

Canine Leishmaniasis

Leishmania is a protozoal parasite widespread in Southern Europe. It is spread by bites from infected sandflies and causes severe disease in both dogs and people. With more and more dogs travelling to Europe the number of cases seen in the UK is on the increase.

The parasite invades white blood cells and causes severe and often fatal disease but the incubation period can vary from three months to years after initial infection. This means that dogs may not show signs of illness for a considerable time after travel.

The first signs noticed by owners are usually skin lesions and hair loss, particularly around the eyes. This is often accompanied by increased thirst and weight loss as the internal organs are also affected. The disease may progress to cause kidney failure, anaemia and arthritis.

Treatment is expensive and can only control the symptoms not cure the disease. Up until this year the only means of prevention was to reduce exposure to the sandflies with the use of insect repellents. In areas in Southern Europe, where prevalence of the disease is high, there is a high risk of visiting dogs becoming infected.

A new vaccine has become available this year which gives a much higher level of protection against the disease. A course of three injections at three week intervals is required initially and thereafter a yearly booster will keep up immune levels. Dogs which may previously have been exposed to infected sandflies should be blood tested prior to vaccination to check they are not already carrying the disease.

We still recommend the use of insect repellents when travelling with your pet, even if they have been vaccinated against leishmaniasis. No vaccine is 100% perfect and biting flies and ticks can also carry other diseases.



Festive Hazards

It's that time of year again, so here are a few reminders of things to look out for over the Christmas period....

Chocolate

As well as stealing chocolate left out on the side, dogs commonly also get hold of chocolate which has been wrapped and left under the tree or sent through the post. A sufficient quantity of any chocolate is poisonous to dogs but much smaller amounts of dark chocolate will cause problems.

Chocolate contains Theobromine which affects the nervous system and heart. Signs of ingestion include; shaking, hyperactivity, panting, diarrhoea and can progress to seizures.

Avoid giving chocolate as a treat to your pet and keep it somewhere secure, not wrapped under the tree or hanging as decorations.

Grapes, Raisins and Sultanas

As well as being one of the main ingredients in Christmas cake and pudding, these are also present in many chocolate bars. There is no specific toxic dose as different animals will tolerate different amounts; a very small quantity can cause kidney failure in some animals. Avoid leaving these fruits where your pet can reach them.

Turkey and the trimmings etc

Also be aware that many Christmas foods are very rich and fatty and can give your pet an upset stomach. Think carefully before giving your pet different food over the Christmas period and keep bins tightly closed. Remember even the plastic wrapping from the Turkey may appeal to a scavenging dog.

Poisonous Plants

Poinsettia, Holly and Mistletoe are all common Christmas plants which can cause vomiting and diarrhoea. Make sure they are well out of reach of pets and check regularly for fallen leaves and berries.

Decorations

Tinsel, baubles and coloured lights may all look like toys to your pet. Make sure they are out of reach and that your pet has plenty of their own toys to entertain them. Many decorations can cause serious problems if swallowed and require expensive surgery to remove. In addition cables to lights will give pets an electric shock causing burns and possible fluid accumulation on the lungs if chewed through. This is especially seen in young, inquisitive pets so take extra care to cover exposed wires.

Antifreeze

Not a festive hazard as such but the cold weather brings an increase in the number of people topping up the antifreeze in their cars. Please remember to be careful not to leave bottles open and to clean up spillages promptly and thoroughly. Antifreeze (ethylene glycol) is highly toxic to animals and humans and only small amounts need to be ingested to cause a fatal kidney failure. Unfortunately it is sweet tasting and even normally picky cats will lick it off their paws if they have walked through it. Signs of poisoning include vomiting, lethargy, increased urination and seizures. The sooner treatment is received the better the chances of survival.

With a little prior planning, hopefully you should be able to avoid an unnecessary trip to the vet's over the festive period. However if you are concerned that your pet may have encountered any of the above hazards, don't panic.

Phone us for advice as many are easily treated if caught early.

Rabbit Diet

Rabbits are a popular pet and are kept both outside in traditional hutches and runs and increasingly indoors as house rabbits.

In the wild, rabbits most of their time foraging with grass, plants, twigs and bark making up their diet. Pet rabbits live in an environment completely controlled by their owners and we need to ensure that the diet we provide is as suitable as possible.

Fibre is the most important part of any rabbit's diet and provides the bulk of their nutrition. Rabbits need a combination of indigestible fibre and digestible fibre. Indigestible fibre is the part which helps wear teeth down and keeps material moving through the digestive tract. It passes through their digestive system and out as hard round faecal pellets. Digestible fibre has nutritional value and also helps keep the right balance of bacteria in the gut. To get the most nutrition out of the fibre rabbits pass it out as soft caecotrophs which they then eat so it passes through the digestive tract a second time. This is usually done at night.

Hay and grass should form the bulk of your rabbit's diet. This can then be supplemented with small amounts of pellets so that they get the vitamins and minerals that they need. We never recommend muesli style diets as rabbits will pick out the sweet high carbohydrate pieces and leave the rest, meaning they miss out on vital vitamins and minerals, especially calcium.

Dark leafy greens such as curly kale and carrot tops can be added in small quantities to add variety to your rabbit's diet. Salad vegetables such as carrots and lettuce should ideally be avoided as they are higher in sugars and can upset the digestive tract, lead to obesity and do not provide enough wear on the teeth.

Providing plenty of forage such as hay, ideally in a rack, also keeps your rabbit occupied for longer than easily consumed bowls of food and helps prevent boredom. A good high fibre diet from an early age is vital to reducing dental and digestive disease and in conjunction with vaccination, good parasite control and neutering will give your rabbit the best chance of a long and healthy life.



Discounted Clinic for Pensioners

From Tuesday to Thursday, the small animal department runs a discounted clinic for pensioners between 10am and 3.45pm. Any clients who are pensioners will qualify for a 10% discount (some conditions apply) on consultations, vaccinations and flea and worm medication. However, you will have to prove you are a pensioner on your first visit - you don't always look your age!

For more information or to book an appointment, please telephone us on:

01722-333291



Are You A Member of Our Pet Health Plan Club Yet?

The Endell Veterinary Group Pet Health Plan offers an easy, cost effective way to meet your pet's essential healthcare needs. We believe that preventative health care is an important part of pet ownership; things like vaccines and parasite control are important factors in helping your pet have a long and healthy life. As well as vaccines, wormers and flea control, the plan provides a six-monthly check up to catch any problems early, something that becomes increasingly important as your pet ages. This is not the same as pet insurance but allows you to save money and spread the cost of preventative health care for your pet and works well in conjunction with a good insurance policy.

What's included?

For a regular monthly fee your pet receives:

- Twice yearly health assessments
- Full routine annual vaccination
- Full worming program for cats and dogs for effective year round protection against round and tape worm (includes lungworm)
- All year round flea control for cats and dogs
- Parasite program for rabbits for *E cuniculi*
- Annual health screen blood test
- Insurance claim forms completed free of charge

In addition, you get discounts on the following:

- Routine consultations
- Neutering
- Microchips
- Dental treatments
- Additional vaccinations
- Royal Canin and Hill's food



Ordering Food and Medications

We have changed the way we order your pets' medications and food. We have found that holding a lot of stock means that many products go out of date on the shelf. To try and combat this we are ordering most medicines and foods from our wholesaler only as required. In order to save yourself a wasted journey in to the practice, we ask that you please telephone us in advance to give us 48 hours' notice to order your food or medication.



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Endell Veterinary Group Small Animal



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