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## Chewing Gum – Warning To All Dog Owners

This is Gypsy, a normally happy Stafford Bull Terrier. She was brought into us as an emergency after eating chewing gum, which contained xylitol (a sugar-alcohol used as a sugar substitute). This sugar free product is widely used in many sweets, chewing gums, ketchup, some brands of peanut butter, protein bars, puddings, cakes and cookies and is commonly used by diabetics who bake sugar free foods.



Nurse **Kayleigh Buchele** was involved with Gypsy's nursing care.

*"Unfortunately Gypsy got into a whole tub of sugar free chewing gum but luckily her mum noticed and knew that it is toxic to dogs. Some brands of chewing gum contains xylitol, which can indeed be toxic to dogs with even just 1 piece of gum. Worryingly it is also found in some brands*



*of peanut butter. Xylitol causes a dangerous drop in blood sugar causing hypoglycaemia and liver damage. Signs can include staggering, appearing disoriented, collapse, weakness and seizures. Gypsy was admitted for emergency treatment, which included fluid therapy and a meal containing charcoal to help absorb the toxins caused by the xylitol. Thankfully after a few days blood tests showed Gypsy had recovered. Her Mum's quick actions and awareness of the dangers of xylitol to dogs, saved her life."*

**Always check the nutritional information on food packets and look out for the ingredient xylitol or sugar-alcohol when feeding human food to dogs.** This type of poisoning is not as obvious as some of the common poisons known to affect dogs such as chocolate, rat poisons, ibuprofen and paracetamol, grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas. Always check the food packets for this invisible ingredient and if you think your dog has consumed xylitol please ring us right away on **Tel: 01376 325511**.

## More balls please – forget Wimbledon!



Exercise is important for all our pets, but giving some dogs the right amount and type of exercise and mental stimulation can be challenging. Nurse **Emma Ruggles** has a very active 3 year old Labrador Retriever called Bella. After bringing her to our own MVP Puppy Playskool when she was 9 weeks old, Emma continued Bella's education with regular puppy classes to ensure her dog had plenty of socialisation opportunities with other dogs and people. When she reached 12 months of age Bella was introduced to agility classes which were great fun, but Emma could see her dog didn't have the motivation that other dogs in her group had.

After watching the flyball competitions at Crufts Emma thought she would give it a go, Bella was now 18 months old so the right age to start – the teams looked like they were having great fun and as Bella loves toys (especially tennis balls!) she

joined the 'Wickford Waggin'tails'. It took no time at all for Bella (and Emma!) to get hooked. *"Bella loves it! It has taken about 6 months to train her to be ready to race in open competition, using lots of positive reinforcement and treats – she is a Labrador after all!! She loves interacting with other dogs on the team and racing for her ball. She secretly loves being the last dog to race on the team and is extremely determined to beat the opposition! This sport is suitable for any breed of dog. I've seen Miniture Schnauzers and Great Danes compete, all you need is a fit owner and a fit dog! Bella just loves flyball and is always excited, bouncy with tail wagging raring to get going, she is also very reliable and listens to me. I'd recommend this sport to anyone, its great fun and a great way to bond with your dog. I am really proud of my Bella!"* added Emma.

Flyball is a sport for teams of 6 dogs, with 4 racing at any one time. Two teams of 4 then race against each other down a lane over 4 hurdles, do a 'box turn', release a tennis ball and race back to their owner before the next dog goes. It's basically a relay race! For more information on the sport visit the British Flyball Association's website [www.flyball.org.uk](http://www.flyball.org.uk)

## Cat Only Clinic Times!



September the 12th marked the start of our **Cat Only Clinic appointments** at our Coggeshall branch, less than 6 miles away from Braintree. We are very aware that cats find trips to the vets stressful but being in a cat only environment will help your cat feel more comfortable. As an International Society of Feline Medicine Cat Friendly Clinic, silver status, cats are important



to us! This will also coincide with the introduction of our owner only **Kitten Parenting Classes**. All this comes as part of our ongoing commitment to our feline patients. Cat only clinic appointments will fall outside of our regular Coggeshall opening times, which will remain unchanged. Cat only clinic appointments will be available at Coggeshall every Wednesday and need to be pre-booked. For further information and to book an appointment please ring **01376 325511**.

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## Feeling ticked off?

Autumn is the prime time of year for ticks as they thrive when the weather is still mild, but moist. They are particularly prevalent in areas with livestock, especially sheep, and where the undergrowth is thick, waiting to hop on to passing pets as they brush by.

Ticks will attach themselves to your pet and feed on their blood for several days. Although pets are rarely bothered by them, they can leave skin irritations behind and have the potential to pass on some nasty infections. Ticks can spread: **Lyme Disease**, an inflammatory infection which causes lameness and fever, **Babesiosis**, which can lead to life threatening anaemia and **Ehrlichiosis** which also attacks red blood cells and can be fatal. The latter two conditions are particularly prevalent abroad, so if you take your dog abroad on holiday, it is essential to protect them against ticks.

Pets should be monitored daily for ticks and if any ticks are found, these should be promptly removed with a specially designed tick remover. Treatments and preventions for ticks are available as spot-ons, tablets and collars and are generally very effective.



Grooming reveals an *Ixodes* tick. These are widespread across the UK and Ireland and may be infected with Lyme disease.



Ticks can be carefully removed using a tick hook.



## Autumn Awareness!

Autumn is a truly beautiful time of year – the trees are turning to glorious golds and the weather is crisp. However, here are some things we need to be aware of to ensure our pets stay happy and healthy as the seasons change.

**Parasite alert!** Firstly, keep up your **flea** protection! Turning on the central heating means our homes become their ideal environment when it is too cold for them outside. Continue to treat your pets and come and talk to us about how to protect your home as well. **Harvest mites** and **ticks** (see above left) also thrive at this time of year and again we are happy to advise you on how to prevent problems.

**Toxic alert!** Cars often have anti-freeze added to their engines around now which means bottles are often left out and spillages can occur. Unfortunately, cats find it very tasty despite the fact it is highly toxic and often fatal. Make sure you keep anti-freeze well out of reach, clean up drips and if you think they might have eaten some, bring them to us immediately.

**Outdoor pets** like rabbits or guinea pigs are usually able to cope fine as winter approaches but we can help by ensuring their cages are free from drafts and that they have enough bedding to create a cosy bed. However, they still should have as much freedom as possible, so do keep allowing them outdoor access in a secure run, they are active creatures and will be miserable cooped up for months.

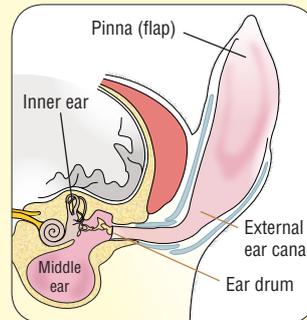
Finally, watch out for **conkers!** For some dogs they can seem like fun play things or tasty snacks! However, they are poisonous, causing nasty tummy upsets, and can potentially lead to dangerous blockages in the intestines.



## A word in your ear!

Ear disease is common in our pets and being able to quickly recognise the signs is very important.

Anatomically, our pets' ears are very similar to ours, with a canal extending from the ear flap into the skull with a drum at the base protecting the middle ear. The main difference is that their ears are positioned towards the top of their heads, rather than the sides, and the ear canals are longer. Sound travels down the ear canal and vibrates the ear drum, stimulating tiny bones in the middle ear, which in turn transmits sounds onto the inner ear and brain.



A dog's ear in cross section. Most ear problems occur in the external ear canal

The vast majority of ear problems affect only the external ear canal but repeated infections and some growths will cause middle ear disease. Middle ear disease (which is more common in cats) can be a challenge to diagnose, and treatment is difficult owing to the depth of the middle ear.

Signs of ear problems include: head shaking and scratching or rubbing at their ears. Discharge is common and can be black and waxy or creamy or pus-like and is often very smelly. You might also notice inflammation and reddening.

Ear infections can be triggered by objects getting into the canal (grass seeds are a common culprit), skin allergies, excessive wetness after swimming (but not for all pets, so if your dog enjoys a dip, you don't necessarily need to stop them!), bacterial infections or ear mite infestations (seen commonly in cats). Sometimes we might recommend sedating your pet so we can fully examine their ears, and run tests such as swabs, bloods or X-rays.

Treatment of ear problems usually involves topical liquids but these can be a challenge in some pets! If you think you might struggle, please ask us about other options. Some drops only require once daily, or even once weekly application, which we can always do for you, and occasionally we will prescribe tablets.

To prevent or reduce ear problems it is important to promptly identify the cause and start treatment as soon as possible to avoid longer term problems. In addition, regular cleaning will help affected pets – once or twice a week is enough and always use a veterinary standard ear cleaner. Ask us and we can show you what to use and how to do it effectively.



Otitis externa in a cat with ear mites with a typical crusty brown discharge.



Photo of a grass awn lodged at the base of the external ear canal. Pets with trapped grass awns will usually present with severe head shaking.



Spilt antifreeze is sweet but also **deadly** to pets

