

AUTUMN 2013



We are still sweltering through the end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn this year. The heat doesn't look like it has any plans of letting up just yet. Hopefully some more follow-up rains and milder temperatures soon for everyone's sake.

Beware "Dr Google"

The ready access to the internet over the past few years has seen a dramatic increase in 'googling' clients diagnosing problems in their animals. Google has many sites that are wonderful resources, including images of diseases which can be interesting and educational. It is important to remember however that it is an educational tool only. It cannot diagnose diseases, and it does not have a University degree. There is a vast range of quality in sites and information, and there is no regulation so the information does not have to be accurate. This is really true of all information on the internet. It takes a close look to see who has created the page and whether if you were talking to this person face to face you would see them as a legitimate expert in the field. Information added to the internet by universities, government departments or professional organisations is generally more trustworthy than that created by other users.

As Veterinarians, we quite often get people telling us they have looked things up on Google. Depending on the client and the information read, this can be either quite helpful, very confusing, lead to unnecessary angst, or in some cases prolonged suffering for the animal.

There is no substitute for a thorough clinical examination of an animal. Dr Google cannot do this, nor does it have the knowledge of anatomy, biochemistry and pathophysiology when performing the examination. Unfortunately 'googlers' tend to think the worst and self diagnose all manner of strange and exotic diseases, and we spend the first half of a consultation explaining that the animal does not have what Dr Google said it did. A common one is the coughing dog - Google says bone stuck in throat. There are many causes of coughing in dogs, which can often be differentiated with a clinical examination. It is amazing the number of dogs with 'bone stuck in throat' that actually have kennel cough (and have spread it to half the neighbourhood by now...) or a loud heart murmur and congestive heart failure.

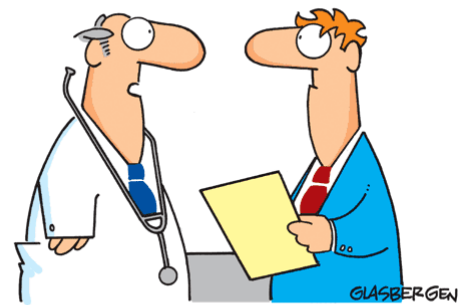
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Some clients who ask Dr Google (or even worse - an internet forum...) for a diagnosis, call and tell us what medication they would like dispensed. Many get quite aggressive when we explain that the medication is a prescription drug, and we will not dispense it because Dr Google said the horse needed it. Too many times we see a horse with a sore eye, that the owner says has conjunctivitis and just needs 'X' ointment for, to find on examination a large grass seed and very painful corneal ulcer.

We encourage clients to research on the internet to get a deeper understanding of their pet's illness, but beware the shortcomings and do not skip the diagnostic pathway and interpretation of information offered by a qualified veterinarian.

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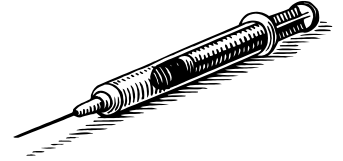


"More and more patients are going to the Internet for medical advice. To keep my practice going, I changed my name to Dr. Google."



Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes mellitus is a disease that can affect cats and dogs and is characterised by either a deficiency of insulin or a failure of insulin to have its desired effect on the organs of the body. The more common of these is a complete lack of insulin in the body (this is analogous to insulin dependent or type 1 diabetes in humans). Diabetes is a very serious illness and without treatment leads to many changes in the body that ultimately lead to death. Insulin has several roles in the body, however its main function is its promotion of the cells in the body to absorb and use glucose (sugar) as a fuel. The failure of insulin to achieve this leads to high blood sugar (hyperglycemia). In turn this excess of sugar leaks through the kidneys into the urine and drags a lot of water from the bloodstream with it. This creates one of the hallmark clinical signs in diabetes of increased urination and increased thirst. Many owners of diabetic animals are aware of their pet drinking large amounts prior to diagnosis of the disease. In the short term a dog or cat usually manages with diabetes because they can use their fat stores as an alternative fuel source rather than glucose. However, the burning of fat produces waste products called ketone bodies that inevitably build up to high levels in the blood whereupon they become toxic to the animal. At this point the diabetic animal enters a crisis which is usually characterised by weakness, inappetance and in more severe cases complete collapse.



Diabetes is a treatable disease. There is no cure, but the use of injected insulins and blood sugar measurements over time will allow the patient to be stabilised in the short term and kept stable in the long term. The beginning of treatment is always much easier in the “well” diabetic rather than the collapsed diabetic so if your pet appears to be drinking a lot more or urinating a lot more than they used to a quick test of their blood sugar can detect the illness before it gets to a more critical stage.

Newsletter Mailing List

We produce a 4 page newsletter every season to keep our clients informed about the goings on at Warby St Veterinary Hospital and the Wangaratta Equine Hospital. We send the newsletter out with our statements each time it is printed, but also deliver it electronically by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter in your email inbox 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 for routine work provided most **TUESDAYS** charging travel fees from:

Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or Milawa.

“BEECHWORTH AND MYRTLEFORD RUN”

For routine work most **THURSDAYS**, travel fees from:

Markwood, Everton, Beechworth, Myrtleford

Vaginal Prolapse in Cows

A vaginal prolapse is a relatively common occurrence in cattle prior to calving. It may occur very shortly before calving or in some cases several weeks before the calf is due. These earlier cases are more problematic as we must keep the prolapse in for a longer period of time before the cow can successfully calve. It is crucial that vaginal prolapses are replaced promptly as their exposure to the environment leads to damage and swelling. This has two negative impacts, the first being that a swollen and firm prolapse is much harder to push back in. And secondly, a replaced inflamed prolapse is more likely to irritate the cow leading to ongoing straining and subsequent re-prolapse.

Vaginal prolapse is observed as a pink ball like swelling protruding from between the lips of the vulva. The usual size of this ball is around that of a basketball. It may also be observed to sometimes be normal and at other times be prolapsed. The prolapse is essentially an eversion of the walls of the vagina, that is the vagina turning itself inside out due to a pushing force by the cow. It is not clearly known why a cow will do this, however it is theorised that the positioning of the calf in the abdomen/pelvis may lead to straining when it is in a certain orientation.

As mentioned above rapid replacement of the prolapse is essential to a good outcome. The prolapse should be cleaned with a disinfectant (such as diluted chlorhexidine) and pushed back into its normal position. If the cow is intent on re-prolapsing after the prolapse has been pushed back in then veterinary attention should be sought. The veterinarian will usually give the cow an epidural anaesthetic to remove their sensation of the prolapse and to facilitate the placement of a device to hold the prolapse in place. There are several techniques used to keep the prolapse in place. The first is a special kit that is anchored through the roof of the vagina and out through the muscles of the rump. A disc and split pin on either end of this device hold the vagina in position even against further straining by the cow (within reason). The beauty of these kits is that a cow can calve with the kit in place and the farmer does not have to be observing the cow as closely for imminent calving. The other technique involves placing several stitches across the vulva to prevent any further prolapsing whilst not impeding the animal's ability to urinate. This technique is also successful, however the cow needs to be monitored closely to determine when she is ready to calve as the stitches need to be removed to allow this process to occur.

It is believed that cows that have one vaginal prolapse will tend to do it again in further pregnancies so there is a strong indication to cull that particular cow from the herd after they have raised their calf.



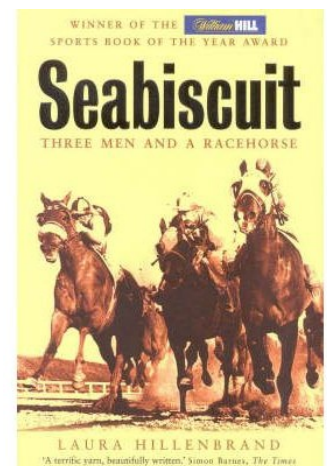
Classic appearance of a vaginal prolapse before it becomes soiled and inflamed.

Book Review!

A completely different tact for this section of the newsletter for Autumn 2013. A book review! Why not.

Several of us in the practice have recently read the story of arguably the best racehorse of all time, Seabiscuit (begin heated disagreements!). The book is very much a work of non fiction and is based on extensive research by the writer of people and their families involved in horse racing at the time. The story documents the trials and tribulations of the horse Seabiscuit, his owner Charles Howard, trainer Tom Smith and jockey Red Pollard as they attempt to win the period's biggest horse race, The Santa Anita Handicap. The events occur in the very interesting period of American Depression history and the horse's struggles and perseverance grow to take on much bigger significance for the public as a whole.

If you are looking for a good book to get started on, especially an animal related one we think Seabiscuit is a winner!



Dilated Cardiomyopathy

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is a heart disease primarily seen in large and Giant breed dogs such as Dobermans, Boxers and Great Danes. The cause of the disease is not fully known, but it is believed that in some cases it is an inherited problem. The major functional defect in this heart condition is poor contraction of ventricular heart muscle. This reduces the heart's ability to pump the blood forward around the body in what is called reduced cardiac output. This reduction in blood flow can cause weakness, exercise intolerance, fainting and in severe cases the dog can go into shock as not enough blood (and therefore oxygen) is being carried to the vital organs.

As the blood is not being pushed forward adequately it begins to accumulate within the heart and then begins to pool behind the heart. The accumulation within the heart leads to dilation of the chambers of the heart (hence the disease's name). The pooling of blood behind the heart primarily occurs in the vessels of the lungs and in the abdominal organs, particularly the liver. This stagnating blood increases the blood pressure within these organs and fluid begins to leak out of the bloodstream as a result. The outcome is fluid on the lungs (causing a cough and worsening respiratory function) and fluid within the abdomen (a pot bellied appearance as the abdominal cavity begins to accumulate fluid). This situation is known as congestive heart failure.

Over time the accumulation of fluid and failure of the heart to contract adequately will lead to death. DCM is diagnosed based on clinical signs and physical examination as well as radiographs of the heart and chest. An ultrasound of the heart is the way to definitely diagnose the condition. Unfortunately the disease is not curable, however modern heart medications allow us to manage the disease and provide a decent quality of life for some period of time after diagnosis in most cases. Treatment centres around the use of drugs that promote contraction of the heart muscles to improve the cardiac output, and the use of diuretics to remove excess fluid from the lungs and abdomen and with time reduce the blood volume to ease the workload of the heart.



Wangaratta Fun Run

The Wangaratta Fun Run was held on Sunday Feb 24th in the showground and Ovens River precinct. It was by all reports a great success for our Rural City. Over 1600 local, Victorian and Interstate competitors took place in disciplines ranging from 2km to a full 42km marathon. You may rightly ask what a fun run and a Veterinary Hospital Newsletter have in common. The answer is that amongst the Warby Street Veterinary Hospital family we had 3 participants and more importantly 2 winners! Our congratulations go to veterinarian Sarah Cavill for her victory in the women's 5km race. A bit more of a stretch, but we will claim him as our own anyway is men's 10km race winner Charlie Blanch. Charlie is the son of practice principal Graeme Blanch. A great effort from these two in a great event.

Next year we are hoping to talk more of our staff into participating and forming an official team. Until then you may see our staff out pounding the pavements and back roads around the Wangaratta area hard in training.

For more information on the event please check their internet site at:

<http://www.wangarattafunrun.com.au>



Sarah Cavill with her golden shoe trophy presented to the winner of the women's 5km event.