

WINTER 2012

Winter has well and truly bitten in the Nth East with several early snowfalls on the mountains and clear crisp days and nights in the valleys.

Further training for better Cruciate Ligament Repairs

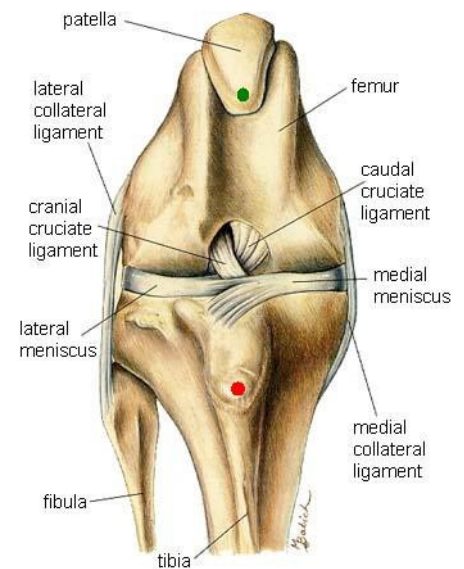
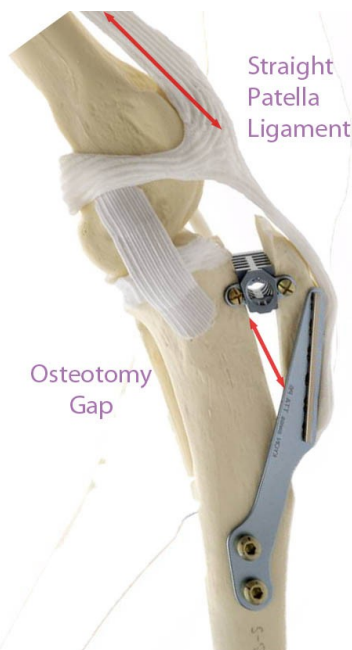
All of our veterinarians at Warby St Veterinary Hospital and Wangaratta Equine hospital regularly attend continuing education seminars, courses and conferences. The advent of online “webinars” has made this even easier for us given our rural location. In late June two of our veterinarians will attend a practical workshop at the Charles Sturt University campus in Wagga Wagga to learn a more advanced technique to repair cruciate ligament tears in larger breed dogs.

Tearing of the anterior cruciate ligament in the knee of the dog is a very common injury. The instability in the knee joint causes lameness and starts a process of arthritic degeneration in the joint. Without surgery to stabilise the joint there is usually a poor outcome with worsening arthritis, lameness and pain for the dog.

We perform many surgeries each year to stabilise knees with torn cruciate ligaments on patients of various sizes. In smaller dogs (<15kg) the procedure that we perform is very successful. The same procedure can, and is, performed in large breed dogs often times with good success. However, in some cases, particularly in very large dogs, the procedure is not as successful because of the forces their size exerts on the joint. As a result of these failures other repair procedures have been created for heavier dogs. These procedures are a lot more in depth than the ones we perform on smaller dogs and have generally required a referral to a surgical specialist in Melbourne.

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The knee joint of the dog. The patella ligament runs from the green spot to the red spot. The red spot shows the tibial tuberosity which is advanced (moved forward) during the procedure. Moving this piece of bone forwards with the patella ligament attached changes certain angles in the joint and creates an inherently stable knee

The training course our veterinarians will attend is designed to teach the skills to perform one of these procedures called the Tibial Tuberosity Advancement (TTA). This procedure changes the dynamics of the knee so that it becomes inherently stable when the dog is moving around. It has been shown to be very effective at returning larger breed dogs to normal running and playing after they have injured their knee. We are very excited to be able to start offering this procedure to our clients without the need for a trip to Melbourne.

This picture shows the surgical procedure and implants on a model dog knee joint. The tibial tuberosity is freed from the tibia then rotated a set distance forward (determined from measurements on xrays) and held in this position using a bone plate and small bridge between the pieces of bone. Doing this tensions the patella ligament and changes the angle of the knee making it stable even in the presence of a torn anterior cruciate ligament. A bone graft is packed into the space between the 2 pieces of bone to speed the healing and return the tibia to one solid piece of bone

Pancreatitis in Dogs

Pancreatitis seems to be the most common more serious medical issue that we see in our practice with a case diagnosed and treated nearly every week. The condition occurs due to inflammation in the pancreas and is often preceded by a fatty meal such as BBQ chicken with the skin on or all things pork based. It can however also appear somewhat out of the blue without a history of eating a fatty meal.

The pancreas has several jobs in the body, one of which is to produce digestive enzymes that help break down the food our dogs eat. These enzymes are designed to break down fat, protein and carbohydrates and usually remain inactive until they are delivered to the small intestine down the pancreatic duct. In the case of pancreatitis these enzymes are activated whilst still in the pancreas and are unable to discriminate ingested food from the dog's own fat and protein and begin to damage the pancreas itself. This digestion causes a lot of pain in the forward part of the abdomen and often leads to vomiting, inappetance and dehydration.

The symptoms and physical examination often give the veterinarian a high suspicion of pancreatitis and the disease can be confirmed by looking at the results of several blood tests.

Unfortunately there is no instant cure for pancreatitis and the condition must be treated with supportive care to allow the pancreas time to settle and return to normal. Each time the dog eats or drinks there is stimulation to produce and release more pancreatic digestive enzymes, which leads to more damage to the pancreas. As a result one of the important things in the dog's treatment is to withhold food and water for around 48 hours. In this time the dog's hydration is corrected and maintained using IV fluids and the inflammation in the pancreas subsides. Pain relief and anti-inflammatory medications are also used to keep the animal comfortable and speed up the resolution of the disease.

Pancreatitis is a serious disease and in severe cases may be fatal. With prompt diagnosis and treatment there is usually a good outcome and the dog is discharged from the hospital in 4-5 days feeling almost 100%. In the short term at home a low fat diet is recommended and future feeding of very fatty foods like BBQ chicken, pork bones or hot chips is discouraged. Some cases of pancreatitis can be particularly severe and in some cases pancreatic cancer can be the underlying cause. In these cases the prognosis is much worse than the usual case.

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

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

Tetanus Vaccination in Horses, Cattle and Sheep

Tetanus is an important disease of livestock and horses caused by toxins produced by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*. Prevention is much better than trying to cure clinical cases and can be easily achieved using a vaccination program. Tetanus may affect dogs in some cases, but they are much less susceptible to clinical disease and are not routinely vaccinated.



Clostridium tetani



Tetanus
Vaccine &
Anti-toxin

Foal with tetanus showing the classic "sawhorse" stance common in affected animals. His mother was unvaccinated so no immunity was passed on in the colostrum.

Tetanus is a nasty disease caused by toxins of the anaerobic bacteria *Clostridium tetani*.

The bacteria is widespread in the environment, found as spores in the soil, and in the intestinal tract of animals. It can enter a human or animal and produce toxins when a wound causes a break in the skin barrier. Puncture wounds are particularly dangerous, as *C. tetani* is an anaerobic bacteria, so thrives in wounds where there is little oxygen. Even wounds in the oral cavity caused by shedding juvenile teeth and getting adult teeth coming through can be susceptible to tetanus entry.

Tetanus is not a contagious disease, but the spores can live in the environment for several years.

The disease is characterised by painful muscle spasms, which can cause respiratory failure, and ultimately death in untreated cases. It is also known as 'lock-jaw', as muscle spasms in jaw muscles early in the stage of the disease can cause difficulty eating and opening the mouth. The ears may also be pulled back causing a facial expression that looks like a grimace. The third eyelid gland is often pulled part way across the eyes also.

Tetanus can be very effectively prevented with a vaccination program. This is inexpensive, and prevention is much better than treatment of this disease. An anti-toxin is available, but unless treatment is initiated early, the fatality rate can be high.

Vaccination against *Clostridium tetani* is a component of the cattle and sheep 5 in 1 vaccines. Two vaccinations 4-6 weeks apart, followed by annual boosters are required for this vaccine. Vaccination in sheep and cattle is usually started at 6-12 weeks of age.

Horses can be vaccinated with either tetanus alone, or a combined tetanus/strangles vaccine. From 3 months of age, horses require 2 vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart, followed by a booster injection 12 months later. This will provide long term immunity, with boosters required every 5 years thereafter. The combined tetanus/strangles 2 in 1 vaccine requires a slightly different protocol.

Tetanus vaccination should be considered an essential part of animal husbandry.



5 in 1 vaccination for Cattle and Sheep

Fracture Repair

Unfortunately broken bones in pets do happen and repair of these injuries is an interesting part of a veterinarian's work. It seems that responsible pet ownership has improved significantly over the years with good fencing and good restraint of dogs when out for a walk leading to a reduction in the number of road traffic accident related broken bones over time. This is great news for our pets that less of them are injured and highlights the positive benefits of effective containment and restraint for their health.

Like in humans there are multiple ways to approach the repair of a fracture in dogs and cats. Small, simple or non displaced fractures can often be managed conservatively with rest and support using bandages, splints or casts. However, these support devices are often not readily tolerated by our pets and regular checks and adjustments are needed so that pressure sores or poor results do not occur.

In more complex fractures the need for surgical correction arises to get an adequate repair. Surgery may involve the placement of a metal pin and wires to stabilise the break, or may involve a plate and screws. In more severe or difficult fractures other devices may be used. External fixateurs form a cage around the leg with pins passing into the bone from the outside to hold the bone in the correct alignment. These are used when the break involves many small pieces, or it has occurred in a location that makes it difficult to anchor a plate or pin effectively (for example at the very end of a bone).



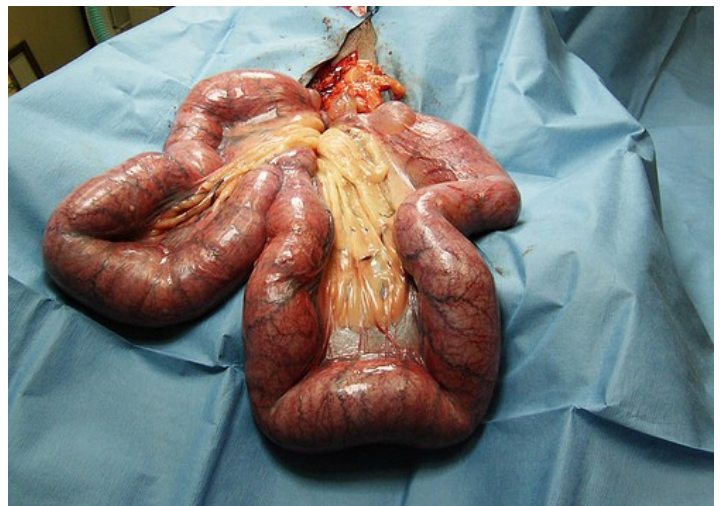
Bone Plating of a fractured radius

In most cases fracture repair takes around 6 – 8 weeks depending on the type of break. Younger dogs tend to heal a little quicker and older dogs may take a little longer for their bones to mend.

Veterinary fracture repair is quite an advanced field of work, which is great for any of our pets unlucky enough to have broken a bone.

Pyometra (Uterine Infection)

Pyometra, literally meaning pus in the uterus, is a condition that affects older undesexed female dogs. The condition usually occurs 1-2 months after the dog has been in season. The affected dog is usually very lethargic because of a high fever and not interested in food or water. In many cases there will be a yellow discharge from the vulva due to pus leaking from the uterus. The infection is very serious and untreated can lead to death. The usual treatment is to desex the animal which immediately removes the infection in its entirety and leads to a rapid improvement in the dog's condition. Attempting to treat the condition with antibiotics is rarely successful and unless the patient is a valuable breeding animal the much more effective surgical technique is preferred.



Intraoperative photo of pus filled uterus.

Like with a lot of things this condition is an example of prevention being better than cure. Obviously a desexed dog cannot get an infection in a uterus that it does not possess. Along with preventing unwanted pregnancies the other major benefit of routine desexing is the avoidance of medical issues such as pyometra as the dog gets older.

Some dogs are not desexed when they are young for various reasons and there is a misinformed belief that older dogs cannot be desexed. Quite contrary to this we strongly recommend the desexing of older dogs because they are the group of animals that can suffer serious health problems such as pyometra. And, it is much easier and safer to operate on a well dog before it develops an illness than to perform a similar operation when the animal is feeling unwell.