

# Colne Valley News

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**your friends  
are  
our concern**

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## **Welcome!**

**(Left to right)** Lisa, Antony and Nicky invite puppies under 14 weeks of age to a Puppy Party course

## **Onward and upward!**

Upward first: our number of full-time vets returned to six after the May Bank Holiday, when we were joined by Hannah Capon. You may have met Hannah at various times in recent years when she has provided us with locum cover. Hannah hails from Mersea and saw practice with us when she was a student at Cambridge Vet School, so it is very much a return to her roots for her.

On the nursing front, Lisa Wilkes moved onward last month to start her new career as a physiotherapist, switching patients from animal to human! This marked the end of a five year training period and much hard work, so we wish Lisa all the best with her change in direction. Lisa will continue to help with the puppy parties (on which, more overleaf...).

## **Flea alert!**

April was remarkably sunny and dry, making up for a late spring. Although May has been cold so far, it is still important to start addressing flea control for all your cats and dogs if you tend to take a more relaxed approach over the winter.

Fleas are a year-round problem, thanks to central heating and fitted carpets. It may have been a cold winter,

but it was still warmer inside our homes than outside! Remember effective flea control needs action on the environment as well as on your pets.

Speaking of being warmer inside, do think twice before your leaving your dog in the car on a warm day. Even with windows left open a little, the temperature inside a parked car can rise rapidly.



## Puppy parties

*The Editor writes:* After years of recommending puppy parties at puppy vaccination appointments, I was invited along to see for myself and to report back for the newsletter. I came away thoroughly impressed and enthused. 'Brilliant' sums up the evening in one word!

A Puppy Party is actually a course of three hour-long sessions (costing a total of £20), from 7.45pm on a Monday evening. They are held at the main surgery. Participating puppies need to have had at least their first vaccination, and to be less than 14 weeks old to ensure they are all at the same stage of development and play.

There are four people involved in running each course: Nicky (trainer), Lisa and Antony (vet nurses) and Cathy (receptionist) who is the important behind-the-scenes co-ordinator.

I walked into the waiting room at the Hythe surgery to find it had been transformed. All the chairs had been placed around the walls and a colourful barrier was in place to prevent any would-be receptionists!

The emphasis is very much on socialising. It was so interesting to see how the puppies interacted: they were

simply allowed their freedom for the first twenty minutes or so. Some made friends and played, others investigated the range of toys lying on the floor.

One pup was very shy at first, hiding behind his owner's legs, but as time passed he became braver and ventured out. By the end of the session even he was joining in. Another pup was put in his place when he started throwing his weight around so he ran back to his owner for reassurance, and ten minutes later he had crashed out on the floor, sound asleep!

Each session is individually structured, with a mix of practical training exercises for the puppies and information for the owners. The puppies are also weighed each time, which should help us vets in the long-term because so many dogs are worried about standing on the scales, or perhaps they become bashful with age!

Many owners have remarked on how much their dogs love coming to the practice after enjoying the parties. I have certainly noticed how previous participants rush into the waiting room, dragging their owners behind them.

We do also offer a free check at four months of age for all puppies and kittens, usually with Antony.

## Fostering kittens

Having focussed on puppies in this issue, fostering kittens will be featured in the next one.