

## Staff News

Congratulations to veterinary surgeon **Frances Dunn**, who recently gained her postgraduate **Certificate in Small Animal Medicine**. This is a fantastic achievement and makes her one of the most highly qualified vets in the country.

The qualification reflects a higher knowledge in non-surgical diseases and procedures, and an ability to manage more unusual and complex cases.

Fran works in conjunction with **Joanne Lampard**, who also holds a Certificate in Small Animal Medicine. Together they run regular medicine diagnostic clinics for internal and external referral cases.

Congratulations also to veterinary nurse, **Gin Board**, who passed with Credit her **COAPE Advanced Diploma in Practical Aspects of Companion Animal Behaviour**.

Gin is now running behaviour clinics at our Whitchurch Hospital and Surgery, for cats and dogs, covering all non-aggressive behaviour issues.

For more information, please contact us on **01275 832410**.

These clinics are available to all our clients, regardless of which branch you are registered with.

## Topics in this issue:

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- *Shape up!*

## New Staff

A warm welcome to three new members of staff.

Veterinary surgeon **Caroline Blakeney MRCVS** joins our veterinary team at the Whitchurch hospital and surgery. Caroline graduated from Cambridge University in June 2005 and is currently studying for her General Practitioner's Certificate in Small Animal Medicine.

**Nadine Russell** joins Nicky Peters, Angela Simms and Vicki Reed in the pet insurance department helping our vets and pet owners with insurance claims and administration.

**Marie Johnstone** joins Joyce at our busy Ashton surgery, ensuring the smooth running of the practice and assisting our Vets in the surgery.

## Dedicated Parking at Ashton

There's good news for clients who drive to our busy Ashton surgery – we've managed to get two dedicated parking spaces right outside the surgery by having the pavement lowered.

## Do I really need to vaccinate my pet every year?



**The answer is 'Yes'**. Your pet is exposed to all kinds of dangerous diseases everyday, both inside and outside of the home.

In addition to this everyday risk, outbreaks of disease happen all the time – for example Myxomatosis, Canine Parvovirus, Cat Flu –

and many of these outbreaks are caused by unvaccinated pets spreading disease.

**Vaccines stimulate your pet's immune system to protect against the most common dangerous diseases.** So when your pet comes into contact with one of these diseases their immune system can fight the infection, either lessening the severity of the disease or preventing infection altogether.

**Why should you vaccinate every year?** Immunity to disease may fade, leaving your pet at risk. Annual boosters are essential to ensure immunity and to keep your pet safe.

**If you're not sure if your pet's vaccinations are up to date, contact us now on 01275 832410** and we will check our records for you.

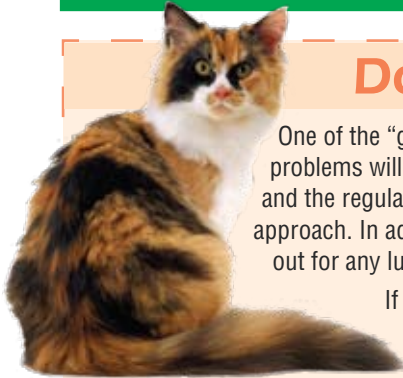


## Wedding Bells



Veterinary nurse **Vicki Campho** married her long term partner, **Paul Adams**, on 7<sup>th</sup> August this year. The wedding was held at Tortworth Court, a stunning country house in Gloucestershire.

We all wish them a long and happy marriage. Vicki would like to thank everybody for their kind wishes and support.



## Don't ignore that lump!

One of the "golden rules" of veterinary practice is that early detection of problems will generally give us a much better chance of sorting things out and the regular health examinations we give your pet are a key part of this approach. In addition, frequent grooming allows *you* to keep a watchful eye out for any lumps, bumps, fleas, ticks and a host of other problems!

If your pet develops a lump there may be several possible underlying causes. These include allergic reactions (such as bee stings), abscesses, hernias and tumours. The most serious of these are tumours; these may be either *benign* – which tend to be slow growing and remain in one place, or *malignant* – which are frequently fast growing and spread to distant parts of the body.

If you do find a lump it is therefore very important we examine it as soon as possible – in order that we may establish the underlying cause and start any required treatment without delay. If you are concerned about a lump on your pet – or any other health problem, don't delay – please contact us today for an appointment!



Skin lump on the elbow of a cat



## Shape up!

**OBSESITY** is a problem that affects pets and humans alike, and just like us, carrying extra weight places extra demands on virtually all the organs of the body. Excess weight can lead to or worsen many medical conditions including:

- joint and ligament problems,
- heart disease,
- increased blood pressure,
- diabetes mellitus (sugar diabetes),
- breathing difficulties,
- decreased stamina and heat intolerance – to name just a few!

Sadly, affected pets often become old before their time, have a diminished quality of life and a reduced life expectancy.

You can tell if your pet is overweight by feeling their chest – the ribs should be felt easily – but not seen, and dogs and cats should have a 'waist' between ribs and hips. If you feel your pet is getting a little portly we are happy to weigh him or her and advise you on their ideal weight. We will also examine your pet to check for any medical conditions (such as an under-active thyroid gland in middle aged dogs) that can result in weight gain.

To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around 2/3 their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. Please contact your surgery for advice on your pet's ideal weight, diet and exercise regime, and ask about our **FREE nurse clinics**.



## Winter worries!



IT IS that wonderful time of year again with winter walks, roaring fires and celebrations. As the chilly weather and festivities begin we've got a few tips to keep your pet healthy.

Firstly – when out and about, remember that whilst many dogs love playing in the cold and snow, slim fine coated breeds will find it much harder to conserve their body heat. Also beware of hazards such as frozen ponds and lakes.

Pets that live outside (such as pet rabbits and guinea pigs) need special consideration at this time of year. It is important to ensure that their hutches are warm, clean, dry and in a sheltered position. Bedding needs to be plentiful and changed daily; give them fresh food and water every day and check the water bottle regularly to ensure it has not become frozen.

Inside the home, don't forget that Christmas decorations such as ribbons and tinsel are often attractive to kittens and puppies – and if swallowed may lead to an intestinal blockage. Similarly make sure that turkey carcasses and string (used to tie up the carcass) are safely disposed of.

Beware also of other household hazards: dogs are particularly fond of chocolate (see box right), but this can prove lethal. In addition, there are now several reports confirming that dogs eating even fairly small quantities of raisins, grapes and sultanas can develop renal failure. Many pets

love to chew on house plants, however many of these are toxic to pets. Lilies pose a particular hazard to *cats* – with all parts of the plant including the pollen being toxic.

Finally fleas don't take winter holidays – so keep up your regular flea treatments!



### What's bugging you?

With the warm weather just a distant memory, it can be tempting to take a pause in the battle to keep your pets and your home flea free! However take a look at the picture on the right – these are **flea eggs** at 10x magnification!

Adult female fleas can lay in excess of 50 eggs per day – thus even a brief infestation can result in (literally!) thousands of eggs being produced. These fall off your pet and are deposited around your home in carpets and bedding where they can lie dormant for up to a year or more before developing into adult fleas.

### Chocolate alert!

Most dogs love chocolate, but as well as being very fattening, it also contains a naturally occurring substance called theobromine which is poisonous to dogs (but not humans you'll be relieved to know!)

The theobromine content, and hence the toxicity of the chocolate, varies according to the type of chocolate with plain chocolate the most dangerous. So if you *must* feed your dog chocolate, specially formulated pet chocolate is the safe option!

