



VETERINARY SURGEONS

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Newsletter – AUTUMN 2011 Issue 11

CLINIC NEWS

Following the recent devastating Earthquake, we hope you, your friends, families and animals are all ok. All our staff are safe and both our clinics are up and running and operating at full capacity.

We have updated the information on our website regarding disaster preparation and also dealing with stressed pets.

You can read more at:
<http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/disaster-prep.php> and
<http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/stressed-pets.php>

If you are concerned about your pet's well being during this stressful time, please don't hesitate to contact us. There are medications and other products that are available that may help.

On a lighter note, those of you that had Dr. Cath Neville as your veterinarian over the last 10 or so years, will be interested to hear that she got married in January and is now expecting her first baby. We are all very excited for Cath and her husband Sean.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Itchy Dogs

by Dr. Eve Allely

Persistent itchiness in dogs can be associated with a number of skin conditions, frequently with multiple triggers. Sometimes these have fairly obvious presentations, but commonly a diagnosis can only be reached by process of elimination. The following is a summary of the more common itchy skin conditions and diagnostic methods by which each can be recognized.

FLEAS

A dog's response to a flea bite varies from a transient minor itch to a more distressing hypersensitivity (allergic) reaction. While a heavy flea burden is usually quite obvious, a flea bite hypersensitivity may be more subtle in that the offender/s often may not be seen. The simplest way to establish if fleas are the culprits is to eliminate them from the affected dog, any in-contact animals and environment with reliable flea treatments.

FOOD ALLERGY

As the name suggests, an allergic reaction to food! Dogs can exhibit an allergy to completely new foods but also over time can develop an allergy to their existing diet. The most common allergy-inducing components in dog food

are proteins - what can be fine for most dogs can cause problems in certain individuals. The other potential offender is the carbohydrate component. The only way to establish food allergy as the cause of itchiness is to give the dog an elimination diet trial. This has to be for a minimum of six weeks and is based on a "novel" protein and carbohydrate. The dog is not allowed access to any other dog food, human food, other animal food (eg cat), treats or even milk during this time. Veterinary prescription diets provide the most reliable, balanced and easiest way of achieving this trial.

YEAST INFECTIONS

The most common of these we see is *Malassezia*, a surface opportunist. Most dogs harbour these organisms in low numbers but given the right conditions e.g. an underlying allergy they will overpopulate and contribute to the itchiness. They produce a distinctive odour and can be seen in samples taken from the skin surface under a microscope. Treatment options include medicated shampoos and antifungal tablets.

PYODERMA

This refers to overpopulation with bacteria, again usually opportunistic in nature (with even more potential underlying causes eg allergies, immune disorders etc) They too can be seen in samples checked under the microscope and will also contribute to itchiness. Infections can vary markedly in severity, and treatment options range from medicated shampoo to antibiotic tablets (which often require prolonged courses)

SARCOPTIC MANGE

A contagious mite that infects the skin of some wild animals and dogs (also potentially humans but it is usually self-limiting unless the host is immunocompromised). Usually the clue in a dog's history is previous exposure to other itchy dogs or wild vectors. More common in Australia where foxes act as vectors.

CONTACT ALLERGY

Hairless or sparsely-haired areas of dogs are vulnerable to this form of allergic dermatitis. There are several plant species that will affect most dogs in this way. Wandering Dew is our most commonly implicated offender. Contact allergies can occur in response to many other things including blankets, carpets etc and dogs will vary in their sensitivities, most having no problems at all but others being very reactive. Diagnosis is made by patch testing suspected allergens.

ATOPY

Basically what you are left with once all other possibilities have been discounted! Atopy is one of our most common itchy skin conditions but the most difficult to deal with. Traditionally it was thought that the problem arises from inhalation of air-borne allergens e.g. dust mites and

pollens. Dermatologists have now come to the conclusion that atopy is the outcome of defects in skin barrier function. It is often hereditary. Intradermal skin testing can be done to identify the most threatening allergens for certain dogs with the aim of formulation of a vaccine to gradually desensitize the patient (variable success)

Other means of dealing with this type of allergy are:

- Dietary supplements (featuring beneficial essential fatty acids and other nutraceuticals)
 - Antihistamines (variable success)
 - Prednisolone (our most reliable short term solution. Side effects undesirable with long term use)
 - Cyclosporin (expensive but very effective and avoids side effects of cortisone)
 - Topical therapies eg oatmeal/aloe vera shampoo/conditioner
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If you are having trouble with an itchy dog, then this is not normal and you should contact us to seek veterinary advice.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Are you thinking of a new career in Veterinary Nursing?

by Angela Dacombe, Veterinary Nurse

I decided two years ago to follow my dream of becoming a Veterinary Nurse. I had been working for 14 years as a receptionist and decided I needed a change. I wanted a job where I could work and care for animals as they were my passion. Part time was the best option for me, as I still had to work while studying and be a mum to my school age son. This involved taking the first step and applying for a place in The National Certificate in Animal Care course at CPIT (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology). See the CPIT website for further information on how to apply and what is required before applying to get onto the course. (www.cpit.ac.nz)

I chose to do the part time one year night classes. Other options included studying one semester fulltime. By doing The National Certificate in Animal Care part time, this enables you to carry on the following year, provided you are accepted and have passed Animal Care, in doing The National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing part time. Another option for The National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing is one year studying full time. This incorporates Animal Care and Veterinary Nursing all in one year. However, if you choose to only do The National Certificate in Animal Care, this can open careers in animal related jobs including working in boarding facilities, wildlife parks and zoos, pet shops, animal welfare organisations etc.

The Animal Care course content includes the handling and care of cats, dogs, rodents and rabbits. It also includes topics such as animal welfare and ethics, parturition and care of newborn dogs and cats, first aid and transport of injured animals, clinical examinations of cats and dogs, hygiene and health and safety, zoonoses, behaviour, anatomy and physiology etc. The tutors are wonderful people and are there to help you succeed in every way possible, but you still need to make a commitment to putting in the effort and hard work. During the year there are exams to study for and assignments to complete. The course is made up of both theory and practical elements which made it very interesting for me. We had a workbook of practical tasks to do during the year and also complete 60 hours of animal handling and animal related work outside course hours. I thoroughly

enjoyed this course and recommend it to anyone who enjoys working with animals and wants to learn more about their care.

On completion of Animal Care in 2009, I then applied for The National Certificate in Veterinary Nursing- Graduate Pathway course for 2010. As there were many people applying and only limited places, there was an interview process, and I was lucky enough to be chosen for the 2010 part time course intake. This course was thoroughly interesting and included practical and theory content. There are also assignments and exams to study for, both theory and practical. We had to complete 240 hours of practical work experience at vet clinics throughout the year of our course time.

Course content includes care of caged birds and fish, surgical nursing, assisting a vet with surgery, monitoring anaesthetics, care and recovery of patients after surgery, fluid therapy, administering drugs, clinical nursing, radiography and developing of x-rays, care of hospitalised patients, laboratory procedures, preparing samples for despatch, selling skills, reception, admitting and discharging patients, communication, artificial insemination etc. Once again the tutors are great people and have your best interests at heart. The Straven Road Veterinary Centre is the training facility during the year for surgical sessions and end of year practical assessments which are taken by Julie Hutt, Dr. Linda Sorensen, Dr. Fiona Richardson and Tania Archbold. Tutorials are also run there by veterinary nurse Gina Trounson. They are all extremely knowledgeable in their fields and have great experience and teaching skills.

If you want to know more about training as an animal carer or veterinary nurse, talk to any of our nurses and they will be happy to help you.

PROMOTIONS

Check out the website for details on our current promotions. Current for April 2011

1. Receive a **FREE** Frontline Plus gear bag when you purchase a pack of Frontline Plus.

Check out: <http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/pet-product-promotions.php> for full details

WEBSITE

www.veterinarycentre.co.nz

Over the last 3 months we have been working hard to increase the content on our website. You will now find a number of new articles with important information for you as pet owners.

More content is being added regularly so keep checking the website!

If you have any suggestions of what you would like to see on our website – please contact us with your ideas.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

We have recently set up a Facebook Page. This is an easy way for you to get updates on new content on our website, promotions and other things happening at the clinics. Don't forget to visit our website and click on the "LIKE" button (this can be found on every page at the top of the right hand column).

We would love to hear your feedback on our newsletter. We thank you for your custom and we look forward to seeing you again soon.