

Winter Offer

Jan, Feb 2011

10% off neutering and spaying

Avoiding unwanted pregnancies is only one of the benefits of having your pet neutered or spayed. It also helps reduce inappropriate behaviour and the risk of life threatening diseases such as womb infections and prostate problems.

Please contact your branch surgery for more details.

Staff News

Congratulations to veterinary surgeon **Lorraine Smith** BVetMed MRCVS who recently gained her Post Graduate Diploma in Clinical Oncology (with distinction) from the University of Birmingham.

Congratulations also to **Ashley Crews** who qualified as a Veterinary Nurse in August. Ashley, who is based at the Whitchurch hospital, is also devoted to hand-rearing and re-homing abandoned puppies and kittens.

BVNA Week Runners Up

Well done to **Gemma Pitt** RVN and **Caroline Webber** RVN were voted Runners Up for their efforts to promote the role of veterinary nurses during BVNA Nursing Week this year.

Qualified veterinary nurses are a profession in their own right, without whom we would not be able to provide such high levels of care and service.

BVNA Nursing Week is a yearly national event to promote the important and diverse roles that nurses play. Gemma and Caroline visited local parks with displays and goodie bags, talking to pet owners, offering advice and giving free pet health checks. Not



only did they thoroughly enjoy themselves, they were voted Runners Up for the whole country!

New orthopaedic referral service

A warm welcome to Nick Macdonald BVetMed MVM CertSAS MRCVS

Nick is a highly qualified and experienced surgeon who joined us in August to head up our orthopaedic referral service.

Nick and his team take referrals from veterinary practices all over the South West, seeing patients with musculoskeletal and spinal problems, either hereditary or as a result of injuries and old age.

Nick and his team perform numerous types of surgeries the most common being:

- **Arthroscopy** – a procedure using special cameras and equipment to visualize, diagnose and treat problems inside a joint.
- **Internal fixation** – a method to hold the broken pieces of bone in proper position with metal plates, pins or screws while the bone is healing.
- **Spinal surgery** – treating slipped discs.
- **Hip replacement** – when an arthritic or damaged hip joint is removed and replaced with an artificial joint.
- **Osteotomy** – the correction of bone deformity by cutting and repositioning the bone.
- **Soft tissue repair** – the mending of soft tissue, such as torn tendons or ligaments.



- **Fusion** – a “welding” process by which bones are fused together with bone grafts and internal devices (such as metal rods) to heal into a single solid bone.

Rest assured, should your pet ever need orthopaedic care, they will be in the very best hands here at Highcroft.

A new lease of life for Maya and Boncie



Most of us have heard of pacemakers for humans, but did you know that pets can have them too? We've recently had two dogs referred to us, from other veterinary surgeons, both diagnosed with problems with their natural heart pacemakers. Heart rhythm conditions are very distressing for both dog and owner as the dog's heart stops beating for short periods of time which leads to unconsciousness. What's more, prolonged pauses in the heart rhythm starve the brain and body of oxygen, and can lead to sudden death.

These scary symptoms were being experienced by Maya, an 11 year old female Springer Spaniel, and Boncie, a 12 year old male Jack Russell Terrier. Both were experiencing collapsing episodes on a daily basis which were seriously affecting their quality of life.

Maya and Boncie have both now received a pacemaker implant to take over the heart's natural pacemaker function and to prevent the pauses in rhythm. These specialist procedures were performed at Highcroft by our expert veterinary cardiologist **Dr Luca Ferasin DVM PhD CertVC DipECVIM-CA (Cardiology) MRCVS**, supported by cardiology nurse **Sarah Knowlson RVN** and the **Highcroft surgical team**.

Maya and Boncie both had a short stay at our new hospital, cared for by the dedicated nursing team, and returned home to lead happy active lives. In fact, both sets of owners have said that they are like puppies again!

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Stockwood: 01275 830000 • Keynsham: 0117 986 7700 • **Advice Line: 01275 893351**

You are what you eat!



We all know the benefits of eating a balanced diet, but did you know that your pet's nutritional requirements actually *change* throughout their lives? The good news is that specially balanced *life-stage* diets are available for every stage of your pet's life, from tiny puppies and kittens, through adulthood and on to old age.

Puppies and kittens require a balanced diet with higher (but not excessive) levels of energy, protein for muscle development and essential fatty acids for a healthy shining coat. The correct mineral balance helps bones and joints develop correctly. This is particularly important for large and giant breeds of dog and they have their own specially formulated puppy food.



Adult pets, with their major growth phase behind them, require a balanced diet to keep them healthy, but with lower levels of many of the nutrients mentioned above.

Senior Pets: As pets become older, their systems become a little less efficient and if they receive too much of a particular nutrient, their bodies will have to work much harder to clear it. Senior foods are specially formulated with this in mind, with lower energy levels to avoid weight gain (as pets become less active), but with altered protein and mineral levels to reduce the workload of internal organs such as the kidneys.

The good news is that feeding your pet a balanced diet, precisely formulated for their particular *life-stage*, plays a very important role in keeping them fit and well. Please ask us for more information and we can help choose the perfect diet for your pet!

Prescription Diets

In addition to life-stage diets, there are also specially formulated "prescription diets" for pets with specific health problems such as diseases of the kidneys, liver, heart, skin, joints and teeth.

Many of the conditions mentioned above require long term management, and prescription diets can play a very useful role in improving the lives of pets with a variety of conditions.

24-hour veterinary care

We've always had 24 hour nursing here at the hospital, but did you know that we now have a **team of four on duty every night?** The team includes a veterinary surgeon, a veterinary nurse, and two auxiliary staff all caring for the overnight patients.

As a busy veterinary hospital we have a large number of hospitalised patients requiring overnight care. We also take referrals from other veterinary surgeons and we provide an on-call service to neighbouring practices who don't have their own emergency facilities.

Veterinary surgeons, **Justin Ainsworth** MRCVS and **Tom Crippen** MRCVS, who share the overnight shifts, both joined us as experienced critical care surgeons who enjoy the challenge of dealing with emergencies. The feedback from our clients is fantastic; they really appreciate the peace-of-mind gained from having a surgeon on-site 24-hours-a-day, and a team of people looking after their poorly pets.

Winter – a seasonal survival guide!



Surviving the winter months can be a challenge for many pets, so here are a few seasonal tips to keep your pet fit and well at this time of year:

Obesity alert! With the nights drawing in, it can be more difficult to find the time to walk your dog and your cat may prefer to settle down in front of the fire rather than getting out and about! Where possible constant exercise levels will help to keep you and your pet fit and healthy. Keep an eye on your pet's weight and please get in touch if your pet is gaining a few extra pounds, since carrying excess weight can have a multitude of adverse effects, including heart disease and diabetes.

Arthritis alert! As well as checking your pet's weight, keep an eye out for signs of joint stiffness. Limping and difficulty rising after a rest are both signs of joint stiffness and pain, which can be made worse by cold weather and also by carrying extra weight (see above). A prompt check of any such signs is advisable as it gives us the best chance of being able to help affected pets.



Festive Hazards! The festive season brings with it a huge range of hazards for our pets! Items such as **ribbon and tinsel** are very attractive to mischievous

pets and, if swallowed, may lead to intestinal blockage. Whilst on the subject of edible items, don't forget that **chocolate** can be very toxic to dogs – in general the higher the cocoa content the more toxic the chocolate.

Additionally, there are now several reports confirming that dogs eating even small amounts of **grapes, raisins or sultanas** can develop renal failure. Many pets also love chewing **house plants** however many of these are toxic to pets. Remember to make sure you



keep **mistletoe** away from pets as both the leaves and berries, if eaten, are extremely toxic to pets. If you would like any further information on caring for your pet at this sometimes challenging time, please don't hesitate to ask!

Winter Flea Alert!



With summer sadly now just a distant memory, it can be very tempting to lower your guard against these tiny wingless pests! However with modern central heating, fleas are no longer just the seasonal summer problem they used to be.

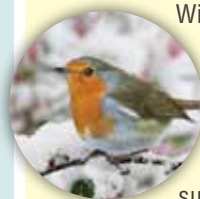
For optimum flea control, treatment should be all year round. **Spot-on treatments** are ideal for treating your *pet*, whilst **larvicidal house sprays** can be used to prevent fleas developing in your *home*.

Rabbits in winter

Pet rabbits and guinea pigs also find this time of year very challenging. See our back page article for further information on vaccinations, feeding and keeping them generally fit and well!



Garden Birds



With a little water, food and shelter, gardens can become a haven for birds and other wildlife. Ensure a supply of fresh water

every day – if it is very cold, use tepid water. During the cold winter weather, birds require high energy (high fat) foods to maintain their fat reserves to survive the frosty nights. A bird table stocked with a high calorie seed mix will be very welcome. In addition a wide range of household scraps such as cooked potato, cake crumbs, grated cheese and soft fruit can also be fed. Hanging feeders containing sunflower rich mixes or unsalted peanuts are also much appreciated!

Further information on all this can be found at www.rspb.org.uk