

SPRING 2011



Spring is officially upon us, however you wouldn't be blamed for thinking that it had come early this year. The warmer weather means foals running around the paddocks, longer days and a great time of year for getting outside with your pets.

Laryngeal Paralysis in Dogs

As the weather starts to warm up it is the time of year where we start to see an increase in the number of clinical cases of laryngeal paralysis. Many of the dogs will have had the problem for a while, but the onset of hotter weather and the need to pant to stay cool exposes their upper airway insufficiencies.

Symptoms of laryngeal paralysis include voice change (the dog's bark becomes hoarse), gagging or coughing (often during or after eating or drinking), exercise intolerance, inspiratory stridor (noise on inspiration), difficulty breathing, and in severe cases cyanosis (blueness of the gums/tongue) or syncope (fainting).

The condition is relatively common and particularly affects older larger breed dogs, especially Labradors and Golden Retrievers. When the dog breathes in, the laryngeal muscles should open the airway wide to allow a larger volume of air to pass. In affected dogs this widening of the larynx fails and as a result the dog is unable to move air as efficiently as it used to. In the cooler months and in dogs that don't do much exercise this reduced capacity to move large volumes of air may go unnoticed because they are not put under much demand. However, when the weather warms the problem often comes to a head because dogs rely on panting to keep cool, and panting requires a rapid movement of large volumes of air. There will also be a large amount of respiratory noise associated with the weak vocal folds effectively "flapping in the breeze" as the dog tries to get air in. The problem can be very serious and some animals are presented in acute respiratory distress needing emergency treatment.



A dog's larynx is visualised using a video laryngoscope under very light anaesthesia. A failure of the vocal folds to retract on breathing in is diagnostic for laryngeal paralysis.

The best treatment for this condition is a surgical procedure called a "tie-back" that as the name suggests ties the larynx back open. This relieves the obstruction and allows better movement of air. Where surgery is not possible successful management of affected dogs relies on keeping them cool in warm weather (padding pools or hosing down work well) and avoiding stress.

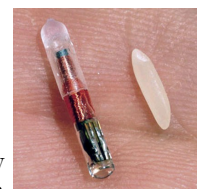
Inside this issue:

- 1 Laryngeal Paralysis in Dogs
Micro-chipping
- 2 Paramyxo Virus in Pigeons
- 3 Restricted Dog Breed Legislation changes
- 4 Hendra Virus

Microchipping and Registration

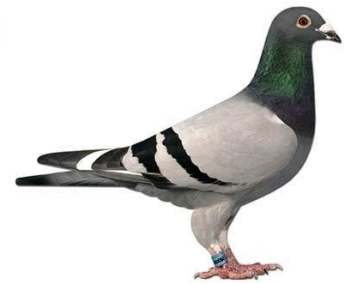
Just a quick reminder that microchipping of dogs and cats is mandatory in the Rural City of Wangaratta these days. Your pets should be registered with the local council by 3 months of age and to register them they need to have been microchipped. These new laws actually began in Wangaratta in 2007 and as a result we lowered our microchipping fee from around \$50 to \$31.50 to help people afford the cost. This fee remains unchanged even though over 4 years have now passed. At present we are also using special microchips that can return a temperature reading from under your dog's skin. This allows a non invasive method of taking your dog's temperature in a consultation.

Above all else a microchip is a permanent means of identification for your pet and a very effective way to get them home safely if they are ever lost. If we are simply implanting the microchip and there is nothing else that needs doing then there is no consultation fee, just the \$31.50 for the microchip and lifetime entry on the national microchip database.



Pigeons and Paramyxo Virus

You may have seen some stories recently in the news about the deaths of pigeon flocks in Victoria due to a new type of Paramyxo virus. This type of the virus has not been detected in Australia before and there is much conjecture about how it came to infect local birds. The virus has proved very virulent with nearly 100% of birds in infected flocks dying. Any affected flocks have been quarantined and it has been asked that all pigeons be kept at home for the time being.



The virus that is affecting the pigeons has not caused any disease in poultry flocks or wild birds up to this point. It is however of great concern as the paramyxo virus family also includes the virus that causes “Newcastle Disease”. Newcastle disease is of major importance to poultry producers because it is highly infectious and highly fatal to poultry. The Newcastle Disease has also been shown in some cases to infect humans who have been in contact with the infected birds. Luckily for us the signs of Newcastle disease infection in humans are those of mild conjunctivitis and flu-like symptoms.

The pigeons that have been affected have experienced high mortality associated with lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs. Sick birds have been lethargic, not flying, vomiting a white tinged fluid and then dying within three days. A large proportion of the birds in affected lofts have died in this manner.

Owners of diseased pigeons should contact their local vet or the Victorian DPI immediately. Following this they should confine the affected flock to the premises pending the findings of an investigation.

Owners of birds can minimise the risk of introducing disease by implementing good biosecurity measures, including preventing contact with other racing, fancy and wild pigeons, both directly and indirectly, for example via feed and water.

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

When is a Pit Bull a Pit Bull?

The Victorian Government has recently brought new laws into effect regarding the designation of restricted breeds and the requirements for owners of these dogs. Much of this has centred around the Pit Bull Terrier as it is the only restricted breed of dog known to be present in Australia (importation of restricted breeds was banned in 2002). From the 30th of September 2011 authorised local council officers will be able to designate an unregistered dog as a restricted breed if it looks like one and will have the power to seize the dog with the intent to euthanase it.

It is not illegal to own a restricted breed of dog in Victoria so long as it was brought into Victoria prior to September 2010 and has been registered with a local council. All dogs in Victoria, regardless of breed, must be registered with their local council by the time they are 3 months of age. For owners of restricted breeds or dogs that look like restricted breeds it is essential that they be registered before the 30th of September 2011. From the 30th of September 2011 authorised council officers will be able to seize unregistered dogs that look like restricted breeds despite claims by owner that they are a different breed. These dogs may then be euthanased. The owner has 28 days to appeal the decision through VCAT by providing evidence that the dog is not a restricted breed (such as pedigree certificates).

Owners of a restricted breed dog must display signs on their premises that a restricted breed dog is present. The property must also be adequately secure to contain the dog. The dog is allowed to leave the property, but it must be on a lead, be muzzled and be under the control of a person at least 17 years of age. Restricted breed dogs must also be microchipped and desexed.

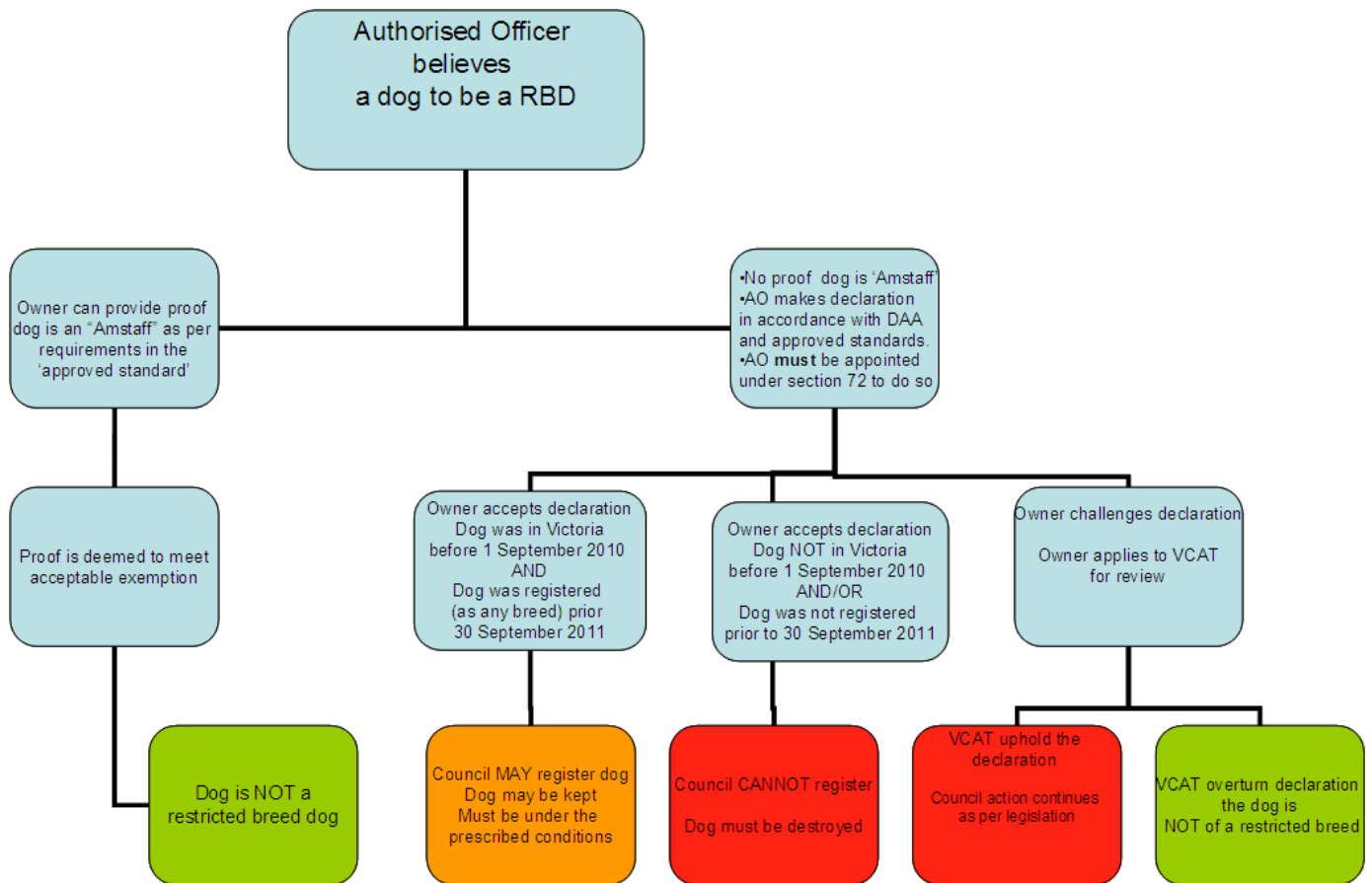
So, it is not illegal to own a Pit Bull Terrier in Victoria provided it was present in Victoria before September 1st 2010, is registered with your local council before September 30th 2011, and in addition you comply with the regulations necessary to keep a restricted breed (signage, muzzling, secure fencing). From September 30th 2011 however it is an offence to own an UNREGISTERED RESTRICTED BREED dog. A penalty of \$1,221.40 applies. The unregistered dog or one that was not in Victoria before 1 Sep 2010 may be seized and put down after due legal process. Penalties for failing to apply to register the dog (\$2,442.80) or failing to make a correct declaration of the status of the dog as of a restricted breed (\$1,221.40) may also apply. If you own a restricted breed dog and do not want to keep the dog, you can surrender the dog to your local council who will arrange to have it put down. Alternatively, take the dog to your veterinary practitioner for advice and assistance for its euthanasia.

Many owners of dogs that look like Pit Bull Terriers are worried about what this new legislation means for their dog. Within this group owners of American Staffordshire Terriers are particularly worried because of their similar appearances. American Staffordshire Terriers are not considered Restricted Breed Dogs, if the owner has one of the following certificates stating that the dog is an American Staffordshire Terrier:

- A pedigree certificate from the Australian National Kennel Council;
- A pedigree certificate from a member body of the Australian National Kennel Council;
- A pedigree certificate from a national breed council registered with the Australian National Kennel Council
- A certificate signed by a veterinary practitioner stating, or to the effect, that the dog is of a particular breed.

Obviously if the American Staffordshire Terrier is a purebred it should have pedigree papers and can be registered as such. Where the waters become muddy for us as veterinarians asked to provide a certification of breed is with crossbred dogs and supposed purebreds without papers. The "Pit Bull" type is actually not a single or recognised breed, but rather a dog of a certain type (look) potentially descended from a genetically diverse group of breeds (American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Mastiff, Bull Mastiff, Boxer, Bulldog, Boston Terrier, Bull Terrier). The new legislation therefore defines the Pit Bull Terrier in terms of its look and several physical measurements. Some people have suggested the use of DNA tests that can define the heritage of a dog. However, as described above the Pit Bull Terrier is not a distinct breed and therefore does not have a breed specific genome. A DNA test cannot really say if a dog is or isn't a Pit Bull Terrier. (continued page 4)





The above flow chart depicts the process that occurs from September 30th 2011 if a dog is believed to be a Pit Bull Terrier (or other restricted breed).

For more information regarding the new legislation please refer to the following website address on the Victorian DPI website:
<http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets/dog-care/pit-bull-terrier-registration>

Hendra Virus

Hendra Virus was first isolated in Queensland in 1994 after a serious outbreak in a racing stable where the trainer and multiple horses died. The natural host for Hendra Virus is the flying fox, but on rare occasions Hendra Virus can pass from flying foxes to horses causing severe illness, usually resulting in death. The disease can also be transmitted from horses to humans. The disease is rare, but mortality rates in humans are around 50%. There has been no evidence of direct bat to human transmission, or human to human transmission. Human cases have been isolated to those people exposed to sick horses or those conducting post mortem examination.

The risk of Hendra virus infection in Victoria is considered low, and no cases have been reported in the state. However, it is important to take care where large flying fox populations are close to horses and with horses arriving from northern NSW or Queensland. Horse feed and water should be protected from contamination by flying foxes and any sick horses (fever and flu-like symptoms) should be isolated prior to veterinary attention. Personal protection equipment (overalls, gloves, facemask) should be considered when dealing with horses showing flu-like or fever symptoms especially if a flying fox population lives nearby.

Victoria is considered low risk for infection because the disease has never been isolated in the state from either horses or flying foxes despite ongoing monitoring. The environmental conditions in Victoria are also very different to those of coastal QLD and northern NSW. In addition Flying fox populations are much smaller and sparsely located in Victoria. The disease seems to occur mainly within the range of the black flying fox, and this range does not extend to Victoria. Our main flying fox is the grey flying fox.

More information on Hendra Virus can be found on the Victorian DPI website:
<http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/horses/hendra-virus>

