

Colne Valley News – July 2017



What is this summer hazard? Answer at the end of this newsletter...

Parasite control

You may have seen mention in the media about the spread across Essex of lungworm, *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, sometimes called French heartworm. The larvae are carried by slugs and snails which may be eaten by a dog either on purpose, accidentally when eating grass, drinking from a puddle or water bowl left outside or when picking up an object when out on a walk, for example.

There are different signs of lungworm disease. Coughing and breathing problems are the classic symptoms or there may poor blood clotting, behavioural changes, or non-specific illness such as weight loss, vomiting and diarrhoea. It is not zoonotic, meaning that it cannot be transferred to humans and no cases have been reported in cats.

Ensuring the most appropriate and effective programme of parasite control for your pet can seem very confusing. Roundworms are routinely included, but what about fleas, ticks, tapeworms, and now lungworm? With recent advances, we are closer to a simplified parasite strategy to keep your pets healthy, depending on his or her life-style, which may take one of three approaches:

1. Topical - absorbed through the skin (may need a tablet for completeness)
2. Oral - tablets by mouth
3. Combination - collar and tablets

A further complication arises if you take your pet abroad as there are additional disease risks to consider, depending on where and when you are travelling. In addition, your pet will need to be treated for tapeworms 1-5 days before returning to the UK (unless you are travelling directly from Finland, Ireland, Malta or Norway) and it is advisable to repeat the treatment within 28 days of your return to the UK. The British Veterinary Association has produced a leaflet with information about taking your pet abroad which can be downloaded from a link at www.bva-awf.org.uk

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Please ask one of the team at the practice for advice on the best parasite control strategy for your pet, at home and if travelling abroad.

Feliscratch

Further to the introduction last year of Feliway Friends diffuser to help with inter-cat relations in a multi-cat household, another new product has recently been launched.

Aimed at re-directing scratching behaviour within the house, a vial of Feliscratch is applied daily to the scratching post (ideally more than three feet high), or a horizontal scratching area, for seven days, then no applications for a week before resuming once weekly for two more weeks. The pack of nine vials is therefore sufficient for a month and should be all that is needed to re-direct a cat's scratching behaviour. Feliscratch contains a blue dye to provide the cat with a visual cue, and catnip to attract his attention, as well as a synthetic form of the pheromone naturally given off from the paws to encourage scratching at the post.

There is an interesting resource on the Feliway website exploring the positioning of resources for cats within the home. For example, did you know that the litter tray should not be in the kitchen because that is such a busy area of the house? Or that the water bowl should be sited away from the food bowls? Take a look at www.feliway.com/uk/What-causes-cat-stress-or-anxiety/Make-Your-Home-Cat-Friendly

Welcome!

Our team of vets will be joined by Janine Scarff this month. Janine has been working in small animal practice across the border in Suffolk.

The Power of Facebook

We have had a Facebook page for nearly two years now with daily posts to keep our followers up-to-date on health issues and useful information on pet-care. Strays brought in to the practice have been reunited with their owners through our Facebook posts.

Last week, a sick dog was found without an owner and brought in to the practice. In an effort to locate his owner, we put a post on Facebook about him which attracted 5,900 shares and 99,700 views, reaching 257,450 people (as of 29th June). Sadly, despite our best endeavours, the dog took a turn for the worse, collapsed and the sad decision had to be made to spare him further suffering. We would like to thank everyone for their support on Facebook.

The summer hazard at the start of this newsletter is the European adder, *Vipera berus*, the only venomous snake found living naturally in the wild in the UK. It will generally only bite if provoked or taken by surprise, such as being accidentally trodden on by a person or dog. If your dog is bitten by an adder, try to keep him calm and seek veterinary attention as a matter of urgency, especially if bitten on the muzzle or face.

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