



THE STRAVEN ROAD
VETERINARY
CENTRE (LTD)

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Newsletter – SUMMER 2011/12 Issue 14

CLINIC NEWS

Welcome to Summer! As I sit and write this newsletter we have just had a most beautiful weekend. Let's hope it continues for many months along with stable ground.

Since our last newsletter, Gina and her husband Hadley welcomed a beautiful baby girl called Hannah in September. And for those of you who remember Geri, who also worked with us up until recently, she and partner Ric welcomed Roman in September too, a brother for Sadie. Both families are doing really well.

Exciting news from our clinic, is that we will be offering our very own Puppy Preschool at the Straven Road branch from 5th January 2012. Jess has been working very hard to get this up and running and we know this will be of huge benefit to all our clients with new puppies. For further information, contact either of our branches. Information will be added to the website shortly.

Don't forget to visit the website and

1. check out some of the new articles including recent new ones added on: [feline diabetes](#) and [canine diabetes](#); [feline acne](#) and [a series of articles about whether you should breed from your dog](#). You should definitely read these articles before heading down the breeding track, as well as the article later in this newsletter.
2. review articles, relevant to the season including the [one on sunscreen](#)
3. check out the [promotions](#) available now
4. [LIKE us on Facebook](#) for more regular updates.

Remember to apply animal sunscreen to your pets if indicated (see our [website article](#) or talk to one of our staff) and never leave your dog in the car unattended. They can get hyperthermia and die very quickly.

At this time of the year we recommend walking your dogs on hot days before 8am in the morning or after 7pm in the evening.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year. Keep safe out there!

FEATURE ARTICLE

Managing caged birds

by Tania Archbold, VN

Are you thinking about getting a caged bird? Research suggests that many parrots such as a Galah or Cockatoo are highly social animals, usually living and interacting with large numbers of their flock. As a result, individual parrots find it stressful confined in isolation for long hours while their 'flock members' (in this case you) are away from home.

If your new parrot will be spending long hours alone we recommend that you consider getting it a mate. Individual parrots become easily bored, lack opportunities for adequate exercise and they can get behavioural problems such as feather plucking or self mutilation. Single parrots may be ok if you can spend a lot of time interacting and training them. Remember that some parrots will live for more than 30 years.

Cockatiels and Budgies are popular as they are relatively easy enough to care for but their potential as pets are often underestimated. A well cared for Budgie can live well into its teens and Cockatiels can also live to be approximately 30 years old. Both Budgies and Cockatiels can be very good talkers. They can learn more than 300 words or phrases. Be careful what you teach your bird to say though - do you really want to listen to that rude word over and over for the next 30 years?

No matter what breed of bird you get it is important to provide a stimulating and safe environment for them. In the wild birds interact with and learn from other members of their flock. We recommend that you provide a wide range of safe toys for shredding, climbing on and manipulating to stimulate the birds' natural behaviour and problem solving abilities.

Cage hygiene is very important because they will spend a lot of time in a relatively confined space. The cage will need to be cleaned regularly and it is important to plan the cage layout so that risk of contamination of food and drinking water by faecal matter is reduced.

Caged birds need a balanced diet. High fat, seed based diets can lead to obesity and liver disease. You should offer your bird a staple diet of a good quality complete formula supplemented by a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables.



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Avocado is highly toxic to birds and should never be fed. Seed mix should be fed but it is important it is limited to a small proportion of your birds overall diet. Hiding some food around the cage can provide added stimulation as the bird spends time looking for it. Grit for a parrot is unnecessary; it can interfere with absorption of essential nutrients and medications.

Perches should vary in size and some should be 'natural timber' (for example, branches from non toxic trees) so that their feet get some exercise. Sand paper wrapped around smooth perches can lead to arthritis and corns so avoid using these. Make sure if you are using 'natural timber' perches that they are a safe wood for your bird to chew on.

For further information about the requirements of your caged bird, or before purchasing a caged bird as a pet contact us, using the telephone or email contact information below, to discuss the requirements further.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Spaying and Neutering

By Linda Sorenson, DVM

Kitten season is in full swing once again, so we thought it a good time for an update on desexing of pets. A couple of weeks ago, we had a kitten scheduled for her spay. When the patient did not arrive, we phoned the owner to reschedule. We were told that they had decided "since she's such a lovely cat, we think she should have kittens" and therefore would not be rescheduling her spay.

We hear a lot of reasons as to why people don't want to desex their pets. We'd like to address some of these issues as well as present some benefits of desexing.

The appearance and/or nature of the offspring may not mirror the dam or sire. The first cloned cat, "C.C." (for "copycat" or "carbon copy") did NOT look like the original, and certainly did not have her personality. If a perfect genetic copy does not have the same characteristics, then odds are a 50% genetic mix will not either. So, a lovely parent may not result in lovely offspring.

If having a litter seems like a good idea and you decide to go ahead with it, be aware that delivery of kittens/puppies by the dam does not always go as planned. Difficult labours are relatively common, and delivery of offspring via caesarian section is an expensive proposition. Sometimes the kittens or puppies do not nurse well and have to be hand fed (every 2 hours). The dam may also develop infections (mammary, uterine) or metabolic disturbances (low blood calcium) after delivery and during the nursing period. And, of course, the mother will have a huge increase in her nutritional needs, not to mention the nutritional and medical needs (vaccinations, worming) of the offspring. All of this can add greatly to the cost of that simple litter.

Spaying or neutering your pet benefits them (and you) in many ways. Did you know that we pretty much eliminate the risk of mammary cancer in females if they are spayed prior to their first heat cycle? Prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate gland in male dogs) is also minimized with neutering (and will require neutering if it occurs).

Other benefits of desexing include:

- Elimination of attraction to males by females
- Decreased fighting with other animals
- Decreased drive to wander, resulting in less risk of vehicular accidents and going missing
- No messy spotting when in season (female dogs)
- Elimination of risk for uterine infections, which are life-threatening and can run \$1000-2000 to treat (including the surgery necessary at that time to spay your pet anyway).

So, when should you spay/neuter your pet? **As soon as possible.** We can perform spays and neuters on animals as young as 8 weeks. We'd like them to weigh at least a kilogram at the time of surgery. In the past 20 years, animal welfare groups have been working with veterinarians on "early" spay/neuter programs (8 weeks of age). There have been no adverse effects reported for the now millions of animals having been desexed at this early age. In fact, we have noticed an improvement in recovery with fewer complications related to the surgical site. Younger animals don't have nearly as much discomfort post-operatively, and they don't tend to bother the sutures the way our older patients do.

For female cats and dogs the ideal time for desexing is prior to their first heat cycle, which usually occurs at 5-6 months. We'd recommend, again, spaying or neutering as early as possible (well before that 5-6 month age). This eliminates the risk of pregnancy and breast cancer. If you didn't catch her in time, we can still do spays while she is pregnant; please call us if this is a concern as there are certain time windows we prefer to work within in this situation.

For males, once both testicles have descended into the scrotum, and the patient is 1 kilogram or more in weight, he can be neutered.

Did you know that a single pregnant cat, delivering an average litter of 6 (half female) twice yearly (which they indeed do!) can contribute (with the help of her offspring) over 250 new cats to the population in just 3 years??? Dogs aren't much better, if left to breed uncontrolled. Cats are just a bit more reliable at becoming pregnant.

So, what happens to all these "accidental" births? Well, some of them do get adopted out and find lovely homes and live a long, healthy life. Unfortunately, a lot of them don't. There are folks working for animal control/welfare groups who euthanize an awful lot of healthy, unwanted animals because they are left with no choice.

If you are thinking about having a litter for whatever reason, assume the offspring from your pet will result in an equal number of euthanasias at the shelter. Would you be willing to hold these animals while they die or give the injection yourself in exchange for the puppies or kittens you plan to bring into the world? Please give it a thought – remember that there is a person who loves animals deeply who does this every day. And we're never in danger of running out of puppies and kittens – Mother Nature will keep us stocked, without any help from "accidental" pregnancies.

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.



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