

#### VETERINARY SURGEONS

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## Newsletter – WINTER 2012 Issue 16

### CLINIC NEWS

Winter is definitely upon us. It certainly changed with a bang from Autumn to Winter with an early snow dump to remind us. Still it sure is beautiful with the sunlight on the snow. If you got an awesome photos of your pet/s in the recent snow dump, why not email them to us and we'll put them up on the website.

Thank you to all those who have now liked our Facebook page. We are still working towards our target of 250 LIKES. Make sure you like us on Facebook to keep up to date. <https://www.facebook.com/veterinarycentre>.

Thanks to the generosity of Hills Pet Food, once we reach 250 LIKES on our Facebook page, we will draw a winner for a small bag of Hills Pet Food, so make sure you click on the link above today.

Its conference season for our profession and a number of our staff have been to or are heading to conferences. In May, Dr. Chantal Moreton combined a holiday with professional development and attended a conference in Hawaii. In June the New Zealand Annual Veterinary Conference was held in Hamilton. Two of our veterinarians spoke at the conference, Dr. Linda Sorensen as one of the main speakers. Angela Dacombe, attended as a delegate. They have all returned with new and updated knowledge to ensure the best care of your pets.

In July, our head veterinary nurse, Tania Archbold has been sponsored by Hills Pet Nutrition, to attend a conference on the Gold Coast. We look forward to all the new information that she will return with too.

It is with sadness, that we will farewell Dr. Francesca Matthews from her regular Monday slot at Papanui in July due to an opportunity in her education role. She has worked for Straven Road Veterinary for many years. She will still be helping with the newsletter, website and the occasional Saturday morning.

This newsletter we look at feeding rabbits. Rabbits are an increasingly common pet and by feeding and housing them properly you can minimise health issues.

We also look at cat fights. As we pass the shortest day, the incidences of fighting often increase. We look at why and what you can do.

### FEATURE ARTICLE

#### Feeding Rabbits by Angela Dacombe VN

Rabbits are herbivores so it is very important to feed your rabbit correctly to ensure that they live a long, happy and healthy life. You should feed your rabbit a good quality rabbit pellet, which is dust free and high in fibre/low in protein. You can pick up some good rabbit food pellets that are commercially made, from most pet shops which provide good nutrition for your rabbit.

Overfeeding pellets can lead to obesity and should be limited. It is important to provide other foods as well to maintain a daily nutritional balance. Good quality hay should be available at all times, and should be the staple part of their diet, as should grass and greens.

Hay is good fibre for them, is good for their digestion and is also used as bedding. Straw can be used as bedding but this is not good to eat as it has no nutritional value in it whatsoever. A good quality meadow hay or lucerne hay can be used, that is not dusty or mouldy as this can lead to respiratory illness.

A good variety of fruit and vegetables should be fed daily also. Make sure they are clean/washed, pesticide free and not contaminated by other animal's faeces. There are some that you should not feed as they can lead to stomach upsets and some are also toxic to the rabbit. Cabbage, Kale, Broccoli, silverbeet, spinach and brussel sprouts can cause tummy issues like colic and bloat so only feed very small amounts of these and lettuce can cause scours. Some foods can also be high in fat and sugar.

#### Foods you can feed:

Carrots, Carrot tops, Apples, Greens, Grass, Puha, Broccoli, Dandelion leaves & flowers, Bananas, Blackberries, Blueberries, Cranberries, Grapes, Kiwifruit, Mandarins, Mango, Nectarine, Orange, Papaya, Pears, Peach, Plums, Pineapple, Raspberries, Raisins, Strawberries, Watermelon, Apple tree leaves, Alfalfa, Basil, Borage, Brussel sprouts, Bok Choy, Clover, Capsicum, Coriander, Chives, Dill, Citrus tree leaves, Celery leaves, Marjoram, Lavender, Fennel, Chicory, Endive, Marigold, Parsley, Radish tops, Rosemary, Watercress, Wheatgrass, Snowpeas, Dock leaves (before they have gone to seed), Celery stalks chopped into small pieces (stops choking on long stringy bits).

#### Here is a list of other foods to avoid:

Most human foods, Nuts, Crackers, Biscuits/cookies,



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Chocolate, Cereals, Seeds, Oats, Beans, Milk, Bread, Pasta, Wheat, Corn, Yoghurt drops.

**Absolutely do not feed these as they are poisonous to rabbits:**

Potatoes, Daffodil, Rhubarb, Lillies, Mushrooms, Avocado, Broad beans, Oak, Sweetpea, Buttercup, Kidney beans, Jasmine, Nightshade, Snowdrop, Privet, Hemlock, Foxglove, Iceberg lettuce, Any leaves from evergreen trees.

Just remember if in doubt, do not feed it to your rabbit! If you suspect your rabbit has eaten something toxic and/or is not well, seek vet treatment ASAP!

As you can see there is a great variety of foods you can feed. Variety is the key. Throw away old, off and rotting food daily as if eaten can cause tummy upsets.

Rabbits love to chew. It also helps relieve boredom and wears down their teeth. Rabbit's teeth are open rooted and grow continuously so they need hard vegetables/fruit or chew toys/wooden toys to help wear them down. You can get all sorts of safe wooden chew toys from petshops. Wood must be untreated. Willow branches or apple and citrus branches can be great for them to chew on. Have these available at all times.

Treats can be fed to rabbits, although not all the time. Limit to 1-2 times a week.

Rabbits should have access to fresh clean drinking water at all times. This needs to be replaced daily. Bowls can be spilled over so bottles are a good choice. These can be attached to cages easily and prevents wet bedding. Bowls for pellets can also be knocked over so gravity bin feeders are a great way to go, which can be attached to hutches/cages also. Remember when changing a rabbit's diet; do so gradually as this can cause tummy problems and on rare occasions, death.

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**FEATURE ARTICLE**

**Cat fighting and Cat Bite Abscesses By Francesca Matthews BVSc**

We are seeing an increased number of cat fight injuries, most commonly abscesses. The reason we get more in mid winter/spring is that from around the shortest day (21<sup>st</sup> June) the tom cats in your neighbourhood start searching for mates and securing territory for themselves. Even though your cats are neutered the tom cats invade your cat's territory. This upsets the usual territory boundaries that neighbouring cats have set up and where a growl and hiss have previously sorted challenges they now find themselves needing to fight again.

Another reason cats fighting is so prevalent in Christchurch currently is that lots of people are still moving, often temporarily while house repairs are carried out. This may mean that new cats are temporarily in your neighbourhood,

again upsetting the usual territory boundaries.

There are steps you can take to reduce the amount of fighting. If you have a new kitten you may decide to have it as an indoor only cat. Cats are fine indoors provided they are supplied with plenty of places to climb and view from high points. You could also consider building an outdoor cat run which is closed in so that cat can access it via a tunnel from your house. These are common overseas where in many areas cat are not allowed outside due to their effect on native species. There are many plans for these on the internet.

If you prefer to allow your cat to come and go outside, you may like to consider keeping your cat indoors from dusk until dawn. Night-time and especially around dusk and dawn is when most fighting occurs. If your cat has been used to going outside whenever he/she chooses it may take a week or so to train this new habit. If this is causing you sleep deprivation, provide them a nice cosy area of the house or garage well away from your bedroom so you can sleep. Many cats will soon adapt to this new routine. Both this option and the indoor only option also reduce your cats risk of contracting FIV.

If your cat is very aggressive to neighbourhood cats and nothing you do seems to stop him/her, then you should consult with us about feline pheromones, or behaviour modification medication which may be helpful.

In addition, if your cat is very nervous and being picked on, feline pheromones can be helpful in helping him/her to relax. Talk to one of our veterinarians or veterinary nurses about these. It is important to keep your cats stress under control as continued stress can lead to inappropriate urination.

It is important that if your cat has a bite wound to seek veterinary attention, because the mouth is full of nasty bacteria and these form an abscess more often than not.

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**IS YOUR PET LAME?**

Commonly the colder weather that we experience in winter causes pets to show signs of lameness.

If your cat or dog is showing signs of lameness and this is untreated they are likely to be in significant pain. Remember there are successful treatments available in the form of dietary change or supplements and pain relief which can significantly extend your pets pain free life.

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**PROMOTIONS**

Currently we have cat carriers available if you purchase a 6 pack of cat Frontline. See the website for details. These are while stocks last.

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**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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