

## WINTER 2014

The last week of cold, rain and even snow around Stanley has well and truly announced the arrival of Winter 2014.



### MY DOG'S HAVING PUPS!

Having a pet dog give birth to pups can be an exciting and memorable experience. However, if it is the first time you have been through the experience things can be pretty daunting. Understanding the process and knowing when things are not going according to plan is paramount to a successful whelping.

The process should begin with a planned pregnancy after a long think about why you want your dog to have pups and what you plan to do to ensure the pups go to a loving home. Ideally the mother should be bred to a dog of similar or smaller size to prevent problems with birthing large pups from the outset. If your pet becomes pregnant without things being planned it is wise to discuss things with your vet and think seriously about whether a litter of pups is in the best interest of the dog.



An X-ray of an expectant mother

Expectant mothers require added feeding in the last 1/3 of the pregnancy. Feeding puppy food to the mother in several meals a day is a good way to ensure they get enough nutrition as the size of their belly increases and squeezes their stomach. Puppy food should continue through lactation as this requires a large amount of energy also and puppy food has more energy per gram of food when compared to normal adult dog food. Gestation length in the dog is around 63 days so the last 3 weeks is the key time to begin increased energy intake by feeding puppy food.

At the time of imminent birth dogs often become restless and start nesting behaviour about 24 hours prior to whelping. From the point of visible abdominal contractions the first pup is usually delivered within 30 minutes. Subsequent pups also tend to come within 30 minutes of each other. A period of 1 hour before the first pup or between pups can be considered abnormal and signifies it is time to call the vet. Intervening earlier rather than later in a difficult birth tends to provide better results. Pups are born in their placentas and the mother will usually break these open and free the pup. If they do not do this you will need to free them from their placenta

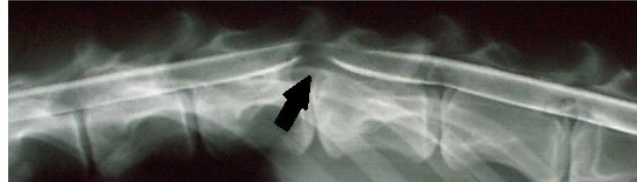
to allow them to start breathing. Holding the pups in a dry towel and gently rubbing their chest walls can help stimulate them to start breathing. The mother will usually lick the pups after they are born and get them going, but if they are not experienced you may need to lend a hand. Pups with nice pink noses and tongues and pups making noises are usually a sign of things going well.

Ensuring the pups get on and have a good drink in early life is important too. The colostrum milk helps to boost their immune system for the first few weeks of life. Pups will usually keep drinking from their mother for 6 weeks. Wet food can be started around 4 weeks of age. Worming of the mother should be done 2 weeks before giving birth and pups should be wormed at 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age. First vaccinations are usually given at 6 weeks of age, with a second at 10-14 weeks of age.

Expectant Mothers	1
Intervertebral Disc Disease	2
Newsletter Subscription	
Dental Health	3
Grass Tetany	
Rain scald	4
Vaccination Reminders	

## INTERVERTEBRAL DISC DISEASE

The bones of the spine are separated by shock absorbing cartilages called intervertebral discs. These discs allow the spine to flex side to side and up and down as the dog moves around. The spine of a dog undergoes a lot more movement than the spine of a human and as a result takes a lot of strain throughout life. As our pets get older these discs get a little stiffer and in more extreme results can become calcified and hard. In older dogs, or in younger dogs that undergo a traumatic twisting force on the spine, the discs can prolapse or bulge their central material into the spinal canal where compression of the spinal cord occurs. The location of the disc bulge or prolapse determines the signs that develop. As a result of the compression on the spinal cord there is nerve dysfunction downstream (ie. towards the tail) of the affected disc. So a disc bulge in the neck leads to progressive weakness in both the front and hind legs. Whereas a disc bulge in the thoracic or lumbar spine leads only to weakness or progressive paralysis in the hind legs.



A myelogram (contrast) xray showing a disc bulging upward and compressing the spinal cord (arrow).

Intervertebral disc disease seems to more often affect small breed dogs, with some breeds such as Dachshunds affected even more commonly. Signs can be mild (weakness in the legs and pain in the back) or very severe (full paralysis of the limbs) and often get worse with time. In general practice the disease is usually diagnosed based on the presenting signs and physical examination, with some support from plain x-rays. In more serious cases CT scans or myelograms (contrast medium enhanced x-rays) are used at specialist veterinary hospitals to help highlight bulging discs. Some cases respond well to pain relief, rest and anti-inflammatories whereas more severe cases require surgery to decompress the spine. Treatment is usually much more successful if started early before the dog becomes fully paralysed.

If your pet is showing signs of weakness in 1, 2, 3 or 4 legs it is important to have things assessed early on to provide a better prognosis for recovery.

## 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](mailto: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

## DENTAL DISEASE

Dental disease is the most common disease in dogs and cats with studies showing that 85% of dogs over 4 years of age have some form of periodontal disease. It is important that you look out for gingivitis (redness of the gums) which can be caused by an accumulation of plaque and tartar on the teeth and progresses to infection around the gum and then down towards the tooth roots. Many pets will require a general anaesthetic to have their teeth scaled and polished and in some cases it is necessary to remove diseased teeth if they are beyond repair. Earlier intervention invariably leads to a better outcome with a quick scale and polish now removing the need for extractions later in most cases. In addition to pain in the mouth pets with dental disease are more likely to develop heart problems, kidney problems, liver problems or diabetes.



Older pets who are eating less, sleeping more, and not feeling too good, could have dental disease. In many cases cleaning the teeth makes them feel much better. It is no surprise since dental disease causes chronic inflammation and chronic infection in the pet's entire body.

A good diet plays an important role in preventing dental disease as food acts as a natural toothbrush for your pets teeth. There are specific dental diets available to help prevent plaque and tartar build up, cleaning the tooth as your pet crunches on the kibble. Meaty long bones or dental chews are a good and easy way to clean your pet's teeth and can help to relieve boredom too. If your pet will tolerate it a tooth brush can also be used.

Book a dental check up now and remember prevention is better than cure!

## GRASS TETANY

The current wet blustery and cold conditions are a prime time for cases of Grass Tetany in cattle. Grass Tetany is a serious problem that often presents as sudden death in cattle. Otherwise cattle are found in a disoriented and staggy state, often a little agitated or angry and frequently down and unable to rise. Grass Tetany tends to affect lactating cows most often as they are releasing large amounts of magnesium into their milk. Grass Tetany is caused by low levels of magnesium in the bloodstream.

Magnesium is very important in nerve function so a lack of it causes weakness and muscle contractions (tetany). The amount of magnesium available to the animal is governed by how much they are consuming in their diet and how much is being lost from the body (such as in milk). Unlike calcium, there is not a store of magnesium in the blood and the animal is reliant on ongoing intake to maintain adequate levels. In wet and windy weather cattle often stop grazing as they concentrate more on surviving the bad weather. If they were already on the borderline of having insufficient magnesium (especially lactating cows) this reduction in grass intake can be enough to tip them over the edge into grass tetany signs. In addition to this some pastures are inherently lower in magnesium (young growth of grasses and cereal crops) which predisposes animals to the problem. Heavy nitrogen or potassium fertilisation of crops can also interfere with the absorption of magnesium in the rumen and contribute to the problem.

Prevention of grass tetany is far better than trying to cure it, especially when the symptoms presenting are sudden death! Magnesium salt licks can be used in paddocks or magnesium "bullets" can be given to cattle that sit in the rumen and release magnesium slowly. There is also a magnesium powder "causmag" that can be sprinkled onto hay to promote magnesium intake.

To treat cattle with grass tetany we need to give magnesium replacements. Cattle with grass tetany can be agitated and therefore dangerous and too much activity can cause worsening signs or even seizures. Trying to treat the animal where it is usually best, but gently getting them to a yard for restraint may be necessary. Magnesium replacement is given by IV 4 in 1 pouches or subcutaneous magnesium pouches (these magnesium pouches should never be given IV as they are very high in concentration). Unlike milk fever where the symptoms rapidly improve and you can encourage the cow back onto its feet quickly, cattle with grass tetany should be left alone and quiet to improve and get up on their own over a few hours. Having 4 in 1 and magnesium pouches on hand is a good idea.

The following link is a good resource on grass tetany for the farmer:

[http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/110888/Grass-tetany-in-cattle-treatment-and-prevention.pdf](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/110888/Grass-tetany-in-cattle-treatment-and-prevention.pdf)



## RAIN SCALD

We have seen many cases of rain scald in the last couple of months with the increased moisture and humidity. Rain scald is caused by the bacteria *Dermotophilus congolensis* in horses. If left untreated, it can be quite a painful and irritating condition for the horse. It causes a moist dermatitis, which appears as scabs and clumps of hair matted together. When these scabs lift off, they leave no hair or areas of 'alopecia' underneath. The 'rain scald' part of the name derives from the fact that moisture such as rain on the lesions will track the bacteria elsewhere on the body. Thus it typically occurs over the back/dorsal midline. Young and old horses are generally affected more frequently, but it can occur in horses of any age/breed/sex.

Thick hair coats may hide the scabs initially until the rain scald is quite advanced, and also acts to keep moisture around the lesions. 'Rain scald' is also a bit of a misnomer, as it frequently occurs in horses that are rugged and technically haven't had any rain on them!

Treatment must involve removal of the scabs, as they act as a continued source of infection. The horse should be washed thoroughly in an antibacterial such as chlorhexidine or iodine. Scabs should be removed with a brush or fingernails. Drying the affected areas is important, as moisture and humidity will enhance the spread of the bacteria. A bit of sunlight will help too rather than a heavy rug that they might sweat under.

In most cases 'rain scald' is a relatively superficial infection that will clear up with topical antibacterials. Deep infections may however require systemic antibiotics such as penicillin. These would be very painful oozing sores.

Don't ignore the small scabs – early treatment is very effective



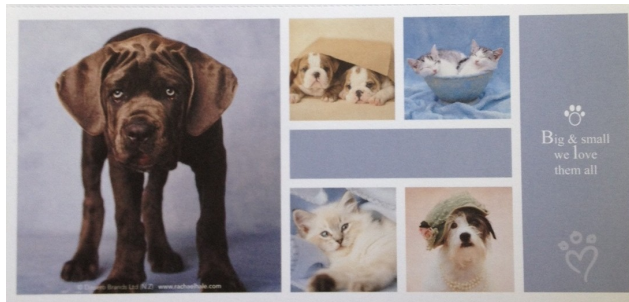
Rain Scald in a horse.



A close up view of skin lesions in a horse with rain scald.

## VACCINATION REMINDERS

We know that a lot of our clients rely on us sending them reminders when their animals are due for ongoing preventative health measures, like vaccinations or cartrophen injections for arthritis. We have always relied on posted reminders in envelopes in the past, which we feel are beneficial because of their tangible nature. A letter pinned to the fridge or notice board keeps on being visible and keeps on reminding us to get our pets into the vet. We are continuing on with posted reminders, but you may notice that they have changed to a more colourful smaller postcard type compared to the old letter in an envelope. These reminders still contain the same information as before and help the environment a little by reducing paper use. We are also trying to move with the times and technology and looking at sending reminders by email or SMS. All transmitted reminders rely on us having accurate contact information so if you think your address or mobile phone number may be out of date on your client record please let us know so we can continue to remind you effectively when your animals are due for a visit, test or treatment.



One of our new postcard style reminder notices. Coming to a mailbox near you soon!