

# PAWS, CLAWS & ALL FOURS

July 2014

## Welcome

We have revamped our Small Animal Newsletter with a new name, and a computer upgrade has also allowed us to produce a better quality publication more easily than before. Hopefully the mixture of serious and lighter articles will provide something for everyone.

Following injury or surgery humans often have physiotherapy. This is a relatively new area in Veterinary Medicine, but Izzy, one of our newest veterinarians, has an interest in this area. She has written an item on her experiences of physiotherapy. You will also see her hints on keeping happy, healthy rabbits.

For some years now two of our vet nurses, Tracy and Michelle, have run Puppy Pre-school. Some owners having done the Puppy Preschool find they enjoy dog training. Tracy has a special interest in dog training and behaviour, and as a result of owner requests is now running dog training classes in the evenings at Balclutha. She has written some tips to make training fun for both dogs and their owners.

Catherine has written an article on parasite control for goat owners. Goats tend to fall into a gap between pets and farm animals. Parasite control is something that large animal vets talk about a lot, but the situation with goats is very different from sheep and different worming regimes are required.

## Rat Bait Poisoning

Peter Heslip - Veterinarian

Rat bait poisoning of dogs is common, especially in winter when owners lay poison because rats and mice are moving indoors. Frequently owners of poisoned dogs assure us that all their bait is laid safely and their animals could not possibly get it. Once the lab has confirmed the diagnosis and owners look again they usually find the source. In some cases the source is never established. We have had one dog with rat bait poisoning this winter, which we had seen with the same problem last year.

Rat bait poisoning causes reduced blood clotting resulting in excessive bleeding. The symptoms caused vary depending on where the bleeding occurs and may be obvious where bleeding is external. If bleeding is internal it may be more difficult to diagnose. A blood test gives a good indication of rat bait poisoning and treatment with the antidote, Vitamin K, is very effective if it is started early enough. Severely ill dogs may require a blood transfusion and even then can die.

Remember to be very careful where you put rat bait. The things that make rat bait tasty for rats make them appeal to dogs. Cats being cats are more fussy, so we rarely see cats poisoned with rat bait.

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# Tetanus Vaccination for Your Horse

Annie Jackson - Veterinarian

Tetanus is caused by infection of wounds with spores of the *Clostridium tetani* bacteria from soil contaminated with animal manure. Horses are highly susceptible to tetanus toxin which causes nervous signs such as muscle spasms, convulsions and respiratory failure. It is very difficult to treat and most infected animals die as a result of the disease. Tetanus is a preventable disease and vaccination is very effective.

The entry wound for tetanus may be very small and may be difficult or impossible to find. If a horse gets a wound and it has not been vaccinated we provide immediate protection with an injection of tetanus anti-toxin (TAT). This is short-lived protection lasting for about three weeks. When a horse is injured, or a colt gelded, an anti-toxin is usually given, and this is often mistaken for a tetanus vaccination. Vaccination provides long-lasting protection, but it takes some time to work and is not useful if there is the risk of tetanus from a wound.

The recommended programme for tetanus vaccination is:

## **Initial vaccination course:**

For all young stock and adults with lapsed or unknown vaccination history:

- Two vaccinations are given, four weeks apart, from three months of age, although often this initial course is given at weaning time.
- A third vaccination is given at no more than 1 year from the second vaccination.

This results in long lasting immunity and boosters need only be given every 3 to 5 years.

## **Broodmare vaccination:**

- Vaccinate the mare 4-6 weeks before foaling to boost the colostral antibodies and therefore help provide the foal with immunity from birth.

## **Tetanus anti-toxin**

Tetanus anti-toxin (TAT) provides immediate protection against tetanus for 3 weeks. TAT can be used at the time of surgery, such as castration, or if a horse has an injury/wound. This is especially important in young stock or other horses that have not completed their initial vaccination course.

Anti-toxin should be used in newborn foals whose dams have not been boosted in the last 4-6 weeks of pregnancy, or foals that have not received adequate colostrum (e.g.; with mares that run milk prior to foaling, or if the foal has a low IGG blood sample etc).



# Bunny Bits & Bobs

Izzy Topham - Veterinarian

Rabbits make great house pets - in temperate climates, house bunnies are more common than back-yard ones! They are very easy to toilet train, are friendly and social, and get on well with friendly cats and dogs.

Bunnies need access to warm, dry accommodation such as a closed in nest box in a hutch, or a home indoors. Hay makes great insulation and bedding (and food!). Other bedding needs to be specifically for bunnies to avoid respiratory problems.

Good quality hay should be 80% of the diet, topped up with a variety of vegetables at 1 cup/kg/day. Check what is safe for bunnies on [Rabbit.org](http://Rabbit.org). Introduce new veggies slowly, and take anything out that causes loose stools. Limit fruits to one tablespoon per kilo per day. Pellets can be fed at 1/8 to 1/4 cup per kilo, and must be fed within 6 weeks of manufacture.

Rabbits need to chew (e.g. hay and apple tree branches) so that their teeth don't overgrow. Drooling, loss of appetite, and weight loss can be signs of tooth problems, and can be serious more quickly than in a dog or cat, so take your bunny to the vet ASAP.

An annual vaccine is available in NZ against a fatal disease called Rabbit Calicivirus. If your bunny goes outside, this vaccination is highly recommended after 12 weeks of age.



Female bunnies should be spayed from 4 months of age to prevent uterine cancer (they have a 9 in 10 chance of this otherwise!). Keep bucks away from 2 months of age. Castrate males after 4 months of age to help reduce unwanted litters, the development of aggression, urine spraying, and humping behaviours.

Your bunny's ideal friend is a neutered bunny of the opposite sex. Unspayed females make the worst pairing – beware! Rabbits harbour a bacteria which causes respiratory disease in guinea pigs, making them unsuitable companions.

It's important to keep bunny's back end securely supported at all times to prevent them making a leap and breaking their own back. Non slip surfaces are also advised.

For more information Rabbit.org is a great place to start, or feel free to come in and speak to our resident bunny vets. We also have free Bunny Handbooks just like the ones for cats and dogs. Call in and pick one up.

## Dog Training with Tracy

Tracy Cullen - Vet Nurse

Some behavioural enrichment ideas for your dog.

- Instead of using a bowl throw biscuits out onto lawn. Make your dog work for its food.
- Have a garden or pit that your dogs can dig in. Bury treats/ toys in it for them to find.
- If you have a gun/bird dog drag a sock with scent in it along the ground and hide it so your dog has to work to find it. Reward when finds.
- Hide food around the back yard or house, rather than put under their nose.
- Let juice / water from meat cool. Throw some dog food into it and freeze (either in a kong/toy or just an ice cream container). Turn out and let them lick at it all day!
- For dogs that like water have the sprinkler on a timer that turns on and off during hot days in the garden.
- Teach them to come by playing hide and seek! This is a great game for children to interact with their dog and at the same time implement training.
  1. Whistle – give treat (repeat)
  2. Move away and whistle. Dog comes to find you – Give treat.
- Take a kibble of food; Let the dog sniff it only. Take the dog out of the room – get him to sit and wait. Hide the kibble in the room – (start with easy hiding places). Release your dog by saying “find it”. Make a big fuss when he finds it. Repeat.
- Cones: Place treats under cones so they have to try different things to get to treat – pushing, picking up with mouth, Tipping etc.
- Sprinkle a biscuit train through the garden till they find their food bowl with the rest of the biscuits inside it.
- **And remember on a cold winter's day training inside. Mental stimulation tires them out!**

## Goat Owner Tips - Worming

Catherine Copland - Veterinarian

Goats are very susceptible to intestinal worms. They do not develop age related resistance to worms as sheep do. They need to be drenched at a different rate and frequency to sheep. Resistance to the drugs in worming drenches can build up very quickly in goats so it's vital to choose the type of drench carefully.

Faecal egg counts are really beneficial to assess worm burdens and to monitor how effective drenching is. A drench gun is much more effective than a syringe to administer the drench but you need to know how to use it properly to prevent injuries.

Please come and get some advice from us before treating your goats for worms.

*“Doctor, doctor I feel like a goat”*  
*“How long have you felt like that?”*  
*“Since I was a kid”*





# Expanding Services - Physical Therapy

Izzy Topham - Veterinarian

Clutha Vets Small Animal department is pleased to say that we are putting more on offer for you! The field of physical therapy for animals (especially dogs) is one of the fastest growing in the veterinary world – *you wouldn't think twice about a few Physio sessions after surgery yourself, so why not for your canine athlete?*

Right from postoperative ice packing, massage, and gentle stretching, through to individualised rehabilitation programs after injury and plans for comfort for dogs with arthritis, we've got you covered. Whether your canine is a working dog, agility star, or beloved couch warmer, we can offer a service tailored to the needs of you and your dog.



## What we offer

- Physical assessment
- Hot and cold packing
- Massage
- Stretching
- Strength exercises
- Balance exercises
- Coordination exercises
- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)
- "Trigger point" therapy (releasing muscle knots)



**LOOK OUT FOR OUR FREE SENIOR PET CHECKS FOR ALL CATS & DOGS (INCLUDING WORKING DOGS) DURING AUGUST!**

## Did you know...

- On average cats spend 2/3 of every day sleeping. That means a nine-year old cat has been awake for only three years of its life.
- Unlike dogs, cats do not have a sweet tooth. Scientists believe this is due to a mutation in a key taste receptor.
- When a cat chases prey it keeps its head level. Dog (and humans) bob their heads up and down.
- Female cats tend to be right handed (right pawed?), while male cats tend to be left handed. Interestingly, while 90% of humans are right handed, the remaining 10% of lefties tend to be male.
- A cat can't climb down a tree headfirst because all the claws on their toes point backwards. Cats have to climb down backwards to allow their claws to engage.
- Cats make about 100 different sounds and dogs only about 10.
- A cat's brain is biologically more similar to a human brain than it is to a dog's. Both humans and cats have identical regions in their brains that are responsible for emotions.
- There are more than 500 million cats in the world, with approximately 40 different breeds.
- It is commonly held that ancient Egyptians first domesticated cats about 5,000 years ago. However the recent discovery of a domestic cat in a 9,500 year old grave in Cyprus predates the Egyptians by more than 4,000 years.



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