



5278 5400

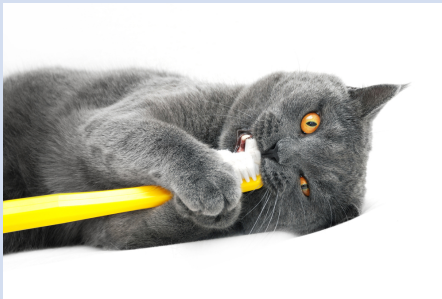
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WINTER PAWS 2013



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A Royal Pain In The Joint!

For those unlucky enough to have experienced osteoarthritis (OA), you'll know that it's not a pleasant feeling. It can range from a dull ache and stiffness that's just loud enough to make life uncomfortable right through to a debilitating condition where the pain is extreme and movement becomes almost impossible.

Like their human counterparts, animals can also be struck down with this disease of the joints – the most susceptible pets are those that are elderly, overweight or genetically predisposed to hip or elbow dysplasia. Although presently incurable, there are a number of options to help ease these animals' suffering.

Let's take a closer look....



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Making The Cut

When it comes time to trim your pet's nails, does it ever seem like you've unwittingly entered the Twilight Zone and dropped straight into a game of imaginary twister? You - right hand to left paw. Tiger the Cat - right claw to your face! It's ok , there's always tomorrow...

If you can identify with this scene, you're definitely not alone says Nurse and Groomer at North Geelong Vet Clinic, Olivia. 'Many owners find cutting their dog or cat's nails really frustrating. Owners end up with scratches or bites and an animal that is incredibly upset. It's a vicious cycle – when the nail clippers reappear next time, the animal takes this as a cue that something unpleasant is going to happen and starts getting stressed.'

Unfortunately, there's just no avoiding it either. Inspecting and trimming your pet's nails on a regular basis goes hand in hand with owning an animal, says Olivia. 'In the case of dogs, some owners think that walking on concrete is sufficient – occasionally that may be true but often you still need to do a bit of a touch-up trim.' On the other hand, she doesn't recommend clipping the nails of outdoor cats as they use these to negotiate obstacles such as fences and trees.

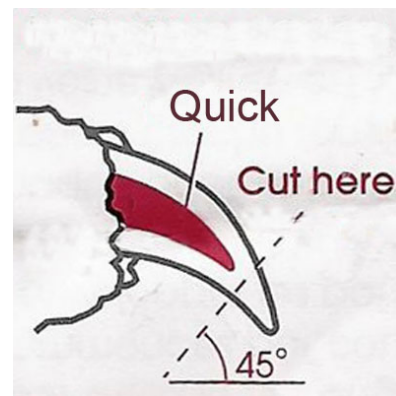
Arming yourself with a pair of nail clippers designed specifically for animals is half the job, says Jane. 'The handles are easier to grasp and you can see exactly where you're cutting. Make sure they're sharp, though, because you don't want to be struggling with your pet once everything's in place.'

Inspecting and trimming your pet's nails on a regular basis goes hand in hand with owning an animal

'It's ideal if owners practice checking their pets' paws and nails as soon as they become a member of the family. Try choosing a quiet time such as when they're sleeping on your lap. Offer praise and a small treat – the aim is to make the experience pleasant for all involved so that the pet gets used to it.'

And avoid forcing the issue with animals showing signs of stress, Olivia adds. 'It's better to take a breather and wait until they've calmed down again, even if it's the next day.'

'When clipping the nail, aim to cut it no less than 1mm from the pink region. The pink region is where the blood vessel and nerve are, so cutting too short will cause the nail to bleed and your pet to yelp. The bleeding can be stopped by plugging the nail tip with soap that has been softened under warm water.' 'Nails that are clear are easier as the pink area is visible. However trimming black nails becomes a guessing game as you can't see the blood vessel and nerve.' In these cases, Olivia recommends that you be conservative and just cut the sharp tip off.



Clients are welcome to bring their animals into the clinic for a hands-on tutorial, says Olivia. 'Often, that just gives people the extra confidence they need or confirmation that they're doing it correctly. And, of course, we love giving the animals a bit of a cuddle and a treat.'

If you really find the whole nail trimming experience just too difficult, then we offer a nail clipping service at the clinic for a small fee. Call the clinic to book in a time that suits you and we can save you the stress!

[North Geelong Vet Clinic](#)

Opening Hours
Monday – Friday 8am – 7pm
Saturday 8am – 1pm

Wintery Whites

Do you brush your teeth every day? Don't worry, there's no need to answer out aloud. It's probably safe to say, though, that most people understand the importance of good oral hygiene for themselves. But interestingly, many don't convey the same importance to their dog or cat's teeth. Try not brushing your teeth for several years and, well, let's just say that maybe it's time to examine your pet's mouth a little closer.

Dr Sally Upham, Veterinarian at North Geelong Vet Clinic, explains that our furry companions' (hopefully) pearly whites need similar care to our own. 'Without regular maintenance, plaque and tartar accumulate and mineralise, eventually leading to periodontal disease, gum recession and bone loss,' she points out. Periodontal disease refers to inflammation and/or infection of the tissue surrounding the tooth and it causes pain in our pets.

Infection isn't necessarily limited to the mouth and teeth, adds Dr Sally. 'Bacteria can travel to other parts of the body through the blood vessels. In animals with weakened immune systems, like older or sick pets, this can add to their debilitation. Advanced cases can even – albeit rarely – lead to endocarditis, a serious condition where the inner lining of the heart and heart valves becomes inflamed.'

'Periodontal disease....causes pain in our pets.'

Loss of bone around the tooth, can lead to instability and the tooth falling out, she continues. 'Sometimes the majority of the animal's teeth are affected and we can't do anything to save them. It's not a pretty sight when it reaches this stage.'

Recognising dental disease can be difficult as pets often don't display any signs, even when the dental disease has progressed significantly. 'Sometimes they might show a bit of discomfort when eating but it often goes unnoticed – animals are really quite stoic. That's why we stress to owners that they need to be vigilant about checking their

pet's teeth. We want to see healthy pink gums that cover the teeth evenly – reddening or erosion of the gum border confirms the presence of gingivitis and plaque. Tartar is even easier to spot by yellow-brown discoloration of the teeth and bad breath is another giveaway. Our vets routinely perform oral examinations during consultations and vaccinations so we can show you what to look for.'

The best scenario, of course, is for a clean bill of dental health. 'If that isn't the case, then hopefully we've caught it early enough so it's easily treated with a Grade 1 dental scale and polish, and no extractions are necessary,' Dr Sally adds. 'Once there's evidence of dental disease, no matter how mild, professional cleaning is the only effective treatment. This can be followed by prophylactic measures such as dental foods, chews and liquids.'

'Too often, the dental disease is so severe, that we have to remove some teeth. We have even had to remove every tooth in some dog's and cat's mouths as they were just so bad'.

The best method of prevention, she stresses, is – yes, you guessed it – regular brushing. 'People laugh when we tell them but it makes perfect sense when you think about it. We have toothpaste flavors specially made for animals and pet toothbrushes that are cheap and make life much easier.'

The best method of prevention is regular brushing



Now is the perfect time for owners to make sure their pets aren't suffering in silence. To celebrate Dental Health Month in August, the North Geelong Vet Clinic is offering free oral health checks to all pets. Call the clinic on 5278 5400 to make an appointment.

A Royal Pain In The Joint!

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Osteoarthritis (OA) can manifest in a variety of ways, according to North Geelong Vet Clinic's Associate Veterinarian Dr Kerri Renshaw. 'Owners might notice that their pet is showing vague signs of hesitation or stiffness when rising or lying down, climbing up or down steps, or during walks. Sometimes they see their pet stumble or display other signs of incoordination. It tends to be worse during the colder winter weather.' She also notes that symptoms are generally more noticeable in dogs than cats – not necessarily because OA is less common in cats but simply because their aloof nature tends to mask the condition. Owners should bring their pet in for a thorough physical examination if they see any of these things, says Dr Kerri. 'We'll watch how the animal moves and then carefully check all of the joints for mobility and soreness. Sometimes x-rays and blood tests may be recommended to help provide more information.'

Shoulders, elbows, hips and knees are most commonly affected.



Dr Kerri explains that there are several options that can provide relief to animals diagnosed with the condition. 'We can't cure OA but we can usually make animals more comfortable,' she says. 'As hard as it is for owner and pet alike, dogs and cats on the cuddlier side need to shed those excess kilos. And any exercise needs to be moderate and controlled, like on-lead walking or swimming

because vigorous activity can negatively impact arthritic joints. Sometimes owners find that implementing these lifestyle modifications are enough to keep the disease at bay for the time being.' She quickly adds that arthritis is progressive but the time frame varies from animal to animal.

A range of veterinary medications is available to treat arthritis. 'These include disease-modifying OA injections and powders that slow down the arthritic process and help protect the joint, and also anti-inflammatories - both non-steroidal and steroidal. Another treatment is feeding your pet a special food that is made specifically for animals prone to, or that already have, arthritis'. Dr Kerri cautions owners to avoid giving their pet any human medication as this may prove lethal. Surgery may be a consideration for some dogs and cats. 'We discuss each option at length with owners so they can make an informed choice for their pet's wellbeing.'

Exercise needs to be moderate and controlled, like on-lead walking or swimming ...

If you suspect your dog or cat has arthritis, or for further information, please contact the clinic on 5278 5400.



Dr Kerri Renshaw
BVSc HonsIIA, MRCVS

Where did you study to become a Vet?

The University of Queensland. I graduated in 1997.

Where have you worked?

Australia for 6 years and in the UK for 9½ years.

Tea or Coffee? Neither!

Pepsi Max or hot chocolate for me (and lots of it!)

I love my job because...

no day is the same and it can often be exciting. I love being able to make a difference in animal's lives. I also love surgery – including orthopaedics.

(We now have special equipment at NGVC for performing advanced surgical procedures)

My secret obsession?

Competing in Ironman triathlons.

(Kerri even competed in the Hawaii ironman in 2011!)

Biggest fear? Huntsman spiders. Living for 10 years in the UK had its upside – huntsman free!