



Warby St Vet Hospital Newsletter and Wangaratta Equine Hospital

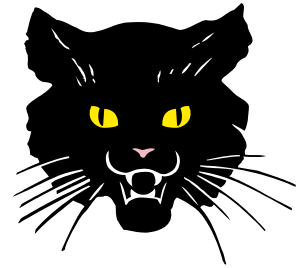


AUTUMN 2012

Very wet lately in the Wangaratta area with roads closed and paddocks underwater. Hopefully a sign of a good autumn and winter season ahead for all the farmers. Stay dry out there!

Cat Fight Infections

There are two things that most cat owners will have probably observed. One that cats can be quite territorial, and two that they have particularly sharp claws and teeth! The result of this combination is that fights between outdoor cats are quite common and the resulting problems that arise are a frequent reason for veterinary care.



The most common result of a cat fight is the formation of an abscess. These pus filled swellings on the head or body are the result of a small tooth or claw puncture wound. The tooth or claw deposits bacteria under the skin, but because the wound is often very small the skin quickly grows back over trapping the bacteria inside. Unfortunately these bacteria quite like the oxygen free environment where they become trapped and grow quickly forming a pus filled abscess. Toxins from the bacteria or even the bacteria themselves can enter the bloodstream leading to septicaemia (or blood poisoning). This often creates a high fever in the cat with subsequent lethargy and inappetence. Thankfully most abscesses when treated promptly respond very well to drainage and antibiotic medication.

In some cases, especially on the legs similar wounds create a very painful swelling in the muscles rather than a fluid accumulation. This swelling is termed cellulitis and will usually create a limp, which is sometimes very pronounced. Treatment of these cases involves antibiotics to kill off the bacterial infection and also pain relieving medication to reduce the swelling and make the cat more comfortable.

The final problem to consider with cat fight wounds is that bites can also spread the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). This virus is quite sinister as it incorporates itself in the cat's DNA and reduces the effectiveness of the immune system over the cat's life. There is a vaccine for this virus, which is recommended for all cats that spend time outdoors.

- Like always prevention is better than cure. Having an indoor cat all but guarantees no cat fights. If your cat or cats do spend time outdoors it is important to get them in for the night as most fighting takes place during this time.

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Rain, Rain Go away!

The last few weeks have been pretty wet to say the least. All this rain is quite a nuisance, but can be quite dangerous for animals, especially livestock. It is important for our pets to have a warm dry place to shelter during the day during wet weather as hypothermia can easily set in if pets become waterlogged.

For farmers it is important to have a plan for flooding and to implement this sooner rather than later. It is always best to move stock to higher ground as a precaution rather than waiting to see how the forecast pans out. A newspaper article about cattle being rescued by people in boats is quite spectacular, but in many cases the emergency situation could have been avoided had the animals been moved sooner when the forecast was looking extremely wet. Take care out there in the wet.



Hot Spots

The late summer and early autumn, especially humid weather, sees lot of dogs being presented to the veterinary hospital for "hot spots". A hot spot is an area of superficial bacterial infection on the skin. They are usually red, itchy and often moist due to exudation from the infection. Hot spots can vary in size, and unfortunately can become quite large to the point where they really affect the dog's demeanour and wellbeing. Some hot spots seem to appear without an underlying cause. Whereas others are secondary to an insect bite or perhaps to the dog scratching itself violently due to itches like ear infections or flea bites. A vicious circle can develop whereby the dog continues to lick and scratch and the size of the area affected grows and grows. Hot spots often affect dogs with longer or denser coats, like Huskies, or dogs with loose skin, such as the neck of a Labrador or Golden Retriever. Hot spots can arise very quickly and owners are often surprised at the short period of time it took to go from a small irritation to a large moist mess!



The treatment of hot spots thankfully is usually straightforward. The hair associated with the area is clipped away to allow more effective cleaning and ointment application. The area is then cleansed regularly with a dilute disinfectant and an antibacterial ointment is applied. In most cases a course of antibiotics is necessary and your veterinarian may wish to use some cortisone ointment or tablets to help bring the itching cycle under control more rapidly. Attempts to stop the dog licking and scratching are also used where practical, such as supervision or Elizabethan collars.

Hot spots are a regular problem in the summer, but respond well to treatment and dogs are usually well on their way to recovery in 7 - 10 days.

Newsletter Mailing List

We had a single computer meltdown recently at Warby St Vet Hospital and as a result the hard drive was irretrievably damaged. We had developed a mailing list for emailing the newsletter to interested clients. Unfortunately this list was lost when the computer decided it had reached it's life span. We apologise to anyone inconvenienced by this computer failure and invite everyone to provide us with your email addresses again so that we can continue to deliver the quarterly newsletter electronically. You can either email me your address at tim@warbyvet.com.au or fill out the slip below and return it to Warby St Vet Hospital or Wangaratta Equine Hospital in person or by snail mail.

YES! I'D LIKE TO RECEIVE THE QUARTERLY WARBY ST VET HOSPITAL NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL!

NAME:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

“KING VALLEY RUN”

A service provided every **TUESDAY** charging travel fees from:

Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or
Milawa.

“BEECHWORTH AND MYRTLEFORD RUN”

A service every **THURSDAY** charging travel fees from:

Markwood, Everton, Beechworth,
Myrtleford

Calving time again

Dystocia in cattle literally means 'difficult birth' and can be caused by a number of different things. A sign that assistance is required is a cow that is obviously trying to calve (clearly pushing) without progress for more than 1-2 hours. In addition any evidence that the calf is not oriented properly for a normal birth, for example only one leg presented, is also an indication for assistance.

There is a fine line between stressing the calving animal by intervening and waiting too long. However, if you believe an animal may be having difficulty it is best to get the cow/heifer in the yards and have a feel of how things are presenting. If you can feel a bulging waterbag then some patience is in order, but if you can feel the calf's legs, head or tail then either there is a problem or birth should be imminent.

Heifers are the group that require the closest monitoring during the calving period and early intervention because of their increased risk of calving problems. This is because heifers have not yet reached their mature body weight at calving (at 24 months), and their pelvis diameter is smaller than that of a mature cow. As calf birth weights increase, so do the incidence of calving difficulties. It is a good idea for heifers to use a bull with a known low birth weight Estimated Breeding Value (EBV).

Common causes of dystocia:

Foetopelvic disproportion: the calf is too big for the size of the birth canal, which can be due to heifers not grown out to an adequate weight before joining and/or a bull that throws large calves is used. Bull calves are heavier than heifer calves on average also.

The calf can sometimes be delivered with a little traction on calving chains, but sometimes requires a foetotomy (dead calf) or caesarian to deliver the calf if it is alive.

It is often a challenge to get heifers to an ideal calving weight without them becoming overfat, which causes problems also.

Malpresentation: this includes breech presentation (tail first), limb malpresentations - where one or both legs are back or twisted, head flexions - where the head does not come into the pelvic canal, twisted calves, twins etc. Malpresentation occurs in approximately 2% of all births. The most important thing to remember when a cow is having difficulty due to malpresentation is that no amount of brute force is ever a replacement for correction of the malpresentation.

Uterine inertia: most common in fat heifers, requires assistance as they basically stop pushing, often with the calf in the correct presentation. Metabolic diseases such as milk fever can also interfere with the calving process.

Close monitoring of calving cows and heifers will allow early intervention and a greater percentage of live calves.

As a final note here is a shameless plug for the health, safety and comfort of your veterinarian (and for yourselves as well). Working with large animals like cattle can be dangerous, but good yards and a solid cattle crush should be prerequisites for your own safety and that of your veterinarian. The crush should ideally have a split opening gate on the left side to allow access for a caesarian if needed. A roof over the crush and electrical lighting are also much appreciated to make the job easier. A source of clean water is also great, and if you're feeling especially kind warm water, soap and a towel for cleaning up afterwards really makes our day. The reality is that as the farmer you use the yards and crush far more often than we do (hopefully!) so any improvements will greatly increase your safety and work efficiency in your daily work, and help us out too.



Lumps and Bumps

Help! What is that lump?

Dogs and cats as they age often develop one or multiple 'lumps' on their body. These lumps can vary greatly in their significance to the animals health, ranging from simple warts to malignant tumours. A very common tumour in older dogs is a benign lipoma, which is essentially a benign fatty lump. These are not harmful to the animal, but can however grow quite large. They are often removed surgically if they are in an area that is impacting on the dogs movement, eg in the groin or armpit area.

It is important to realise that lumps like a benign lipoma cannot be differentiated by feel from some of the nastier tumours such as sarcomas. Externally these lumps can look very similar, and just because a lump 'feels' fatty does not mean it is not a more sinister tumour. New lumps that develop should also not be assumed to be the same type as a previous lump. Each new lump that grows should be checked. A quick, painless and inexpensive way to gauge whether a lump is benign or malignant is to perform a fine needle aspiration (FNA) of the lump. A very small needle is passed into the lump and some of the cells are sucked out into the hub of the needle. This tiny sample of cells is then expressed onto a microscope slide, stained and examined under the microscope. Often a diagnosis can be made from an FNA alone, but some lumps will require a biopsy sample to be sent to the laboratory.

Some breeds are also predisposed to certain tumours. A lump on a Boxer dog is more often than not a mast cell tumour, which can be quite nasty. Quick identification and treatment of these are essential for a normal lifespan.

Important notes:

- Get lumps checked when they develop, especially rapidly growing ones
- It is impossible to tell tumour type by 'feel', a Fine Needle Aspirate or biopsy is required for a diagnosis.
- Do not assume new lumps that develop are the same as previous ones.

Malignant tumours should be removed surgically as soon as possible to prevent metastatic spread to other parts of the body such as the lungs or liver. Often we will take chest radiographs prior to surgery on a malignant tumour to check if this has occurred already. The smaller a tumour is, generally the easier it is to remove surgically. This is especially true for lumps on the legs, where there may not be a lot of skin to cover the deficit once the tumour is removed. It is therefore best to remove these tumours early, rather than wait and 'see if it gets bigger', as it invariably will.

