

# Companion Animal Newsletter Summer 2011



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Welcome to our second biannual newsletter.  
If you are not on our mailing list and you want  
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## Summer Heat

Every year there are cases of dogs suffering  
from heat stroke after being left in closed  
vehicles. Every year articles appear in the  
paper from Vets or the SPCA, but the problem  
is so important it bears repeating.

Everyone knows vehicles can get very hot if  
left in the sun. A few years ago we left a

thermometer in a vehicle on a sunny day.  
The temperature went from 25 C to 45 C  
within 15 minutes. Initially dogs in a hot  
environment respond to the increased  
temperature by panting and evaporation of  
saliva on the back of the throat helps to cool  
them. If they cannot keep themselves cool  
and their core body temperature rises, then a  
chain reaction of events starts which may  
eventually be fatal. If dogs survive an episode  
of heat stroke they can have serious  
complications such as severe renal failure.

The advice we give is clear. **Never leave  
dogs shut in a vehicle without adequate  
ventilation and shade.** Don't forget the sun  
moves and shade can disappear quickly.  
Think about what could happen if you get held  
up.

Heat stroke is also a problem with dogs over-exercising. This is particularly so of heavy or muscular dogs such as Bull Terriers or Mastiff types. It also occurs in breeds with squashed face shapes, which may experience difficulty breathing normally. If you take your dog to Central Otago over summer the temperatures are much higher and are even higher close to the ground where dogs are. Always have water available



### Grass Seeds

Last weekend I saw a Chihuahua which the owners said had a rip in her back leg. When I looked it was clear there was an infected wound which was quite deep. There was a tiny piece of something poking out of the wound. When it was pulled a grass seed 2cm long that had been deeply buried in the flesh came out.

This is a common scenario of a grass seed burrowing into the tissue. It happens in the summer, when the grass is longer and the seeds have dried out and become hard and sharp. Most of us know how uncomfortable grass seeds in our socks can be, so we can only imagine how much worse they are buried in flesh.

At the time of writing the grass hasn't really dried out in South Otago yet, but this dog was from Wanaka and had been running in long grass by the lake. Once the summer progresses we will start seeing them here.

As a precaution **keep dogs out of long dry grass**. This is even more important in long-haired dogs. If they do walk through long dry grass check for and remove any grass seeds you find on the skin. Look especially between the toes, but they can burrow in anywhere.

**Any dog with a sudden onset of intense ear irritation in the summer could have a grass seed in its ear.** These can be hard to see and often need a sedative or anaesthetic to remove.



### Grooms

One of the procedures we do regularly over the spring and summer is grooming/clipping cats and dogs under sedation. The reasons we do are that:

- 1) Clipping removes uncomfortable knots from the coat and reduces discomfort.
- 2) It prevents overheating.
- 3) Clipping stops grass seeds from lodging in the fur and then penetrating the skin.

I think that owners massively underestimate the degree of discomfort that a knotted coat causes. Knots will contract over time and as they do, pull the hairs from their follicles. Typically owners tell us that after their pet has been clipped they are much more active and playful.



### Milton Clinic

Over the last year there has been a lot of disruption at the Milton Clinic due to major renovations being done. We have appreciated that our clients have been

inconvenienced, sometimes having to travel to Balclutha when the building was too noisy or fumey to use. The end result of this effort has been a building which is more pleasant to work in and better for our patients and clients. We think it has been worth it. Certainly the people who came to the open day were impressed.

**Clutha Vets has been community owned since its inception over a hundred years ago.** As a result our ethos has been centered on community service and putting profits back into facilities and rebates to benefit our customers. This is what distinguishes us from our neighbouring practises and is something we are proud of.



### **Skin Cancer in Cats**

Lumps and bumps are often seen on the skin of dogs and cats. 50% of skin tumours in cats are due to squamous cell carcinoma (SCC). This type of skin cancer is caused by solar damage. It develops particularly on the unpigmented areas of skin where the hair is very short. That means the tips of pale ears and noses are most commonly affected.

**SCC develops after years of sun exposure.** Exposure to the sun causes sunburn, followed by pre-cancerous thickening, followed by the development of the cancer.

A typical complaint from a client with SCC is that their cat has a wound on its nose or ear that won't heal. Often these clients are expecting to go home with antibiotics for an infection. The reason clients are confused is that **the tumour grows as an ulcer.** The tumor spreads from the surface into the tissue and as it does the surface tissue dies and drops off leaving a crater. The crater is raw and red and can bleed quite heavily. Often

the area is painful to touch and there is often evidence of sunburn on adjacent skin.

**As with all tumours early diagnosis and treatment gives the best result.** These tumours do not spread to other organs but They can grow fast. Tumours on the ear tips are easily removed by surgery, taking the tip of the ear off with some adjacent tissue. SCC on the base of the ear or the nose is more difficult and can be removed by freezing with liquid nitrogen or amputation of the nose pad if it is a little deeper. SCC sends filaments of tumour down into apparently healthy tissue and if it is an advanced tumour over bone it may be impossible to remove completely.

Prevention is difficult. Keeping white cats inside during the day and applying sunscreens are effective but not always practical to do.



### **Rehoming Kittens**

In the absence of an SPCA in the area Sharron at the Balclutha Clinic has been doing a great job finding homes for stray kittens and at times kittens from homes where the mother cat is unspeyed. Things change from year to year and this year it has been extremely difficult for Sharon to find enough homes. If you have a cat that has kittens we will help you if we can but we are not able to take nearly as many kittens as are available and you should plan on finding homes for kittens yourself.

**Once again prevention is better than cure and speying your cat at 6 months of age will save you a lot of problems.**

Need your cat or dog wormed?  
A single worming tablet costing  
from \$2.10 (4kg cat) to \$7.23  
(25kg dog) can last up to 3  
months.

**Register Now!**

## Register for this newsletter

These newsletters will be available on our website at [www.cluthavets.co.nz](http://www.cluthavets.co.nz) in the Newsletter section.

You can register to have them posted to you by either:

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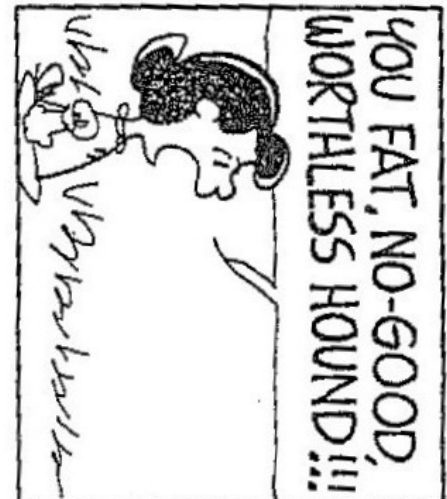
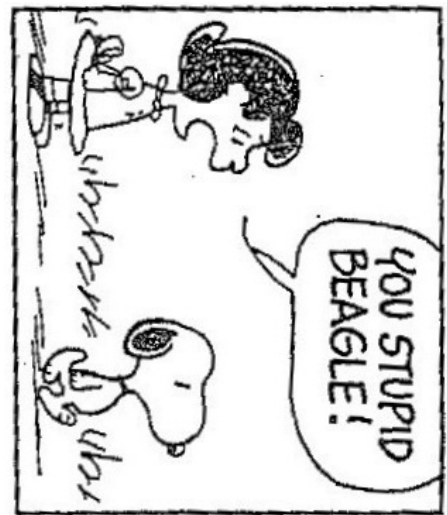
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