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Issue 5, 2014 

## AUTUMN PAWS 2014



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### Like it or Lump it

You've just found a lump on your furry friend. What should you do next?

'Although some lumps and bumps are harmless, it's very important to get them checked out, as others may be harmful,' says Dr Julia. 'We see a high number of lipomas in overweight and obese animals. These are a benign accumulation of fatty cells and generally aren't a problem unless they develop in an awkward location. Then they may ulcerate due to the mechanical trauma of being rubbed or they may cause joint problems if the lipoma causes a limb to be used differently. There are also many other causes of lumps that we need to rule out, such as swelling, bruising, abscesses, grass seeds, cysts and tumors. Tumors can be benign or cancerous. Cat-bite abscesses are a risk in cats that go outdoors, especially entire animals that are more likely to roam and fight.'

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### Barking Mad

Rex's barking is driving everyone mad. Why, oh why, won't he stop?

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## Complete Dog Grooming Services in our heated GROOM ROOM

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## Poop Snoop

It's not really dinner table conversation, but keeping an eye on your pet's poop is all in a day's work.

Many pet owners are embarrassed to ask about their pet's toileting habits, says Dr Janine. 'But it's actually quite important to be able to recognise if your pet is having any trouble in this department. Dogs and cats have a very similar digestive system to humans, and this includes absorbing nutrients from food as it passes down the gastrointestinal tract. By the time food reaches the rectum, all that should be left is waste faeces.'

***Constipation or diarrhoea that is accompanied by other signs, such as inappetance/anorexia, vomiting, lethargy and pain, is very serious***

'Faeces must be expelled from the body on a regular basis, otherwise toxins build up and we end up with one very sick animal. It should be shaped like a sausage and able to be picked up easily in one piece. How often your pet passes faeces will depend on a number of things, including the quality of the food they are being fed, if they have a parasitic infection and if they are ill, but ideally it would be once a day without difficulty.'

The spectrum of diarrhoea can be great, continues Dr Janine. 'At its mildest, the stools can still be formed but are not able to be picked up in one piece. From there, it may progress to a Mr Whippy-like consistency, then a cow pat and finally to complete liquid. Sometimes, loose stools may also have blood in them – this is called haemorrhagic diarrhoea and may indicate a serious underlying problem.'

'The causes of diarrhoea are too great to list, but garbage enteritis is one that we see commonly,' she says. 'This is particularly the case with any breeds that love to scavenge, such as Labradors, Golden Retrievers and Beagles. These dogs will eat anything and that often includes things that don't agree with them. Pets that have had a sudden change in diet are also prone to gastrointestinal disturbances.' At the other end of the scale is constipation, explains Dr Janine. 'Lack of faeces in the litter tray or yard is an obvious tell-tale sign, but so is unproductive straining. Be careful though, because sometimes animals may still strain with diarrhoea. Constipated dogs or cats may need assistance to remove the faeces, in which case an enema will be performed under sedation or a general anaesthetic.'

Constipation or diarrhoea that is accompanied by other signs, such as inappetance/anorexia, vomiting, lethargy or pain, is very serious and needs to be addressed immediately.'

'Owners should also be aware that their dog or cat's anal glands may block up when faeces is not being expelled in the normal manner,' says Dr Janine. 'Animals will drag their bottom along the ground when the glands are blocked and a vet may need to express them to release the pressure.'

A lack of faeces, often accompanied by vomiting and inappetance may indicate an intestinal obstruction. We have removed fragments of bone, corn cobs, fruit stones, pieces of toys and more from the small intestine of dogs and things such as toys with string attached and fur balls from cat's intestines. Delayed removal of these objects can be fatal.

Our advice to all pet owners is to take note of your pet's poop and promptly seek veterinary advice if you have ***any*** concerns.







## Dog Training Courses at North Geelong Vet Clinic

### “Paw-fect Puppies”

Age: 8-16 weeks old

Wednesday

7pm – 8pm

Start on first Wednesday of the month. Course duration: 4 weeks.

Cost: \$60

### “Terr-ific Toddlers”

Age: 4-7 months old

Thursday 7pm – 8pm

Start on first Thursday of the month.

Course duration: 4 weeks.

Cost: \$80

The courses are run by an Instructor with more than 25 years of experience training dogs. A vet also gives a talk each week.



## Barking Mad

Rex's barking is driving everyone mad. Why won't he stop?

You're young, you're energetic, you love being around others. So what do you do when you've been left by yourself while 'the humans' go to work for what seems like an eternity or when they're somewhere else in

the house instead of playing with you? This is a question you've got to ask yourself as a pet owner, says Dr Chloe.

'Try looking at the situation from your dog's perspective. Just like children, many dogs crave attention, and boredom is one of the most common reasons why dogs bark excessively. As pet owners, we have a responsibility – and, hopefully, a real desire – to provide a loving, comfortable environment that fulfills all of their needs. This includes not only shelter and food, but physical and mental stimulation as well.'

Dr Chloe says that giving dogs plenty of opportunity to exercise, especially for more active breeds, is critical. 'Dogs such as Border Collies, Cattle Dogs, Kelpies, Jack Russell Terriers, Labradors, Golden Retrievers and German Shepherds all require lots of physical exercise – the more the better, but a 30-minute walk or run at least once a day would be the absolute minimum.'

*'... boredom is one of the most common reasons why dogs bark excessively.'*

However, environmental enrichment is just as important as exercise, adds Dr Chloe. 'This means providing toys or activities around the house or yard to stimulate your dog mentally. One of the best examples of this are toys like KONGs. The idea is to hide food inside these toys so that your pet is kept occupied while trying to get the food out. You can start by putting in food that's easier to get out, like small dog biscuits, and then 'graduate' to bigger pieces and finally to something that will keep them entertained for hours – for example, a smear of peanut butter or meat smeared on the inside.'



When selecting a food toy, it's important to choose one that's specifically designed for animals, well-built and constructed only from high-quality components, she says. 'If you think about it, these toys have to withstand the repeated pressure of a dog's bite. Cheap and poorly-made versions break easily and can then become a potential intestinal obstruction if ingested.'

Of course, there are a number of other causes of barking in dogs, such as fear, being protective or territorial, separation anxiety and compulsive behaviors. 'Some of these behaviors can become entrenched or learnt over time, meaning that the barking continues even though the initial cause has disappeared. As with any behavioral problem, the quicker you seek advice, the more likely it is that you will have a positive outcome.'

# Like It or Lump It

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'Part of the diagnostic process when dealing with lumps, is gathering a thorough history so that we understand whether the pet is also showing signs of illness – perhaps he/she has gone off food, is very thirsty, is vomiting or lethargic, or is in pain. Has the lump grown quickly or changed appearance? Are there other lumps? Does it feel solid or fluid-filled? These are all important clues to what may be at play here. Taking samples from the lump to check for fluid or gather cells/tissue for laboratory analysis may be necessary. Sometimes this can be done while the animal is conscious, but some procedures require sedation or an anaesthetic.'

*There are many causes that we need to rule out, such as swelling, bruising, abscesses, grass seeds, cysts and tumors*

Treatment will depend on the cause, says Dr Julia. 'Abscesses need to be drained and sometimes treated with antibiotics, while cysts and benign lumps can be completely removed if they are causing irritation to the pet. For nasty or malignant cancers, like mast cell tumors or lymphomas, we have to check whether the cancer has spread elsewhere in the body. If it has, the owners need to take this into consideration when deciding on a treatment pathway. The animal's quality of life becomes very important in these situations – it's important that we never lose sight of that.'

But Dr Julia stresses that owners shouldn't automatically assume that a lump is cancerous or nasty. 'Most of the time, lumps are quite treatable or even may require no treatment. The main thing is to get it checked as early as possible to put your mind at ease.'



Opening Hours:  
Mon to Fri  
8am – 7pm  
Sat  
8am – 3pm



## Meet the Vet: Dr Sally Adams

**I started working at North Geelong Vet Clinic** in March 1989, when I did a 2 month locum for Dr Rod Blake. I took over the practice 4 years later & ran it for 16 years before handing over to Dr Sally Upham. Now I work part time & it can be confusing sometimes with 2 Dr Sally's !!

**My qualifications are** - Bachelor of Science (Microbiology) hence I enjoy looking down microscopes & Bachelor of Veterinary Science (Honors), both from Melbourne University.

**My most memorable experience as a vet was** doing a caesarian on a python having trouble laying its eggs.

**I own** a very relaxed gentle carpet python who only needs feeding every 2 weeks and doesn't bark or dig up the garden!

**The most misunderstood breed of dog** is a Pitbull.

**The pet I would recommend for a young family** is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Cross. They are gentle natured, affectionate dogs that do need some grooming. Pure breed Cavaliers can have some potential medical problems but these are less likely if crossed with another small breed.

**Something you don't know about me is** I worked as a cook in a fishing lodge in Scotland & a ski lodge in Switzerland when I was doing a European working holiday as a young vet. I loved it!

**I love my job because** I like fixing things, be it sewing, or using a hammer & nails or fixing a sick animal. I love the challenge of working out what is wrong & the satisfaction of seeing my patients get better & be happily reunited with their loving owners. Unfortunately we can't fix everything & there are sad times too

**I recently learned that** the sex of crocodiles is determined by the temperature that the eggs are incubated at. Hotter temperatures lead to more males, cooler temperature to more females.

**Did you know that** our Premier, Denis Naphine, was one of several vet students who spent time working on my father's farm during their training? These students inspired me to become a vet myself later on.

**My most challenging case was** a dog who developed diabetes, mastitis, constipation, anaemia, jaundice, pancreatitis, an infected uterus (pyometra) & breast cancer one after the other over a couple of weeks. It was a major juggling act but somehow we pulled her through all of these problems & got her back on track.

**I once treated** a freshwater crocodile with a broken jaw. I had to amputate the lower jaw.

**The secret to a happy pet is** lots of love & attention at home, regular exercise, keeping a trim figure & getting regular vet checks to detect problems early when they are easier to prevent or treat.

