstervets.co.uk

## February feature...

by Nadine Fletcher  
RVN, Cert AAB, Dip Dog  
Psy, ACAI, MVNA

Summerhill Veterinary Centre



# Socialising your new puppy

Most people know that they need to socialise a new puppy, but what does this actually mean? And more importantly, how do you actually do it? The socialisation process involves positive associations between your puppy and other people, other dogs, other animals, environments, sights, sounds and smells. Inadequate exposure or negative associations will commonly result in anxiety and fear, often leading to fear aggression.

The aim of socialising your puppy is to encourage confidence; a confident puppy is more likely to develop into a confident adult. Sounds easy doesn't it? It is, except that puppies have a sensitive period during which the majority of this socialisation and positive exposure should occur and sadly, this window of opportunity is VERY small. The optimum time for socialisation is actually before the puppy has even left the breeder's premises, at 3-5 weeks of age. At 3 weeks old the puppy is able to hear, see, smell and move and is in a natural state of relaxation. By 5 weeks of age the puppy becomes more reactive, it is more likely to startle easily and jump and be less confident around new things. Ideally puppies that are going to live indoors should be housed indoors with the breeder thus allowing them to get used to domestic noises and sights such as the telephone ringing, the vacuum cleaner, the television etc. CD's can be played to mimic noises that they may be exposed to in later life such as trains, buses, aircraft, fireworks, gunshots and thunder. The puppy should also experience car journeys, meeting other dogs (that are vaccinated and of known good temperament), other animals and a variety of people, including children. So the first step in socialisation is choosing a breeder that has already started the process for you.

The ideal age at which to get your puppy from the breeder (as far as behaviour development dictates) is at 7-8 weeks of age. From then until 18 weeks of age the puppy is still receptive to new experiences, and you

should continue to expose them to a variety of dogs, other animals and people. As the owner, you must handle the puppy every day, grooming and touching the puppy all over and the puppy should experience being left alone (only for short periods) as well as visiting the groomers, kennels and veterinary surgery to ensure positive associations with each of them. Until the puppy is fully vaccinated it may be carried out along the street to expose it to the sights and sounds of traffic and can learn to travel in cars and on public transport.

All of this should be done in addition to attending a puppy class (which most vet practices run). Any new puppy should be encouraged to attend, regardless as to whether it is your first puppy or whether you already have other dogs at home. These classes allow your puppy to develop communication skills and are also important to promote confidence and prevent dog to dog aggression as an adult. These classes should be undertaken before the puppy is 16-18 weeks old. However, it is important to choose carefully ensuring that all interactions are well supervised and controlled so as not to develop any bully type behaviour or negative association with handling and interaction with the other puppies.

Socialisation takes time and effort, but failure of the breeder and you the owner to undertake this important step in your puppy's development can RUIN a dog. Work hard now and reap the benefits for the whole of your dog's life.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

# Small talk

FEBRUARY 2012

SMALL ANIMAL NEWSLETTER



All the Latest News from your XLVets Practice...

VET FOCUS

Pet Weight Management...



# SOCIALISING YOUR NEW PUPPY...

XLvets  
Excellence in Practice

The Importance of Pet Insurance

Diet and Nutrition

Most people know that they need to socialise a new puppy, but what does this actually mean? And more importantly, how do you actually do it?

Small Talk is published by: XLVet UK Ltd, Carlisle House, Townhead Road, Dalston, Carlisle CA5 7JF

© XLVet UK Ltd No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.  
Disclaimer: XLVets does not necessarily share the views of contributors. No responsibility can be accepted for opinions expressed by contributors, or claims made by advertisers within this publication.

# Welcome...

Welcome to the first edition of Small Talk for 2012!

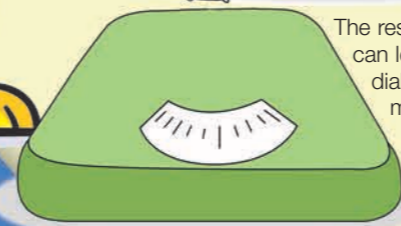


With New Year's resolutions on our minds and with 40% of the pet population now being obese we have timely articles on weight management and diet and nutrition.

We also look at the importance of pet insurance and provide advice on details you should consider when choosing the right insurance policy for your pet. Finally, Most people know that they need to socialise a new puppy, but what does this actually mean? And more importantly, how do you do it?

Our last article explores the socialisation process and how to get it right!

you can go first...



The result of pets being overweight can lead to heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and decreased mobility to name but a few.

There are sometimes certain breeds or circumstances where an animal may be more prone to putting on weight e.g. hormonal

problems, post neutering etc. But a fit and healthy animal should be able to lose weight and get in shape safely if put onto an appropriate diet and monitored regularly for progress and health by a veterinary professional.

It is important to assess our pet's body condition to ascertain how much if any weight a pet needs to lose. This should be done by a professional and most veterinary practices offer weight management advice or clinics that will be run by vets or nurses in your local area. Some breeds vary massively in size so your pet could be overweight even though they are within the average for their breed.

If your pet does need to get in shape it is important to use a good quality diet that is well balanced with the correct nutrients as cutting down their normal diet can restrict the nutrients they receive which can lead to deficiencies.

## Pet Weight Management

# Does your pet need to get in shape?

by Katrina Venables RVN C-SQP CC PHC Larkmead Veterinary Group

With Christmas just over we can all understand the feeling of overindulging and wanting to get into shape for the New Year.

Whilst for us it is our choice how much we eat and how much exercise we do our pets rely on us for everything; we control their food, home environment, exercise, care and attention. With some 40% of the pet population now being classed as obese this does seem to be a growing trend. The cause of obesity in pets is much the same as it is for us, more calories consumed than energy expended, which leads to excess calories being stored by the body as fat.

It is possible to restrict a pet's ordinary diet and assist them in losing weight but some diets are specifically designed, just like those for humans. These help ensure gradual weight loss without your pet feeling hungry. Dieting cats is especially challenging and the specially designed diets can be incredibly helpful. Every pet is unique so an appropriate diet will be selected to meet their individual requirements. A plan will be constructed outlining feeding amounts and exercise regimes and then follow up appointments will be scheduled to check progress. However, one of the main factors seen for pets gaining weight is that they have far too many treats! You have to consider that these are not calorie free and include them in your calculations. It is possible to use the odd treat but you have to be as strict with your pet as you would have to be with yourself! No point in undoing all the good work with a sneaky biscuit here and there!

Make sure you avoid the idea of a crash diet which can be incredibly dangerous for cats! Weight loss for your pet should be gradual and should be approximately 1-3% of their body weight a week to ensure that only fat is lost and that they remain healthy. Adjustments may need to be introduced over time but this will be tailored to your pet's needs.

Exercise may help, but unlike us humans, exercise alone generally doesn't work. Trying to increase your daily walks should help, as will encouraging your cat to play.

If a weight loss plan is followed correctly you will soon start to see results and you will see how much healthier your pet looks and feels!

# Diet and Nutrition

by Imogen Read, BVSc MRCVS Drove Veterinary Hospital

With so many different diets and formulations available these days, it can be really difficult to know which one will best suit your pet.

No one diet is right for every pet so you may have to try two or three over a few weeks. Marketing, packaging and promotions can play a huge role in which food we choose, however, try reading the small print on the pack, especially the list of ingredients contained within. Also, consider the daily amount your pet will need to eat in order to fulfil their nutritional requirements. As a general rule, the better quality diets will be more expensive per bag, however your pet may require a smaller portion, hence the daily feeding cost may be lower than you think.

Feeding a poor quality diet may result in stunted growth, obesity, tartar-encrusted teeth, upset stomach, dry coat, itchy skin, bladder stones and even behaviour problems such as hyperactivity. Also, remember there is little point in feeding a premium diet if you then give poor quality treats. You may have to bend the rules occasionally, but it always pays to get some advice from your vet first.

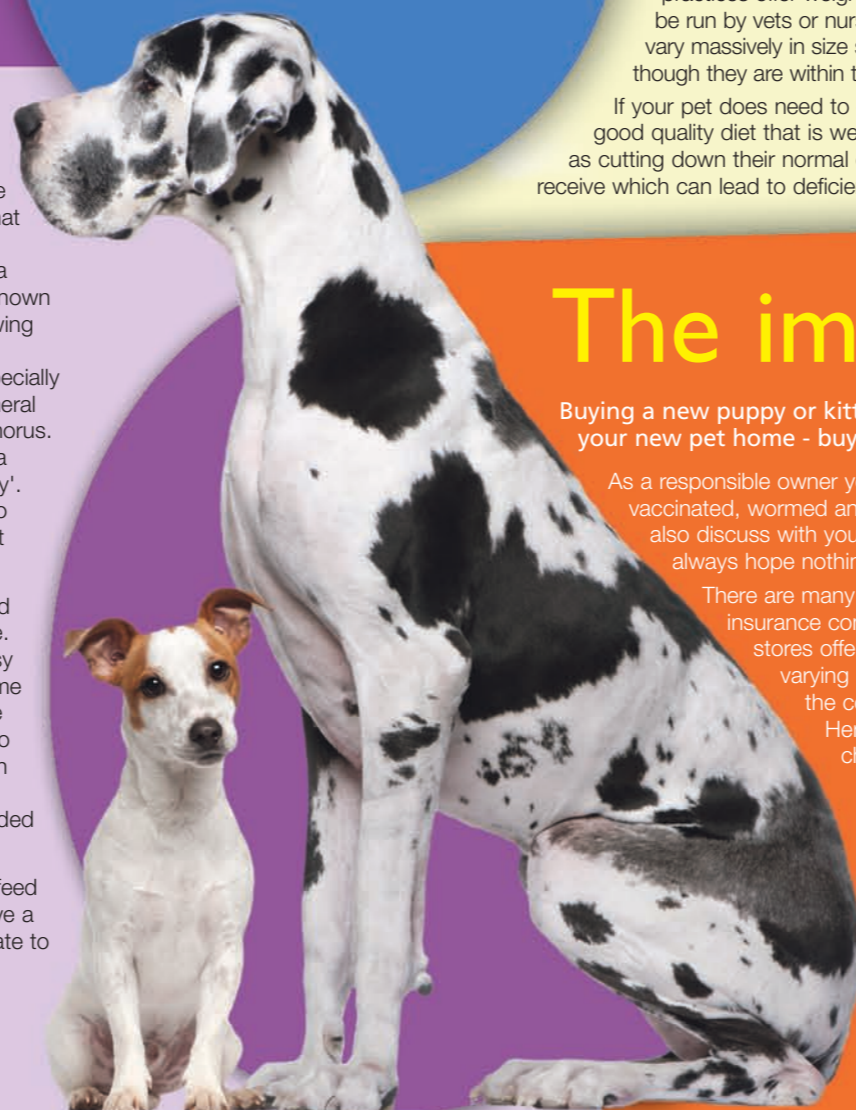
Any reputable diet should come in a range of formulations. This is especially true of dog foods, because dog breeds vary so much. For example, a Great Dane has different nutritional requirements to that of a Jack Russell. Large breed puppies (reaching an adult weight over 25kg) are a particularly important group. It is widely known that feeding an imbalanced diet to a growing large-breed dog can have devastating consequences on their development, especially that of the joints. This is partly due to mineral imbalances between calcium and phosphorus. You may think that adding fresh meat to a complete dry food will improve the 'quality'. However, adding a huge protein source to an already balanced diet actually makes it completely imbalanced.

It is common to think a pet may get bored when receiving the same food all the time. This is not the case. With puppies or fussy eaters you may be tempted to add in some meat or gravy. This can actually make the problem worse because they may grow to expect it and gravy and stock can contain onion salt so you do have to be careful, hence adding to their diet should be avoided unless specifically advised by your vet.

If you have any questions about what to feed your pet, or are worried your pet may have a diet-related problem, please do not hesitate to contact your vet as I am sure they will be happy to help you find a solution.

## DID YOU KNOW...

A Great Dane has different nutritional requirements to that of a Jack Russell...



Wendy Carle ANA PIA Ardene House Vet Practice

# The importance of Pet Insurance...

Buying a new puppy or kitten is always an exciting time but is not without cost. There will be lots of preparation to do before bringing your new pet home - buying toys, treats, food and somewhere cosy for your pet to sleep.

As a responsible owner you will need to ensure that your pet is vaccinated, wormed and identichipped. Your veterinary surgeon will also discuss with you the importance of pet insurance and while you always hope nothing will happen, you can never be too sure!

There are many different providers ranging from the traditional insurance companies to supermarkets and department stores offering pet insurance at a range of prices and with varying levels of cover. Pet insurance is there to cover the cost of illness or injury, giving you peace of mind. Here are a few details you should consider when choosing the right insurance policy for your pet:

- Always take the time to check the small print across a range of policies.
- Check that cover is adequate, over time a single illness can cost hundreds or even thousands of pounds.
- Check the policy does not stipulate a time limit for claims - this will affect degenerative, chronic and recurring conditions which can go on for life, not just for 12 months.

- Is the maximum benefit per year or per condition?
- Check the insurance extends to aged animals, i.e. will your pet still be covered when they reach their 8th birthday? Some policies for older pets will involve you paying a percentage of every claim in addition to the excess.
- **Veterinary fees** - amount available per condition, exclusion clauses and initial excess fee per condition. You may find that a low monthly premium means that you have a higher excess.
- **Third party** - amount of insurance available in the event that the insured animal causes an accident or injury to third parties.
- **Optional extras** - boarding during owner hospitalisation, holiday cancellation if your pet becomes ill, advertising costs to recover lost pets or complementary treatment cover (physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, homeopathy or acupuncture).

As with home and car insurance, whichever pet insurance policy you choose, there will be an excess that you will pay for each separate condition. Vaccinations, lifestage diets and preventative products such as worming and flea treatments are excluded. Some insurance companies can offer a pensioner or multi-pet discount.