

# WINTER NEWSLETTER

## Warby Street Veterinary Hospital

June 2007—August 2007



### Rat Bait Poisoning

In the past few weeks we have seen a surprising number of rat bait poisonings in the clinic. This is probably due to the cooler weather recently and therefore the unwelcome addition of rats and mice into your house! Rat bait is highly poisonous to all animals, but it is mainly seen in dogs and cats as they have poor colour vision and often mistake the bait for kibble.



There are a couple of different types of rat bait, the older, traditional brand 'ratsak' which uses Warfarin. The newer generation brands use more potent, longer acting poisons such as Brodifacoum and Coumatetralyl, which require more aggressive treatment.

#### **What signs will you see?**

The poison contained in rat bait is an anti-coagulant. It prevents activation of Vitamin K which is essential for blood clotting. This means the blood is prevented from clotting and internal bleeding occurs. Signs of poisoning do not occur until 1-2 days after ingestion. This is because it takes time for the clotting factors to become depleted.

Common signs include inappetence and weakness, lethargy and palour. Occasionally you may notice a cough, this is because the lungs are usually the first place internal bleeding occurs. Sometimes there is also bleeding from the nose or extensive bruising from minor bumps.

#### **Treatment.**

If signs are recognised early enough, treatment is simple by using Vitamin K to allow the blood to clot again. If internal bleeding has occurred, your pet may need a blood transfusion and other treatments to prevent infection and further bleeding. All animals that have had rat bait poisoning need ongoing Vitamin K therapy for some weeks to ensure there is no residual toxicity.

#### **Prevention.**

If you see your pet ingesting rat bait, you should contact us at the clinic immediately. The vet will be able to induce vomiting to prevent the poison from being absorbed. If your dog has any of the signs explained above, and you have rat bait around the house, contact the vet and bring the packet of poison into the clinic with you. If you have placed rat bait around the house, try to position it high where dogs won't be able to reach it.

### **DESEXING SPECIAL!**

• **\$30 off all female desexing**

• **\$25 off all male desexing**

Thanks to money kindly donated by the RSPCA.

**BE QUICK, FOR A SHORT TIME ONLY!**

## Update on the drought.

Even with the beautiful rain we had over the past week, with the cold weather coming upon us, the growing season is coming to a halt and this means no more feed. Livestock, which are already suffering, will be facing an even tougher time. At Warby Street, we are seeing diseases and deaths associated with the drought conditions. Listed below is an outline of the conditions we have seen over the past few months that we think you should be aware of.

- ✂ Botulism: The toxins grow in warm, moist conditions- often in mouldy feed or decaying vegetation in paddocks. The disease is usually fatal once clinical signs begin. An annual (5 in 1) vaccination is the most effective form of control.
- ✂ Drowning in dams: Animals are too weak to get out and the banks are getting steeper as the water level gets lower.
- ✂ Bracken poisoning: The most toxic part of the plant is the underground stems, next comes the younger green fronds and the least toxic part is the mature fronds. Outbreaks occur when pasture feed is scarce, particularly when there has been no autumn break. Naturally, getting rid of bracken is the best way of preventing poisoning. Stock access to bracken paddocks should be monitored closely. If stock must graze paddocks with bracken, always provide a good alternative feed source such as hay or oats; that is **high in energy**.
- ✂ Malnutrition: The most important issue during drought times. Malnutrition can affect livestock no matter what condition score they are in. Again, the most important thing is a good quality feed which is **high in energy** and well balanced for vitamins and minerals.
- ✂ Pregnancy Toxaemia and other stresses of calving: are more likely to occur in cows in times of limited feed quality, especially if they are bearing twins. Larger losses occur during drought if supplementary feeding is inadequate. It is important that supplementary feed is **high in energy** i.e. grain, protein alone is not sufficient.
- ✂ Severe calf diarrhoea: Can be caused by either viruses, bacteria or protozoa. It is more common in hand-reared calves, but can be seen in all calves. It is common in times of hardship because the cows have a lower quality of colostrum. It is important that newborn calves receive at least 2 litres of colostrum in the first 24 hours of life. Adequate nutrition is important to keep strength up and rotation of calving paddocks.
- ✂ Bottlejaw in cattle: This is not always associated with fluke or woody tongue. In drought conditions it is often due to low protein associated with malnutrition.

As we get further into the cool weather, life is going to get tougher! We could reach the end of feed reserves and people are already at the end of their tether. Your livestock are going to need good quality roughage and pasture which is **high energy carbohydrate**. **Giving molasses, vitamin ADE and salts is not a substitute for food!** If you don't have feed stored or are unable to source feed, it may be better to consider alternatives such as selling your stock. Hopefully the rain will continue and the weather will stay mild!

### *"King Valley Run"*

A service provided every **Tuesday**  
Charging **travel fees** from Glenrowan,  
Greta, Mohyu or Milawa.

### *"Beechworth/Myrtleford valley Run"*

A service provided every **Thursday** charging  
**travel fees** from Markwood, Everton,  
Beechworth and Myrtleford.



## Travelling with your pet.

14% of Australians take their pet with them on weekend getaways, of course pets are usually more likely to go on shorter breaks rather than extended holidays.

### How do I decide if I should take my pet?

If your dog is a barker, anti-social or a poor traveller, a boarding kennel may be best.

You should always check before you place your pet in a boarding situation. If it smells bad then it is no place for your pet. Also, are the water bowls and kennels bright and clean?

Leaving your pets with friends can end friendships. Have clear binding agreements about where responsibility lies before any arrangements are made.

### How do I prepare my pet for travelling?

If your pet is going to be a regular traveller in the car it is good to get them used to this from the very beginning. This means starting them on short trips in the car, then increasing the time they spend in the car so they get used to it.

Reward for pets when they behave in the car so they have a good experience travelling.

Make sure your pets vaccinations are up to date. Also check the destination with your local vet, in case your pet needs extra protection, e.g. ticks or heartworm.

### What to do on the day:

- ✗ Try to fit in your departure time in with your pets daily routine.
- ✗ Always give your pet the opportunity to relieve itself before leaving.
- ✗ Take a 'pooper scooper' and leash for dogs and a litter tray for cats.
- ✗ Be aware that without adequate ventilation animals left in cars can quickly die from heat exhaustion - even on moderately warm days.
- ✗ Take their favourite toy/blanket to make your pet as comfortable as possible.
- ✗ When travelling with dogs, stop every two hours and exercise them.
- ✗ Do not feed your animal on the day you leave. Make sure you have fresh water; it is best if it comes from the home supply.
- ✗ Restrain them well in the vehicle. Car harnesses are a great idea and very safe.



### Keeping your animal safe and comfortable while on holidays.

- ✗ Dogs will generally be quite excited by the prospect of new territory to explore. When you arrive, walk the dog around its new area and familiarise it with its holiday home.
- ✗ Cats are more likely to be unsettled, so ensure that your cat can be confined until it is relaxed and obviously adjusted to its new environment.
- ✗ Ensure your pet can not run away and become lost in unfamiliar surroundings.
- ✗ Ensure your pet has a collar and tag with a phone number which can be reached while you're away.

Hope you enjoy travelling with your pets!

**ALL MICROCHIPPING IS NOW \$31.50, THAT'S A \$25 DISCOUNT!**

*This special on microchipping does not have to be in conjunction with another procedure.*

*All new council registrations must now be microchipped, by law.*



## Grass Tetany/Lactation Tetany

Now that we have had some rain (hopefully there'll be some more!) and the weather is starting to get cooler, the likelihood of grass tetany/lactation tetany increases.

**So, what causes grass tetany?** Grass tetany is caused by a low amount of Magnesium in the blood. Grass tetany occurs when there is a low dietary intake of magnesium coupled with a high requirement for the mineral. Pastures that are growing rapidly in cold weather are commonly low in magnesium. Reasons for high requirements of magnesium include loss of magnesium in the milk during lactation and impaired absorption of magnesium when pastures contain a concurrent high level of potassium and nitrogen. So the most common time that we see grass tetany is just after the autumn break, when the weather is reasonably cool and grass is growing rapidly. The condition is seen in autumn calving cows, in peak lactation.

### Stages of grass tetany:

- **Acute:** sudden decrease in appetite, very sensitive to stimulation which causes bellowing, galloping and convulsions. Mostly seen as sudden death because cows die before treatment.
- **Sub-acute:** gradual onset of 3-4 days with slight inappetence and exaggerated limb movements. There is a decrease in appetite and milk yield, muscle tremors and an unsteady gait. These cattle are also sensitive to stimulation. Some cattle will spontaneously recover, others may progress. Treatment is usually effective but there is a high tendency to relapse.
- **Chronic:** cows have low magnesium levels in the blood, but do not show clinical signs.

**Treatment** of grass tetany is with the administration of calcium and magnesium salts. Recovery rates are always higher when treatment is administered early. Importantly, if low magnesium has occurred in a herd, the rest of the herd is at risk and should be treated to prevent further outbreaks.

**Prevention** of grass tetany is easy, although not always completely effective. Firstly, high risk animals should be moved onto low risk pastures. High risk pastures can be grazed by low risk animals such as steers and yearling heifers.

- Blocks of magnesium salts, usually magnesium oxide are good during the high risk period. Magnesium can also be administered orally on a daily basis, but this is quite time consuming.
- Increasing the magnesium content of pastures can be rapidly achieved by spraying pastures with magnesium oxide. This has to be done at regular intervals, usually every 2-3 days.
- Magnesium bullets introduced into the gut are another effective way of preventing grass tetany. The bullets release a daily amount of magnesium. In very high risk animals on high

### **ONLINE NEWSLETTER**

**If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletters via email, please fill out the form below and drop it into us at Warby St Vet Hospital.**

**Name:** .....  
(first name) (surname)

**Postal Address:** .....

**Email Address:** .....