

# Viking Vets

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018



- LATEST GOSSIP** All the news from the Viking team
- TICK WATCH** How to spot ticks, remove them and prevention
- IN THE NEWS** The top 100 dog breeds are revealed

# Welcome

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Viking Vets newsletter.

Read all about the latest gossip from the team, including details of our recent Wellbeing award! We have two cats as our star pets in this issue- read all about their stories on p4. And we focus on dogs in the news with a list of the top 100 dog breeds in the UK and how owning man's best friend could help you live longer (p9).

As we move into Spring and the weather starts to warm up ticks will begin to proliferate. These parasitic bugs can attach themselves to your pet's skin in order to feed causing localised infections and irritations, as well as potentially spreading Lyme disease. It is really important to check your pet for ticks regularly (see p6 for more information about keeping your pet safe from ticks, what to do if you find one on your pet and the recommended prevention).

If you have any feedback or there is anything you would like to see in the newsletter please contact us:

Viking Vets  
Chevening House  
Station Road  
Henbury  
Bristol BS10 7QQ

Tel: 0117 9505888

Email: [thevets@vikingvets.com](mailto:thevets@vikingvets.com)

Web: [www.vikingvets.com](http://www.vikingvets.com)



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[@vikingvetsbristol](https://www.facebook.com/vikingvetsbristol)

# Viking wins a Wellbeing award

We recently won a Wellbeing award in a competition for veterinary practices in the UK, looking at how they look after their team.

I firmly believe that you have to look after your team, then they will look after the practice for you. Giving excellent service to pets and people requires that people like the environment they work in. The nature of veterinary work means that we are continually working with uncertainty, often owners are not able to afford to do all the tests we need to be certain in a diagnosis. We often have to compromise our treatment plan and second guess what might be wrong with the pet. In addition we are constantly running out of time. This mix of urgency and uncertainty is a recipe for stress.

Vets are often of a perfectionist-type personality. They have been very good at passing exams, and have hardly failed at anything until they come into practice and are suddenly faced with their patients dying. Mistakes happen in every part of life, but there is a lot less acceptance that this can happen in medicine. It is easy to feel useless and depressed when this happens, however this is not helpful for the individual or for the practice. When mistakes happen, we do not look for blame, but aim to analyse what has happened and how it can be prevented in the future. It is also very important to be able to talk about the issues with a supportive team, not having to take the burden home to offload on partners.

Social bonds are important to build resilience. We have a social committee which organises events outside of work. We have done everything from go-carting to cocktail making.



We are a one-site practice, therefore it is easy for us to communicate - we do not use email, we talk to each other! There is a daily huddle to run through the day and plan the next day. And we have monthly practice meetings, with a home-cooked lunch.

The overall reason for making work an enjoyable place to be is to have a happy team that stays for a long time, thereby creating continuity for you and your pet.

Having moved from Norway, I look upon the team as my extended family, and love the challenges that come with that.

**Maria Lowe**

## Keyhole spays now available



Our equipment has arrived, is fully set up and we are now offering keyhole (laparoscopic) spays and other minimally invasive procedures.

Our vet Andy has been performing these procedures since 2012 and is very experienced. The benefits of the keyhole procedure are a

65% reduction in pain, quicker recovery times and patients only need to have exercise restricted for two days (in most cases).

If you are interested in a keyhole spay please let us know. We currently will only be able to perform two per week (on a Tuesday and Wednesday).

## Avian flu warning for bird owners

Recently there has been an outbreak of Avian flu in the Dorset area. The bird flu prevention zone has been spread across the whole of England.

DEFRA (The Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs) is urging people to follow these new legal requirements to protect their birds.

- Ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds - for example, by netting off ponds and removing wild bird food sources.
- Feed and water your birds in enclosed areas.
- Minimise movement in and out of bird enclosures.
- Clean and disinfect footwear, and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy.
- Reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or



boggy areas.

- People are being encouraged to report dead wild birds to the DEFRA helpline on 03459335577.

DEFRA has said that the prevention zone will remain in place until further notice. It is important that vets and poultry keepers follow these new legal requirements to try to contain further spread of the disease.

For more information please visit [www.gov.uk/government/news/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-winter-2017-to-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-winter-2017-to-2018).

## Well done to Petplan nominees



The Petplan award nominations have been announced and we are very proud to have eight - Chloe and Lisa in the Nurse of the Year category; Andy, Vicki, Veerle and Maria for Vet of the Year; a nomination for Practice of the Year; and Sonia in the Practice Support Staff category.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate. Fingers crossed for a winner!

## Upcoming offers and promotions

March is tick awareness month here at Viking Vets (see p6 for our feature on tick awareness) and we will be offering a 10% discount on Seresto collars, which protect cats and dogs from ticks and fleas. We are also supporting The Big Tick Project. Visit their website at [www.bigtickproject.co.uk](http://www.bigtickproject.co.uk) for information.

April is wildlife month – we will be raising money for the charity Badger Care People. May is our ever-popular dental month. Book in to take advantage of our 50% off a scale and polish offer throughout the month, and we will also be offering nurse dental checks.

# Brave cats win our hearts

In this issue we have two very brave cats who have both been through a very tough time but are now recovering well at home with their owners.

Jekyll is a lovely black and white domestic short haired cat. He was brought in by his owners as they'd noticed he had not been eating and had been listless for a few days. On clinical examination Jekyll was found to have a high temperature of 39.7 °C, meaning that he was extremely pyrexia and had signs of significant dehydration. It was decided that Jekyll would require intravenous fluid therapy, a blood test and appropriate treatment to help support his previously diagnosed renal insufficiency, so he was admitted into the practice for hospitalisation.

After two days of hospitalisation, and with the help of fluids and antibiotics, Jekyll's temperature began to come down and blood tests revealed no significant abnormality. A plan was implemented to continue to monitor his temperature over the next 24 hours and then reassess his temperature to see whether Jekyll could be treated at home. However, the day before he was due to go home his breathing became laboured and respiratory noise was noticed while the vet and nurse were examining him. One of the symptoms of this was occasional open-mouth breathing and flared nostrils. After discussing these findings with Jekyll's owner, the decision was made to go ahead with an ultrasound scan of his chest so that we could rule out any potential abnormality.

Jekyll tolerated the scan very well therefore no sedation or anaesthetic was required. During the procedure, the scan revealed a significantly abnormal volume of free fluid surrounding the



Jekyll is now back to his old self and recovering well at home.

heart and lungs within the chest. A thoracic tap was carried out to obtain a sample of the unknown fluid, which involves placing a needle between the rib spaces and drawing the fluid back into a syringe for analysis.

The sample was distributed onto a slide and examined under our laboratory microscope, which revealed a high amount of neutrophilic exudate - a sign of pus indicating a potential pyothorax (pus in the chest).

The results were reported to the owners and permission was granted to go ahead and perform a conscious chest drain. This was achieved by clipping the fur and cleaning the area of skin above where the thoracic tap was taken, then placing a butterfly catheter between the ribs into the chest cavity and attaching a three-way

tap to the catheter. The fluid from within the chest was then drained out by gently retracting the syringe until full, then changing the one-way flow valve so that when emptied the fluid would filter off into a kidney dish. A total volume of 60ml of fluid was drained from the chest cavity, which relieved the pressure around Jekyll's heart and lungs enabling him to breathe with more comfort and ease.

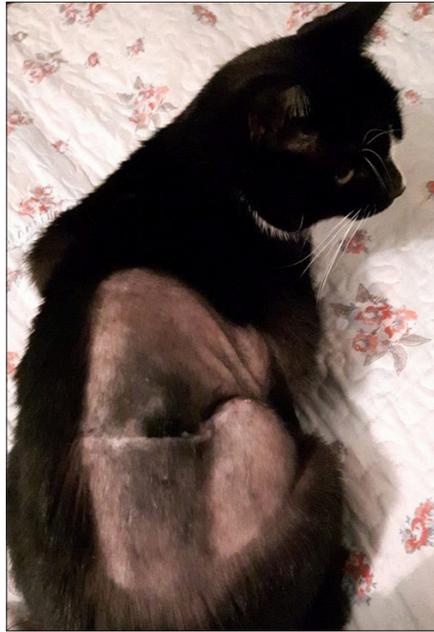
Jekyll was sent home a few days later on a course of antibiotics and his owners were asked to monitor his resting respiratory rate because if his breathing became laboured or noisy again, this could indicate that his chest had refilled with fluid.

In addition, during Jekyll's recovery at home, his vigilant

owners later noticed a lump had appeared on his right side. After closely monitoring the lump, 48 hours later Jekyll was back in the practice for an examination as it appeared that the lump had burst.

On examination with Vicki, a rather deep penetrable hole was discovered leading straight into the abdomen. It was possible that this had been causing the pyothorax and was the cause of Jekyll's initial high temperature and dyspnoea (difficulty breathing). Jekyll was admitted for an exploratory laparotomy to investigate the wound and resulting pyothorax.

During surgical investigation, Andy discovered a lengthy tract running from the chest all the way back towards the pelvis just beneath and parallel to the spine. This was therefore highly likely to have been the cause of the pyothorax as it had provided a clear entrance for infection into the chest cavity. Before closure of the wound, exploration continued to reveal no further



**Jekyll was found to have a deep wound into his abdomen.**

abnormalities or foreign bodies. Due to the large dead space volume now left beneath the surface of the skin, a penrose drain tube was inserted and sutured in place to allow for any fluid to evacuate from the wound post operatively. Just

before waking Jekyll up from his anaesthetic an X-ray was taken of the abdomen and chest to rule out any potential foreign bodies in the abdomen, but none were found. Tissue samples from the wound site were sent off to an external laboratory for culture and sensitivity.

Two days after surgery the drain was removed as it had stopped discharging any fluid and Jekyll was sent home on antibiotics and strict rest to help prevent any delays in wound healing.

After four days the results from the lab were back and revealed no abnormalities within the tissue samples submitted from the surgery, therefore ruling out any cancers.

Recently, Jekyll boarded with us overnight and he appears to be very bright and has regained his appetite, enjoying a good fuss from the nurses and a warm comfy bed. The Viking team wish Jekyll a speedy recovery from everything that he has endured over the past few months.

## Matty's eye ulcers cause problems

Matty is a very handsome ginger and white domestic short haired cat. Matty was brought into us recently by his owners as they had noticed he was squinting and holding his eyes tightly shut. On closer examination by vet Andy, it was discovered that Matty had two corneal ulcers (one in each eye), which were causing blephrospasm (squinting or holding eyes tightly shut). These ulcers can be caused by trauma such as a cat scratch or rubbing of the eye over a rough surface. The usual treatment would involve medicated eye drops to assist with healing the ulcers.

However, in Matty's case, he also had signs of an entropion (inward scrolling of the eyelids) on both of his lower eyelids.



This posed a "which came first" question. It was unclear if the entropion was causing the corneal ulcer or if the ulcer was causing the entropion due to the eye retracting back into its socket allowing the lower lids to fold

towards the surface of the eye.

Our very own advanced practitioner in ophthalmology, Vicki, assessed both eyes using a powerful ophthalmoscope and after discussion with Matty's owners it was decided to perform surgery to debride his ulcers and repair his entropion on both of his eyes.

The surgery went as planned and Matty recovered well following his anaesthetic. Contact lenses were applied to each eye to act as a protective shield enabling the ulcers to heal beneath them. Less than a week later, his ulcerations were healing nicely and Matty appeared much more comfortable and happy in himself, returning to his usual activities.

We wish Matty a quick recovery and congratulate his owners on the care they have given him before and after his operations.

# What can you do about ticks?

At this time of year, tick populations are increasing and you need to be more aware of looking for them on your pets. In this article we will look at what ticks are, what you can do if you find one on your pet and the best ways of preventing them.

Ticks are spider-like, egg-shaped, blood-sucking arachnids. They have eight legs and vary in size from about 1mm to 1cm long. Adult ticks look a bit like small spiders. They are common in woodland, grassland and heath areas, but can also be found in your garden if you live in an area with lots of wildlife. You are most likely to come across them in areas with lots of deer or sheep. They are most prevalent between spring and autumn, but they are active throughout the year.

Ticks don't fly or jump, they attach onto your pet when they brush past them in the environment. They like to attach to areas where the hair is thin, for example around the face and ears, and on the belly.

## Looking for ticks on your pet

Ticks are oval or rounded in appearance and vary in size depending on their age and whether they have just fed, but they are definitely big enough to spot. They can be various colours from pale cream to a dark grey or brown. Generally, a tick attached to your pet's skin will look like a small rounded pebble because you will be unable to see their legs or the probe which they use to pierce the skin with. Run your hands over your pet's body to check for any lumps or bumps. A tick will feel like a small bump on your pet's skin.

Once a tick has attached to your pet (with its mouthparts) it will feed on your pet's blood, which can cause a reaction on the skin. If an animal has a severe infestation it could



A tick is spider-like with eight legs (top; *Ixodes ricinus*) but when filled with blood it looks like a small stone (bottom).

cause anaemia, however this is very rare and usually only occurs in very young, old or ill animals. Ticks can transmit disease e.g. - Lyme disease and babesiosis. Ticks carry a bacteria called *Borrelia*, which can cause Lyme disease. This causes symptoms such as fever and joint pain in animals. It is a very serious disease and can even be transmitted to humans, but the risk in the UK is very low. Symptoms in humans include a circular rash, muscle and joint pain, and fatigue. Left untreated, the disease can develop into



The safest way to remove a tick is by using a tick hook.

conditions such as viral-like meningitis, facial palsy, arthritis and nerve damage, so if you walk your dog in areas with deer or sheep make sure you take precautions to avoid being bitten.

Babesiosis is extremely rare in the UK and the tick that spreads it has only been found in southern England. Symptoms in dogs include pale membranes, loss of appetite/depression, increased heart and breathing rate, fever, collapse, jaundice (yellowing of the whites of the eyes and gums) and red urine.

## Removal

If your pet gets a tick we advise removing it. We are more than happy to remove ticks free of charge or to give you a demonstration of how to do so safely. It is vital to make sure that you remove the whole of the tick and don't allow the head end of the tick to break off and remain embedded under the skin. We also sell tick hooks so if your pet picks up ticks regularly you can remove them

safely yourself. If you do remove the tick yourself please dispose of it immediately as ticks can attach to humans. Once you have removed the tick, give the affected area of your pet's skin a thorough wash and a wipe over with a topical antiseptic. Keep an eye on the affected area for a couple of days afterwards to make sure it does not become sore or inflamed.

### How 'not' to remove a tick

- Do not brush, scrape or pull the tick off the skin. This can lead to the tick's probe breaking off under the surface of the skin and leading to a range of potential infections and problems.
- Do not just leave the tick on your pet if you spot one – it must be removed.
- Do not remove the tick with bare hands or your fingernails as this can allow the spread of diseases such as Lyme disease.
- Do not attempt to burn or singe

### TIPS FOR AVOIDING TICKS

- Carry a tick-removal tool and antiseptic wipes.
  - Avoid walking dogs through heavily tick-infested areas
  - Use a tick repellent/treatment collar on your pet such as a Seresto collar, which is a safe, effective product that lasts for eight months.
  - Treat pet accessories with repellents too.
  - Groom pets thoroughly: make sure you brush against, as well as with, the hair growth to see any embedded ticks. Check
- inside the ears, around the eyes, on the chin and around the muzzle, as well as between pads and toes.
  - Don't bring ticks home: take off outer clothes before going indoors. Tests have demonstrated that ticks can survive a full cycle in the washing machine and short periods in a dryer.
  - Check your pet daily for ticks and safely remove as soon as possible if you find one using the correct removal method.

the tick off.

- Do not spray the tick with an insecticide or toxin.
- Do not use alcohol to remove a tick or attempt to suffocate the tick using a layer of Vaseline or soap.

### Prevention

A Seresto collar is our recommended form of tick

prevention as it stops ticks from attaching in the first place and kills ticks if they do manage to bite your pet. The collar can be worn for eight months and will protect your cat or dog from fleas and ticks for this length of time.

There are other prevention products available so speak to one of our vets if you would like any more information.

## What is The Big Tick Project?

The Big Tick Project is a collaboration between MSD Animal Health and the University of Bristol to conduct what has now become the largest-ever veterinary study of ticks and tick-borne disease in the UK. The aim of the project is to raise awareness about the risks to pets and humans from tick-borne disease as the numbers of ticks in the UK increase.

The Big Tick Project was launched in April 2015 in the New Forest in Hampshire by TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham. It was started to raise awareness about the dangers of ticks and tick-borne disease in the UK – and as a way to educate pet owners on how to protect against them.

At the start of the project,



veterinary practices were asked to examine dogs in their practice for ticks each week and to complete a questionnaire relating to the clinical history of each dog. Tick samples were then sent to the University of Bristol to be studied. A total of 1461 veterinary practices responded to the request for tick collection and a huge 6372 ticks were sent in. The samples have

been "mapped" by location and were analysed for the presence of tick-borne disease

### Results

Of the 7102 dogs involved in the study, 2181 were infested with ticks. This means that around one in every three dogs was affected. The study also showed that ticks are not just confined to rural areas, with strong tick populations present in urban areas.

There are several different species of tick found in the UK; the most common found in the Big Tick Project was *Ixodes ricinus* (see picture on p6), present on 89% of infested dogs.

You can visit the Big Tick Project website to look at the interactive tick map. Simply enter your postcode to view the potential tick risks in your area.

More information can be found at [www.bigtickproject.co.uk](http://www.bigtickproject.co.uk).

# Dogs lower your risk of death

A new study in Sweden has found that owning a dog lowers your risk of death from cardiovascular disease or other causes.

The team analysed 3.4 million people aged 40 to 80 and found that there was a lower risk of cardiovascular disease in owners of dogs, particularly of hunting breeds, such as terriers, retrievers and scent hounds.

One of the reasons behind this could be that owning a dog helps to increase your physical activity, although researchers said it may be that active people are more likely to choose to own dogs.

The study team also said that owning a dog may protect people from cardiovascular disease by increasing their social contact and wellbeing, or even by changing the owner's bacterial microbiome. The microbiome is the collection of microscopic species that live in the gut. It's thought a dog may influence its owner's microbiomes because dogs change the dirt in home environments, exposing people to bacteria they may not have otherwise encountered.

The researchers said that the protective effect was increased for people who live alone. "The results showed that single dog owners had a 33% reduction in risk of death and 11% reduction in risk of heart attack," compared to single non-owners, said lead study author Mwenya Mubanga of Uppsala University. This is an interesting result as previous studies have shown that people who live alone have a higher risk of cardiovascular death. Dr Mubanga said: "Perhaps a dog may stand in as an important family member in the single households."

The study, published in *Scientific Reports*, looked at data from 2001 to 2012. In Sweden, every visit to a hospital



is recorded in national databases and dog ownership registration has been mandatory since 2001.

Dr Mike Knapton of the British Heart Foundation, said: "Owning a dog is associated with reduced mortality and risk of having heart disease. Previous studies have shown this association but

have not been as conclusive - largely due to the population size studied here.

"Dog ownership has many benefits, and we may now be able to count better heart health as one of them.

"However, as many dog owners may agree, the main reason for owning a dog is the sheer joy.

"Whether you're a dog owner or not, keeping active is a great way to help improve your heart health."

Tove Fall, senior author of the study, said there were some limitations: "These kind of epidemiological studies look for associations in large populations but do not provide answers on whether and how dogs could protect from cardiovascular disease.

"There might also be differences between owners and non-owners already before buying a dog, which could have influenced our results, such as those people choosing to get a dog tending to be more active and of better health."

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**“Owning a dog is associated with reduced mortality and risk of having heart disease. Previous studies have shown this association but have not been as conclusive.”**

# Nation's top dog breeds revealed

Dogs have now overtaken cats as the nation's most popular pet – which might not come as a surprise to devoted dog owners!

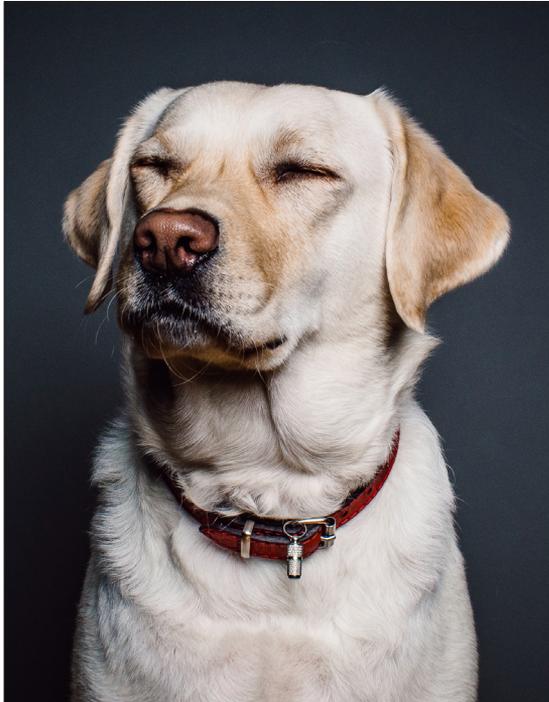
One in four of us now share a home with a dog and there are a vast array of different sizes and breeds. But which

of the 217 recognised breeds, not to mention thousands of cross-breeds, comes out as the nation's favourite?

A poll of 10,000 people for ITV show *Britain's Favourite Dogs: Top 100*, which was shown in January, revealed the top 100

dog breeds in Britain.

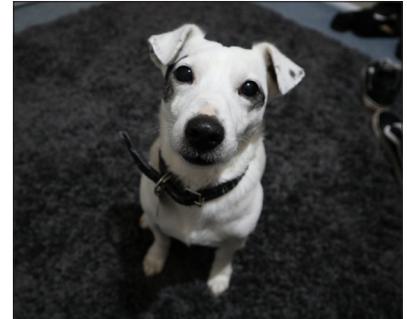
Here we count down the top 10 and find out where our staff dogs come in the list. You can see the full list of the top 100 breeds at [www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/100-most-popular-dog-breeds-1076444](http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/100-most-popular-dog-breeds-1076444).



1. Labrador



2. Mixed breed



3. Jack russell



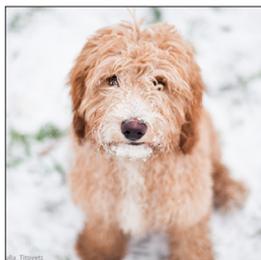
4. Staffordshire bull terrier



5. Border collie



6. Cocker spaniel



7. Cockapoo



8. German shepherd



9. Springer spaniel



10. Cavalier King Charles spaniel

So where do our staff dogs feature in the list?

- Vet Maria – Labrador (number 1) and lurcher (24)
- Vet Denise – Cocker spaniel (6)
- Vets Andy and Amy – German shorthaired pointer (57)
- Head nurse Lisa –

- Doberman (52)
- Student nurse Jeri – cockapoo (7)
- Receptionist Laura – cockapoo (7)
- Student nurse Emily – terrier cross (mixed breed 2)
- Receptionist Sonia – Victorian bulldog (26), boxer (18),

- two jack russells (3) and a Yorkshire terrier (15)
- Nurse Chloe – boxer (18), shih tzu (12) and Parson Russell terrier (47)
- Nurse Tash – bichon frise (25)
- Nurse Sam – two mixed breeds (2)
- Nurse Jo – labrador (1)

# Spot the 8 differences on the farm

