



# North Shore Veterinary Hospital

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Welcome to our December 2014 newsletter.

It is hard to believe another year is coming to a close. We have again gone through the never ending cycle of life where we say goodbye to our old friends and welcome new ones into our lives. Their memories do however stay with us.

On a personal note our two children have both returned from their overseas work and travel experiences and are both back at home completing our family once more.

Kerry has secured a post at Ponsonby Primary School teaching year 5s next year while David is still looking for an interesting IT position.

On a sad note Kerry's old cat Gabby did not make her return, having suffered a stroke on the Easter weekend and sadly had to be put to sleep. She had just turned 21. We also said a sad farewell to another of our old girls, Smudge, who was 18 when she went into renal failure.

Once again it has been a pleasure to attend to all my regular clients and their pets and I hope to see you all again in the new year. Do have a safe and happy Christmas break. Remember to check on your pets' vaccinations before taking them into kennels and catteries to avoid any complications.

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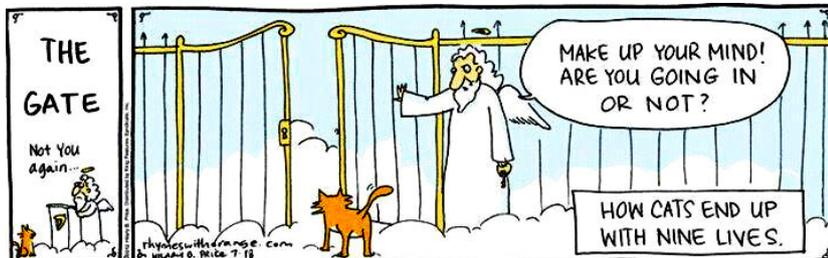
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## New products

The never ending fight against fleas has seen an explosion of new products being introduced, each promising longer and better results. While true resistance to the commonly used topical products has not really been shown - they still kill the fleas when initially applied - the duration of action seems to be declining.

We are stocking two of the newest products:

**Activyl®** which is a topical for dogs and cats and which promises to last the full 4 weeks (in fact in testing they were getting closer to 6 weeks control)

Another tablet form, **Bravecto®**,

kills fleas and ticks and lasts a full 3 months. It is palatable to boot (so they tell us) and does not cause nausea. **Bravecto®** is unfortunately for dogs only at this time.

The best news of all is that the struggle to get that worm pill into the cat is finally over. While there are flea treatments that contain dewormers covering round and hook worm, we now have **Broadline®**, a flea treatment that includes a wormer that covers the full spectrum i.e. including tapeworm. **Broadline®** is packaged individually for the times when you need a flea treatment and full deworming.

Although it is not a new product, I am starting to use a long acting pain

medication called **Trocoxil®** more frequently and with more confidence. The initial concern was for those dogs that have a low tolerance to the gastric irritation so commonly seen with NSAIDs. Where it is tolerated we find our pain control of the older dog with arthritis to be a smoother experience.

In the fight against dogs with allergic skin conditions, a new product (not fully available yet) has been launched. **Apoquel®** is designed to inhibit some of the inflammatory chemicals in the skin and provide rapid relief from itch in as little as 4 hours. It does not have the side effects of corticosteroids and provides effective itch control and relief.

# Ebola in our Pets

Dogs and other animals pick up Ebola from consuming infected meat or from direct contact with infectious fluids such as urine and faeces. The very detailed Centre for Disease Control study found evidence of infection in dogs by testing hundreds of blood samples for antibodies.

According to the World Health Organization, the Ebola Virus has killed more than 3,400 people in West Africa and infected at least twice that many to date.

From a 2005 report, dogs appear to be the first animal species shown to be naturally and asymptotically infected by Ebola virus, however, there have been no documented reports of dogs either carrying or transmitting the virus.

Despite these findings, a pet dog belonging to an infected woman in Spain was recently ordered to be euthanized by the Spanish government. The Madrid regional government said “available

scientific information” can’t rule out “a risk of contagion”. The dog was euthanized and the alternative of quarantine was not considered.

The conflict is that infected dogs are asymptomatic, and it is not known whether or for how long the virus can remain viable in the dog and whether it can be shed into the environment from an infected dog.

Sadly, the dog in question was not tested for the virus despite technology being available to allow for testing and quarantine, rather than automatic euthanasia. It is possible that dogs may harbour the virus, particularly in endemic areas where they may roam and have access to infected animal carcasses; however, house pets that may potentially be exposed in developed countries represent a very different scenario.

Precedence should not be set for euthanizing pets as the exposure

levels increase and fear escalates.

The virus that causes Ebola is not airborne and can only be spread through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person who is showing symptoms or who has died. To date, the Ebola virus has never been isolated from a dog although seropositivity is consistent with exposure.

And in Cats

Cats don’t get Ebola virus to the best of our knowledge and therefore get no symptoms.



## Arthritis in Cats

When I was in veterinary college, arthritis discussions were always focused on dogs. In fact, in orthopaedic lectures the word “cat” didn’t even come up. But cats do get arthritis - way more than anyone even knows. One study found that 33.9% of cats aged 6½ years had radiographic evidence of arthritis. The prevalence of arthritis increased significantly with age. The most commonly affected joints were the hips and elbows. In another study (2002), 90% of cats over 12 years of age had evidence of arthritis. Yet another study suggested that 60% to 90% of cats over the age of 8 had some arthritis. It can occur in the hips, shoulders, elbows, knees and ankles.

What is arthritis, anyway? The term is used a lot but it is also easily misunderstood.

Arthritis, also referred to as degenerative joint disease (DJD), affects the smooth cartilage of joints in the body. The normally

smooth, silky joint cartilage will become irregular and raw, rubbing together and causing pain as well as lack of joint mobility.

The irritation of the joint lining causes chemical mediators to inflame surrounding tissue (which in turn causes more pain and inflammation).

The signs of arthritis can be very subtle in cats. As you might have experienced, cats are very good at hiding when they are in pain. The signs in dogs are often way more obvious and include lameness, trouble walking, and trouble getting up. In cats, you may notice very subtle changes such as reduced play drive and more time spent sleeping. You might also find that your cat doesn’t jump up on their favourite spots or has become lame. These signs can come and go and are often easy to miss.

Diagnosis can often be made with a physical examination and radiographs.

Treatment for arthritis includes a

variety of supplements, drugs and weight loss. Cats at an ideal weight typically cope with their arthritis far better than cats that are overweight, as weight reduction decreases stress placed on the joints.

There are several new drugs on the market that primarily address dogs’ arthritis and are not approved or safe for use in cats.

Medication used in cats that can help are supplements like green lip mussel extract, chondroitin sulphate and glucosamines. A course of injections of pentosan polysulphate has also shown to be very beneficial to some cats. There is also a non steroidal anti-inflammatory drug licenced for use in cats.

If you notice any signs of suspected arthritis, including “slowing down” or not jumping up, think about making an appointment with us to see what we can do to help.

# Hyperthyroidism

The thyroid glands are located in the neck, one each side of the trachea (windpipe). They are responsible for producing the thyroid hormones. These hormones influence a wide variety of physiological functions, including how fast cells use energy, body weight, cardiovascular and neurological function, body temperature regulation and fur growth, amongst many others.

Hyperthyroid disease most commonly affects cats in middle and older age. It is most commonly the result of the growth of a benign tumour of the thyroid gland, known as thyroid adenoma. This causes enlargement of the thyroid gland ('goitre') and an increase in the production of T3 and T4 hormones from the affected gland. Both thyroid glands are affected in about 70% of cats. The increase in thyroid hormones circulating will often lead to a cat which eats (and often drinks) more than is normal, but nevertheless loses weight. They may be short-tempered and will often develop a scruffy unkempt-looking coat. They may vocalise more than before. They will often have an increased heart rate and sometimes you may be able to feel a lump under the skin on their neck. Cats with thyroid disease will sometimes suffer from recurrent episodes of vomiting and diarrhoea. While increased appetite is very common, some cats will show the reverse, and eat less than normal.

The invisible changes can be more serious - increased heart rate and high blood pressure are common. High blood pressure can cause significant damage to organs throughout the body - heart murmurs, rhythm abnormalities, and even congestive heart failure can develop or worsen. Blindness can result from the effect of excessive blood pressure on the retinas of the eyes. High blood pressure will also tend to speed the progression of kidney disease. Both kidney disease and heart disease are common in the same age group of cats, which can make these patients with multiple interacting problems challenging to treat.

A number of different approaches to treatment are available, and the choice in any given case will depend on a variety of factors, including consideration of the cat's (& owner's) lifestyle, and any concurrent or underlying health problems.

Treatment with radioactive iodine is widely regarded as the gold-standard treatment for most of these cases. A special radioisotope of iodine is given (usually by injection) and this concentrates in the thyroid glands, destroying the overactive thyroid tissue due to the local effect of Beta-radiation. It is a very safe and effective treatment, and often only a single dose of radioiodine is required. Cats that are treated need to stay in isolation at the veterinary hospital until the radioiodine has been cleared from their bodies, a period of hospitalisation of at least one to two weeks.

Surgery to remove the enlarged thyroid gland is sometimes performed, but only in cases where only one of the glands appears to be involved. In some cases which first appear to be unilateral (one-sided) and which respond well to surgery, hyperthyroid symptoms will return months or years later with the involvement of the second gland. No surgery is ever without risk, which can include anaesthetic complications due to their age and to the effects of the hyperthyroid state, but successful surgical treatment can return these cats to normal health without requiring long-term medication or changes in their lifestyles.

Drug treatments are available, in the form of tablets given once or twice daily, which counteract the effect of the high circulating levels of thyroid hormones. Some owners will be able to medicate their cats with very little trouble, whereas others will find it completely impossible! Drug treatment is generally effective but cats

receiving these medications do need to be monitored quite closely with regular check-ups and blood tests to ensure that the medication is being given at the correct dose.

A proportion of cats will develop drug-related side effects, which can prevent these patients from continuing to receive these medications.

Finally, a more recent treatment involves the feeding of an iodine-restricted diet to hyperthyroid cats. By depriving them of the



iodine the thyroid glands require as 'building blocks' of the thyroid hormones, excessive production can be avoided and more normal thyroid levels can be maintained. The problem is that iodine is in very nearly all foodstuffs. Quite recently, a prescription diet has been brought to market which is iodine-restricted for the treatment of thyroid disease in cats. It can be very effective, and avoids the risks associated with surgery, the trouble of daily medication and risk of drug-related side effects; however, cats being treated in this way really must consume nothing whatsoever except the prescription diet and fresh water.

In a very small proportion of cats with thyroid disease, the over-production of thyroid hormones is the result of a malignant tumour called a thyroid adenocarcinoma.

## A question often asked is.....

How well does my dog or cat see?  
This can be difficult to assess but to date researches have found the following.

### *Sensitivity to Light*

Both cats and dogs are more sensitive to light than humans. Cats have a minimum light detection threshold up to 7 times less than that of humans. Although the canine minimum light threshold is not as low as that of cats, it is still well beyond that of humans.

### *Sensitivity to Flickering Lights*

Flicker fusion is crudely correlated with the rapidity with which the retina can up-date an image. Some falcons have flicker fusion rates in excess of 100 Hz. Because dogs can detect flicker at 70 to >80 Hz, a television screen which is updated 60 times/sec and appears as a fluidly moving story line to most humans may appear to rapidly flicker to a dog.

### *Depth Perception*

Stereopsis (binocular depth perception) results when the 2 eyes view the world from slightly different vantage points and the resulting image is fused into a single image. Most dogs probably have 30-60° of binocular overlap versus approximately 140° for cats and humans.

### *Estimates of Visual Acuity*

The Snellen fraction is a common method of describing visual acuity in humans, with the normal person having a visual acuity of 20/20. This ratio means that the test subject can discern the details of an image (letters on a chart) from 20 feet away that a normal person could differentiate from 20 feet away. When this scheme is applied to animals, the visual acuity of the typical dog is about 20/75, and the average cat is between 20/100 and 20/200.

### *Colour Vision*

Dogs, and to a lesser extent cats, possess and use colour vision, although they have far fewer colour sensitive cone photoreceptors than do humans. Dogs have 2 sets of cones seeing blue-violet and yellow but lack green cones. This is similar to humans who lack green cones and are "red-green colour-blind". Cats have three sets of cones, but due to lower concentrations seem to have a limited capacity for colour vision.

Limitations in colour vision are probably of little consequence to dogs and cats in dim light, however, as insufficient light is available to

stimulate cone photoreceptors. On the other hand, dogs have been reported to be able to differentiate perfectly between closely related shades of grey that are indistinguishable to the human eye. This ability would be a greater aid in visual discrimination in low light levels than would enhanced colour vision which requires bright light.



And a follow up to the front page joke....



## Christmas and New Year Hours

Dec 24 Wed	8am - 4pm
Dec 25 Thur	Closed
Dec 26 Fri	Closed
Dec 27 Sat	Closed
Dec 28 Sun	Closed
Dec 29 Mon	8am - 7pm
Dec 30 Tue	8am - 7pm
Dec 31 Wed	8am - 4pm
Jan 1 Thur	Closed
Jan 2 Fri	Closed
Jan 3 Sat	Closed
Jan 4 Sun	Closed
Jan 6 Mon	8am - 7pm

Our usual hours will apply on other days.

The North Shore Veterinary Hospital is open from 8am to 7pm weekdays and 9am to noon on Saturdays. Our receptionists will be happy to assist you during those times, and are qualified to advise you on pet nutrition and flea control.

For a veterinary consultation, please telephone first (phone 4899759) to make an appointment, as a vet may not always be immediately available.

When we are closed, please contact either the After Hours Veterinary Clinic in Glenfield (Phone 443 5640) or the Animal Emergency Centre in Carrington Road, Mt Albert (Phone 849 2121) and they will be happy to assist in any emergency.