



AUTUMN 2009

Westgate Veterinary Hospital

www.westgateevets.com

NEWS

Congratulations...

A very big congratulations to our veterinary nurse Margaret Hanratty who gave birth to a bouncing baby girl, Siobhan, on 17th of April. We are delighted for Margaret and her husband Paul on their new arrival. Also congratulations to Ciara Mc Bride who works in Head to Tail grooming who also gave birth to a baby boy this month, mother and baby are doing great.

Congratulations....



Congratulations to our trainee nurse Susan Corr who has been accepted onto the veterinary nursing course in DIT. Thankfully Susan will not be leaving us and will be here part time. We wish her the best in September.

Welcome.....



Welcome to Róisín Dixon who is the latest addition to the Westgate team. Róisín is a qualified veterinary nurse originally from Derry. Róisín last worked in UCD in Dublin and we hope to benefit from her experience in a teaching hospital.

Also in this issue:

- Autumn Alarm!
- Keeping your Guinea Pig healthy!
- Keeping an eye on things!

It's official: chips are good for pets!

OUR PETS are part of the family and as such we all want to do everything we can to keep them safe. You have them checked over regularly and keep them up to date with their vaccinations, but how well would you cope if your pet went missing?

No matter how responsible you are or how well behaved your pet is, it is very possible that one day they may go missing. While collars can be slipped, name tags can fall off and tattoos may become illegible over time, **microchip** identification is *permanent* so if your pet is lost, a microchip gives you the best chance of being reunited.

A microchip is hardly bigger than a grain of rice and having it implanted is quick and simple. Like a normal injection, it is inserted under the skin at the back of the neck and, once there, it lasts a lifetime. The chip contains a unique code that identifies the pet and the owner. These details, including your name, address and contact telephone numbers are held on a central database.

Most vets, animal charities and local authorities have microchip readers. If the unthinkable happens and your pet does go missing, once found and handed in, your pet will be scanned. Your contact details can then be looked up on the database and then it is just a case of calling you and returning your pet.

Do remember that if you move house or change your telephone number it is vital to update the central database as well!

Can you imagine how you would feel if your beloved family pet became lost and wasn't microchipped? For all responsible pet owners, getting your pet microchipped should be one of the first things that you do. Remember – microchipping is as simple as having your pet vaccinated! Contact us today for further details!



Microchip implant x1



A tiny microchip is easily injected under the skin.



A special scanner is used to "read" the unique I.D code. This code speedily identifies your pet.

Is your pet insured?



JUST as having your pet microchipped can be invaluable if your pet goes missing, so pet insurance can be a real lifesaver for the unexpected vet bill! Recent advances in veterinary medicine have meant that treatments that were unimaginable just a few years ago are now a reality. Diagnostic procedures such as MRI scans are increasingly routine, and surgical procedures such as cataract removals and hip replacements are commonplace.

On a daily basis we see the heart wrenching decisions some of our clients face regarding the treatment of their pets, but with appropriate pet insurance, we can hopefully ensure that any treatment decisions are made on the basis of *need* rather than *cost*. Don't take the risk – get your pet insured today!

Dog/Cat photo (above) and dog photo (left): Jane Burton.

For further information on any of the topics covered in this newsletter, please contact your local surgery

Autumn Alarm!



WITH THE onset of cooler autumn weather, we look at some of the issues facing our pets at this time of year.

With the cold dark nights coming, it's important to make sure that you find time for walking your dog or his mobility (and yours!) may suffer; affected pets may show signs of **joint stiffness** – particularly after rest. Visibility also becomes an issue at this time of year – particularly in the evenings and early mornings; wear pale and reflective clothing and collars to avoid accidents.

Now is the time to keep pets indoors in the evenings to avoid **firework** injuries. Dogs with noise phobias may benefit from medication to help relieve the



anxiety associated with fireworks.; habituation to loud noises over a long period of time can also be helpful. Please ask us for an appointment to discuss this further.

Talking of **bonfires** – piles of leaves are irresistible for hedgehogs looking for a nest or some dry shelter. Always check for these little creatures before lighting a bonfire.



This is also the time of year that many car owners prepare for winter. **Anti-freeze** (used in car radiators) is a very palatable poison. If ingested, even small amounts can cause serious kidney failure and usually death.



As the weather cools, **bees and wasps** become dozy and are easily caught by pets. Unfortunately they can still give nasty stings to your pets.

If you are planting **bulbs** at this time of year – bear in mind that many of them are toxic to pets. It is important to ensure that newly planted bulbs are not dug up and eaten by inquisitive pets.

Another hazard to avoid is dogs eating autumn fruits and developing digestive problems; do prevent access to **fallen apples, conkers** and the like.



Perhaps surprisingly for many pet owners, **fleas and ticks** are still a huge problem at this time of year!



Don't drop your guard against these pests! Please let us advise you on the best products for your pets!

And finally, the autumn is also a time for **tortoise** owners to ensure their pets are adequately prepared for hibernation.



Please come and see us for a pre-hibernation check up!



Keeping an eye on things!

WHILST the eye is an incredibly complex organ, it is easy to take normal eye function for granted. Here we look at two conditions commonly seen in older dogs.

It is easy to overlook the role tears play in helping to keep the eyes healthy and their importance cannot be over emphasised! Tears lubricate the movements of the eyelids, wash out dust particles and provide oxygen and nutrients to the cornea (the clear outermost part of the eye). Tears also contain substances which help fight bacterial eye infections.



Normal eye

Dry eye is a condition seen reasonably commonly in dogs and is caused by a **reduced** or **total** lack of normal tear production. There are many different signs of dry eye which can develop over time. Affected eyes typically develop a thick, yellowish discharge and may also be itchy and reddened.



Dry eye

Eyelid tumours are another condition seen commonly in older dogs. They occur on the margin of the eyelid (see right) and have the potential to cause marked corneal irritation.



Eyelid tumour

Early diagnosis is the 'golden rule' with eyes, for example early diagnosis and treatment of dry eye can make a real difference to the vision of affected dogs. Don't delay! If your pet is showing **any** symptoms of eye problems, come and see us for a thorough health examination.

Keeping your Guinea Pig healthy!

GUINEA PIGS are very popular as pets and originate from the grasslands of South America. They are naturally grazing animals and, to keep their digestive system working, require large amounts of grass and hay, together with small quantities of fruit and vegetables (as a source of Vitamin C), along with some high quality commercially prepared food.

They are generally healthy pets, but – just like other pets, they *do* require periodic check-ups. In common with other rodents, their **teeth** grow continuously and can become overgrown making feeding difficult. Additionally their **nails** can also become very long if they are not clipped at regular intervals.



Skin problems may also occasionally occur; the most common of these is an infestation with a burrowing mite – *Trixacarus caviae*. The mite causes intense itching and scratching, with areas of reddened, sore and crusting skin. The photo (right) is typical of a mite infestation.

We are here to help! If you would like any further information on any aspect of guinea pig care, or a check-up for your pet, please contact us!



Typical crusting lesions

Dog and hedgehog photos: Jane Burton