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Issue 4 : 2013

## SUMMER PAWS



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## NOURISH THE ONE YOU LOVE (BUT NOT TOO MUCH)

Turn on the news and chances are that you'll see at least one report on the obesity epidemic affecting many developed countries. Unfortunately, this goes for our pets as well. There's no doubt that better nutrition standards for humans and animals has led to improved overall health. However, too much of a good thing has undeniably turned into a widespread problem. Here's why your kindness could be hurting the one you love.

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with Dr Sally Upham

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## ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS ...

As we approach the merriest part of the year, many people may be thinking about buying a pet for themselves or a loved one. However, there are a number of factors to consider and it's important to think about these well in advance – especially to avoid the cute-puppy-in-the-window trap. Here's a look at some of the considerations before purchasing a pet.



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**North Geelong Vet Clinic**  
**NOW OPEN TIL 3pm ON**  
**SATURDAY**

**Opening Hours:**  
**Monday – Friday 8am -7pm**  
**Saturday 8am – 3pm**



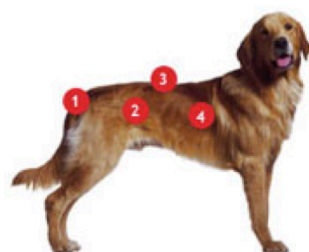
## NOURISH THE ONE YOU LOVE (BUT NOT TOO MUCH)

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More than a third of Australian pets are overweight or obese, yet many owners aren't aware that their pet may have a weight problem, says Dr Chloe McGillivray. 'I've been practising for over eight years and the level of owner awareness about the appropriate body condition for their pet is still probably not where we would like it to be. Most of them are surprised when they find out that their pet is actually considered overweight or obese.'

Some people may have preconceived notions of what a breed normally looks like, whether that be from pictures, shows or the local park. However, these don't necessarily translate to the optimal body condition for an individual animal, says Dr Chloe. 'Just as different people have different body shapes, the same applies for animals. That's why it's difficult to say an animal should weigh a certain amount – it's more to do with how their physique and muscle to fat ratios compare.'

'The optimal body condition in dogs and cats is being able to see a waist, to easily feel their ribs (without them sticking out prominently) and see that the abdomen is neatly tucked up underneath the body, rather than sagging down. It's a good idea to get into the habit of assessing your pet's body condition regularly.'



1. Does the base of his tail seem thick?
2. Is it difficult to see your dog's waist?
3. Does he have a broad back?
4. Is it difficult to feel his ribs?

Obesity in animals is linked to a myriad of health issues, just like it is in humans –

cardiovascular disease, diabetes, shortened lifespan and arthritis to name a few. Dr Chloe says that respiratory problems in brachycephalic breeds of dogs, such as Pugs, Boxers, Shih Tzus and British Bulldogs, are further exacerbated by carrying excess weight. 'The anatomical features that make these breeds so loveable – in other words their pushed-in faces – also predispose them to breathing problems. Add lots of 'love handles' to the mix and we have a recipe for disaster.'

### ***It's not only important to feed the right type of food but also the right amount***

Feeding a good quality, balanced diet is critical to maintaining your pet's health, she continues. 'Many people worry that their dog or cat might get bored by eating the same type of food all the time but that's not the case. Choose a premium brand such as Hills Royal Canin or Hills Science Diet that is suited to your pet's life-stage and stick to it. These are complete meals, which do not require supplementation so resist the temptation to give your pet anything else.'

Dr Chloe says that it's not only important to feed the right type of food but also the right amount. 'The main determinant of weight for domestic pets is calorie intake. Use the feeding guide on the pack to begin with but then adjust the amount according to your pet's body condition. Remember too, that an animal's nutritional requirements can fluctuate so you may need to increase or reduce the portion as required. If you understand the basic principles to pet nutrition then you will set up your pet for a healthy and long life.'



## DOG TRAINING CLASSES 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

### “Terrr-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 taken by a dog trainer with more than 20 years of experience training dogs. A vet also gives a talk each week.

\*\*\*\*\*



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\* Full body clips

\* **SUMMER CLIPS**

By caring and experienced groomers

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## ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS ...

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1. **Be completely certain that getting a pet is the right choice for you**  
Remember that a pet is for good or for bad till death do us part.
2. **Avoid buying pets for other people unless you know without a doubt that they want one and can look after it**
3. **Research which breeds suit your lifestyle the best**  
When choosing a dog or cat, make sure you pick the right breed for your situation. If you're an active person, getting an active dog such as a Kelpie or Border Collie is a good match. If lazing around on the couch is more your thing, get a cat instead. While dogs and cats are popular choices, remember there are many other options such as rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, goldfish, reptiles (a licence may be required) and birds.  
Make sure that you have enough space to keep an animal – housing a German Shepherd in a small apartment is not a great idea. Remember there are always adult pets available for adoption at animal shelters (puppies can be cute but they do require a lot of effort in the first year or two of life). Feel free to speak to any of our staff for further advice.
4. **Get pet insurance**  
It's important to understand that there are certain costs associated with owning an animal – in the same way that having a child costs money. Examples of basic care to help our pets live long and healthy lives are routine vaccinations, worming, annual check-ups and providing good quality food. Pet insurance will cover you for unexpected illnesses and accidents which can occur at any time. Petplan is a fantastic Pet Insurance company that we highly recommend. The sooner your pet is insured, then the less predisposing problems they will have. We have information about Petplan at the clinic or you can check it out at [www.petplan.com.au](http://www.petplan.com.au)
5. **Training**  
If you bring home a puppy, be sure to enrol in our Paw-fect Puppies School for puppies aged 8 weeks – 16 weeks. We also have a Terrrr-ific Toddlers School for dogs aged 4 months – 7 months of age. The courses go for 4 weeks on either a Wednesday or Thursday evening and are led by a dog trainer with more that 20 years experience training dogs. The classes do fill up so be sure to enrol by contacting us as soon as you obtain your new furry family member.
6. **Enjoy**  
Give your pet lots of love and attention and they'll do the same for you. And the world will be a better place ...

## NOW YOU SEE(D) IT, NOW YOU DON'T

The notorious grass-seed season is underway, but don't be fooled by their small size because they can cause huge headaches for you and your pet. That's why now is the best time to pay attention to some matters of a hairy nature.

Grass seeds are abundant when the weather warms up, says Dr Sally Adams. 'It's not only domestic animals that are affected – it can be a major concern in farm animals as well. The seeds have tiny barbs that help them attach and then there's really only one place they can go – through the skin. They then tend to track further inside the body, causing a large amount of pain, and ultimately lead to infection and abscess formation.

Commonly affected areas include paws, ears, eyes and noses but they can get stuck just about anywhere, says Dr Sally. 'Signs that pets may have a grass seed include shaking their head, licking at their paw, a sore and watering eye, sneezing, or a lump that may or may not be discharging pus. Sometimes the signs are fairly vague, such as going off their food or becoming depressed and lethargic.'



Finding the actual grass seed that's causing the problem can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack, Dr Sally continues. 'We often need to give the animal sedation or an anaesthetic to perform a proper examination and locate the offending seed(s). Clipping the hair right back is the most important part of the process, especially in dogs or cats with long or dense coats of hair. I remember one case where we simply lost track of the number of grass seeds in the dog's coat. Luckily there were only two seeds that had actually penetrated the skin superficially.'

'Timing is crucial when dealing with grass seeds as the longer the seed has been causing damage under the skin, the harder it is to find. Also there isn't anyway of seeing where the seed is as they don't show up on x-rays, ultrasound, CT scans or MRI. Occasionally two or more surgeries are required to explore the area in an effort to remove the seed(s).'

### ***Commonly affected areas include paws, ears, eyes and noses***

Dr Sally says that the best way to reduce the risk of grass seeds being a problem in your dog or cat is to make sure their coat is kept as short as possible during spring and summer. 'The benefit of regular grooming is three-fold. It reduces the chance of your pet picking up seeds in the first place, it makes it much easier to find them and it keeps the animal cool. Owners should also check their pets after they've been on an outing, paying particular attention to the paws, eyes, ears and "armpits".'

Contact the clinic today to book your dog in for a "Summer Clip".



**Dr Chloe McGillivray**

**My qualifications is** Bachelor of Veterinary Science (Honors) from the University of Sydney.

**My most memorable experience as a student was** working at the Dubai Equine Hospital in Dubai.

**If I were an animal, I would be** a cat. I love to eat, drink and sleep.

**I own** two dogs Dizzy and Dakota, and two cats Kona and Freeway. Dizzy and Dakota are Australian and Kona and Freeway are American. Also, a couple of slow racehorses!

**The most misunderstood breed of dog or cat is** Pitbull dogs.

**The pet I would recommend for a young family is** a Whippet. They are very loyal, low maintenance, calm in the house but lots of fun to play with.

**Something you don't know about me is** I love horseracing and breeding. I also compete in Ironman Triathlons in my spare time.

**Coffee or tea?** Coffee – a strong latte.

**I love my job because** the people I work with are amazing. The staff all excel at their jobs and share my passion of helping pets to live the longest, healthiest lives they can.

**Did you know** I spent the last five years living and working in Austin, Texas with my American husband, who is also a Veterinarian. Our dogs have been to America and back, and the cats are enjoying being in Australia.

**I recently learned that** Geelong really does have four seasons in one day, a shock after life in Texas.

**My most challenging case was** a 16-week-old golden retriever puppy that was born with congenital kidney disease.

**I once treated** a camel.

**The secret to a happy pet is** preventative Veterinary care. Most diseases and conditions can often be prevented, or detected by regular veterinary visits and preventative testing.