

## WINTER 2015

The trees are all but bare, there is snow on the high country and the fires are burning in living rooms across the North East. Winter is here again.

### The Blocked Cat

#### Urethral obstruction in the Cat

Urinary tract obstruction in the cat usually affects male cats because of the narrowness and inelasticity of the urethra as it approaches the end of the penis. The source of obstruction may be a urinary stone or a plug made up of mucus, pus and crystals. The condition is particularly common in overweight male cats that live most of their life indoors and have a diet made up solely of dry cat biscuits. A urinary obstruction is a serious problem as the failure to excrete waste products in the urine leads to rapid metabolic and electrolyte imbalances and may lead to death as these changes take their toll on the cat's system.

When the cat becomes obstructed they require treatment to remove the obstruction and allow swelling and inflammation in the bladder and urethra to subside. This requires a general anaesthetic and the passage of a urinary catheter to allow the urine in the bladder to drain. If the cat also has urinary stones in the bladder they may need an operation to remove the stones from the bladder and in some cases passing a catheter from the bladder down the urethra is the only way to remove the obstruction. In most cases once the obstruction is removed and the swelling, infection and inflammation subsides the cat returns to normal urinary function. However, without weight loss and a change to wet (tinned) food the cat is at risk of another episode of obstruction in the future. In severe cases it may not be possible to remove the obstruction or damage to the urethra may lead to the formation of strictures that further disrupt the normal flow of urine. In these cases a procedure to create a wider urethral opening may be necessary to solve the problem and avoid future complications.



Cat Straining in the litter tray

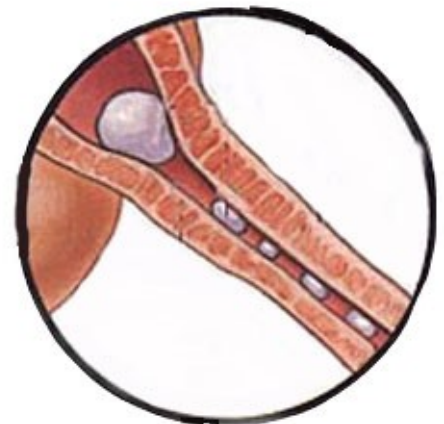


Illustration of urinary stones obstructing the urethra.

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A cat that is having urinary tract infection, inflammation or blockage will tend to show classic symptoms at home. They will pass very small amounts of urine frequently.

This urine is often blood tinged. In some cases the owner will see their cat straining to urinate without producing any urine at all. Some cats will also vocalise while trying to urinate which indicates the discomfort they are experiencing from the infection or blockage. It is important to recognise these signs and present the cat (ideally with a urine sample) to the veterinarian promptly. In many cases early treatment can avoid the situation of full urinary tract blockage which is much more serious than inflammation or infection alone.

Special urinary diets are also produced that help to prevent the symptoms arising again in the future.

Tim Craig  
Warby St Veterinary Hospital

## The Dreaded Bot Fly!

Bot flies (*Gasterophilus* spp) have been making their presence known in the past couple of months, harassing many horses while attempting to lay eggs on the hair coat. The female bot fly looks like a large honey bee, and will hover around horses legs attempting to lay eggs on the hair of the legs, mane and wither.

The sole purpose of the female bot fly is to find a horse to lay eggs on. They lay between 150 and 1000 eggs in their lifetime. They have no mouthparts, so are not distracted by needing to feed. This is why poor horses running away from bot flies sometimes look like they have been doing it for hours, they have been harassed for hours!

There is a reason the female bot fly lays her eggs in certain areas on the horse's coat. The eggs begin to hatch into larvae with warmth, moisture and carbon dioxide, found when the horse licks or chews that area. Front legs are favoured by the bot fly as horses will often rub their face on their legs. Eggs on the mane and wither are often ingested by paddock mates during a mutual grooming session.

Larvae hatch in the mouth, and stay in the tissues of the mouth for several weeks. In a large infestation, these larvae can cause irritation and pain in the mouth and tongue. These larvae are then swallowed into the stomach, where they spend 9-12 months attached to the stomach lining after developing into further larval stages. In early summer they are passed in the faeces and hatch into the adult fly, where the cycle begins again

Often the annoyance of the adult fly is more troublesome than the bot in the stomach. Only in very large numbers do they cause clinical disease - mouth pain, stomach ulceration and occasional obstruction of food passage through the stomach.

Manual removal of eggs on the hair coat with a bot knife can be performed a couple of times a week to reduce numbers reaching the stomach, but the most effective form of bot control is to use an intestinal wormer at the end of autumn. Products that contain ivermectin and moxidectin are very effective against larval bots. The female fly does not survive past the first big frost of late autumn, so this is an ideal time to worm and make an impact on the bot life cycle.



Removing bot fly eggs with a bot knife

## 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: .....

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## Calving Malpresentations

Autumn calving season is well under way and the vets at Warby St Veterinary Hospital have already been busy assisting the delivery of calves around the district. Calves have a habit of getting themselves into all manner of contortions inside their mothers many of which are simply not compatible with being born without help. Being able to recognise when one of your cows is having trouble calving is very important in trying to achieve a good outcome. In general if a cow is noticed to be straining forcefully in labour we should see the water bag emerge within 30 minutes. We should then see the calf's feet within another 30 minutes and finally have a calf within 30 – 60 minutes after that. At the end of the day if you see a cow straining and a calf has not arrived within 1-2 hours then intervention is warranted.

Intervention in calving should begin with yarding the animal and examining the position of the calf in the uterus/birth canal. With practice you can get a feel for what is going on inside. The key is determining if the calf is in a normal presentation (front feet and head coming first like the calf is trying to dive out of its mother like a person diving into a swimming pool). There is then some art to deciding if the normally presenting calf feels like it is small enough to exit the birth canal. The golden rule of pulling calves is that the calf is delivered by technique and gentle traction rather than by brute force. No traction should be applied to a calf that is not in the correct presentation to be born.

If the calf is not presenting normally the type of malpresentation needs to be defined and then corrected. As there are so many ways that a calf can be coming “the wrong way” it takes practice to determine what is going on. One of the most useful parts is deciding if you can feel any feet/legs and then deciding whether they are front or back legs. If you can't feel any legs but can feel a tail then you have a true breach calving situation. If you can feel two legs but no head then you need to work out if the calf is coming backwards or if the head is not following the front legs (“head back”). The key to identifying what type of leg you have is in the way the first two joints in the leg bend. In a front leg the fetlock and carpus both bend in the same direction, whereas in a back leg the fetlock and the hock bend in opposite directions. In addition to this when a calf is coming backwards you should be able to follow the legs up to the rump and feel the tail.

Fig. 1: Anterior presentation



Fig. 2: Posterior presentation



Fig. 3: Breech presentation



Fig. 4: Two front legs presentation



In the diagram to the left you can see the normal or anterior presentation of a calf. You can then see the posterior presentation (coming backwards). Many people call this a breach calving but the true definition of a breach calving is seen in the third picture where the calf is coming backwards but with no legs presenting (you can usually feel the tail when the calf is like this). The fourth picture shows the “head back” presentation. Abnormal presentations need to be corrected before any attempt is made to pull the calf.

The decision of when to call the vet is an important one because it can make the difference between a live and dead calf or even between a live and dead cow. If you do not have experience with correcting presentations and pulling calves then the decision to call the vet is any easy one. If a cow has been straining to calve for more than 1.5 hours without delivering a calf then it needs assistance. While the vet is on their way it is ideal to yard the cow and have her ready for the vet to assist. A sturdy crush should be present on any farm that is calving cows and is an important part of keeping the farmer and vet safe in handling their animals. Clean water is also a welcome addition for the vet.

If you are experienced in delivering calves then a good rule of thumb on calling the vet is that if you are not making any progress in 20 minutes of trying to correct the presentation then you should call the vet. If extended attempts are made to correct the calf's presentation without success then a lot of the natural lubrication that aids delivery is lost and swelling of the vagina and uterus can develop making delivery much more difficult. Vets usually use a similar rule in deciding whether the calf will be delivered normally or by caesarean. If they are not making any headway in 20-30 minutes then the need for a caesarean delivery becomes likely. Extended delays in determining that a cow needs help calving and delivering the calf can lead to the death of the calf prior to delivery.

When the calf is in the correct position traction with a calf puller or block and tackle is used to apply **reasonable force** to allow delivery. Motor vehicles or tractors are never required to pull a calf. That amount of force is unnecessary and dangerous.

## Equine Lymphoma

### Equine lymphoma

Lymphoma is the most common internal malignant cancer of horses. It carries a grave prognosis, and most horses pass away or are euthanased for humane reasons within 6 months of diagnosis. It can occur in horses of any age, but the most common age range is 5-10 year old horses of both sexes.

There are four different forms of lymphoma in horses – generalised, intestinal, mediastinal (within the chest) and cutaneous (skin). These forms often overlap in the horse, and can be difficult to distinguish.

The most common clinical signs of lymphoma are chronic weight loss, ventral oedema and enlarged regional lymph nodes. Often horses are losing weight despite a good appetite in the early stages, but this can decrease as the disease progresses. Ventral oedema is swelling under the chest and abdomen of the horse, and can be ‘pitting’ in nature. This means if you press a thumb or finger into the swelling, an indent will stay there for a period.

Localised tumours may cause difficulty swallowing, rapid breathing, coughing, nasal discharge, a staggery gait or colic depending on their location. Intermittent fever and diarrhoea are also reasonably common.

Affected horses can sometimes have secondary signs associated with cancer, such as high levels of calcium in the blood, and calcium deposits in organs such as the kidneys or heart.

Occasionally a diagnosis is possible on a blood test and examining the lymphocytes in a blood smear, but more often than not histopathology is required to demonstrate neoplastic lymphocytes (cancer cells) in affected tissue or organs. These samples can be obtained with a biopsy.

Unfortunately there is no successful long term treatment for lymphoma in horses.

## Free Cytology on Lumps in June! (\$44 value)

### What’s That Lump?

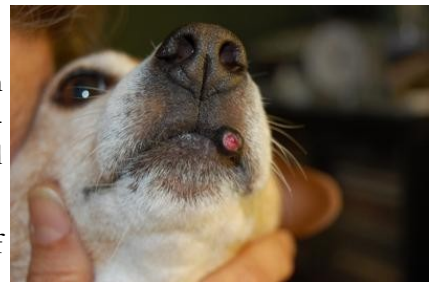
Our pets can develop a multitude of lumps on their bodies over various times in their life. Some are benign and innocuous whereas others are very serious and possibly life threatening. The one thing that they all have in common is that they should be checked out by your vet to make sure they aren’t a risk to your pet’s health.

Your vet will examine the lump and look at its size, position, colour and rate of growth. In many cases a simple examination and discussion about the lump will allow a diagnosis. However, if things are still unclear after a physical examination and history collection the next step is a biopsy of the lump to look at its contents under the microscope.

Initial biopsies are usually by a fine needle aspirate which can be performed without any need for sedation. This method of biopsy is simple, cheap and nearly pain free. It allows us to look at the cells recovered from the lump under the microscope to try and determine what type of lump we are dealing with. In many cases we can give you an on the spot answer to what type of lump your pet has. In some cases however the microscope slide will need to be sent away to a pathologist for a more specialised examination. Occasionally certain types of lumps do not yield their cells very easily by this simple technique and a surgical biopsy or removal of the whole lump and submission for analysis to a pathologist may be necessary instead.

At the end of the day all lumps should be checked out for peace of mind and to avoid the situation where we wish we had have seen the lump weeks or months before to begin treatment. Of particular importance is any lump that has arisen suddenly, is growing quickly or has developed an ulcerated surface.

If your pet has any lumps that you haven’t had examined it is a great idea to get them in for a check. Your vet can give them a full checkup at the same time and make sure they are doing well.



We are offering a “June Special” this month with free cytology at any full price annual health check or other consultation. This involves examination of a fine needle aspirate under the microscope by one of our vets and is usually charged at \$44. The offer is valid for dogs and cats seen at the hospital during the month of June.