

Viking Vets

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2019



LATEST GOSSIP All the news from the Viking team

SENIOR PETS Focusing on obesity and diabetes

STAR PET Meet our very own Harley Bear

Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn issue of the Viking Vets newsletter.

We have one of the team's dogs as our star pet in this issue – read all about his story on p4. This month's feature is all about elderly pets and the common illnesses they get, focusing on diabetes (p5).

As the children go back to school and the days start to get shorter we are focusing on "back to school" healthcare at Viking. Preventative options are very important for your pets to avoid illnesses starting. Regular worming, flea treatment and annual vaccinations are a priority. We offer a health plan to enable you to pay a fixed monthly sum to make it easier and more cost effective to cover your pet's preventative treatments over the year. If your pet is not currently on the health plan and you would like to find out more please speak to a member of staff.

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

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Keep up to date with everything happening at Viking Vets by following our

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



We also now have Instagram, [#vikingveterinarysurgeons](https://www.instagram.com/vikingveterinarysurgeons)

Recycling pet food pouches

Pollution is becoming a huge problem for today's world, but it can feel like there is nothing we can do to help. However, the smallest changes make the biggest difference.

If an average cat has two sachets of wet food a day that means the cat goes through 730 plastic sachets a year and sadly most of these aren't widely recyclable. That's where Terracycle comes in. Terracycle runs a scheme where they will accept any type of pet food packaging (both wet food sachets and dry food packaging) and recycle it!

If you would like to recycle



your pet food packaging make sure it is clean and dry. There is a map showing the collection points on their website (www.terracycle.com/en-GB/brigades/petfood).

If there isn't a collection point near you why not change to tinned cat food as tins are widely recycled in your home collection.

We are STOMPing for cancer

On 12th October we will be walking six miles from Anchor Square in central Bristol to Pill to raise money for Penny Brohn. They provide wellbeing care for cancer patients and their families, which is very close to the hearts of several of our team.

Maria, Lisa, Chloe, Sonia, Sam, Katy and Louise will be completing the walk. Please help us to raise as much money as possible by donating online (www.justgiving.com/fundraising/vikingvets19) or putting any spare change in our donation pot in reception.



Any donations are very greatly appreciated for this wonderful charity.

Team complete muddy Race for Life

On a very hot Saturday in July Jo, Lisa, Charlotte and Sam donned their running gear for the Muddy 5k Race for Life on the Downs. In searing heat they made it round the 5k course, through the mud and over the obstacles. They raised a fantastic £220 for Cancer Research UK. Thank you for all of your donations.



Upcoming offers and promotions



In September we are focusing on back to school preventative healthcare such as worming, flea treatment and annual vaccinations. We will also be highlighting our health plans, which allow you to pay a fixed monthly price to cover your pet's annual preventative care.

October is dental month. Dental disease is a very common problem – it affects 70% of cats and 80% of dogs by the age of three. Dental disease can cause pain and discomfort as the gums become sore, swollen and infected. Bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream causing problems or exacerbating previous

ailments elsewhere such as the heart, kidney and liver.

If you're unsure if your pet is suffering from dental disease please call us on 0117 950 5888 to book in for a free dental check with Katy, our oral care nurse. She might advise you to book your pet in for a scale and polish (50% off during October).

During October we will also be preparing for Bonfire night with advice on how to keep your pets calm during firework season.

In November we are offering advice about senior pets. In our feature on p5 we focus on diabetes and overweight pets, which are more common as your pet gets older.

An update on our hand-reared kittens

You might remember the litter of kittens that our nurses hand-reared earlier in the year. Well in July it was time for them to fly the nest and go to their forever homes.

They are settling in really well and everyone here at Viking wishes them a happy healthy life.



Staff news

Our head receptionist Laura has decided that she won't be returning to work with us following her maternity leave. Her daughter is now a year old and she plans to devote her time to looking after her. We wish her all the best.



Vet nurse Jeri is expecting her second child. The baby is due in January and will be a little sister for her two-year-old son Finley.



Our receptionist Sonia recently received her gold accredited receptionist award. Congratulations from everyone here Sonia, you deserve it!

There are several new faces that you might see around. Amy Smith is back with us as a qualified veterinary surgeon. We also have a new student veterinary nurse - Vicky - who is with us from Ireland. And our newest member of the team is Abi who is a veterinary care assistant who will hopefully be starting her veterinary nurse training next year.

Harley Bear has our hearts

Investigations reveal that our very own Harley Bear has a life-threatening heart condition.

Harley Bear is a five-year-old Victorian Bulldog that belongs to our receptionist Sonia.

Harley recently scared his family one evening when he started breathing rather unusually. His respiratory effort had increased, he had developed a cough and he had become very lethargic.

After an examination by our vet Vicki, it was noted that he was tachycardic - meaning that he had an abnormally fast heart rate - and his lung fields did not sound completely clear. We ran a haematology blood test in-house and the results came back normal. Harley was then admitted for chest X-rays.

The chest X-rays showed some abnormalities with his heart and lung fields, although not consistent with aspiration pneumonia, and so a plan was made to await the results of a ProBNP blood test and start Harley on some antibiotics. A ProBNP blood test measures the level of the BNP hormone that helps to regulate blood volume. If there is an increased level of this hormone it can be suggestive of heart failure.

Harley was also scanned by our specialist ultrasonographer who noted abnormalities with his heart and suspected congestive heart failure. Harley was started immediately on diuretic medication to reduce fluid in the lungs and therefore support his suspected heart condition while an emergency referral to a cardiac specialist was organised.

The ProBNP result came back extremely high, which was concerning for the vets as it



can be a sign of endocarditis - inflammation of the inner lining of the heart. Harley's antibiotics were increased to help fight off any potential infection.

The cardiac specialists performed further investigative blood tests and an echocardiogram. Harley was diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, which means

that his heart is unable to pump blood effectively around his body due to the left ventricle being enlarged and weakened.

Unfortunately this is a lifelong, life-threatening condition for Harley, but we are pleased to report that he is doing very well at the moment. He is continuing on his heart medication and is back to his old mischievous self.

Focus on: Diabetes in elderly and overweight pets

There are many things that can contribute to the risk of your pet developing diabetes, but the good news is there are also lots of things you can do to help prevent it and minimise the risk.

What is diabetes?

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that controls the level of glucose (sugar) in the blood. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the body and is found in the food that your pet eats. The digestion of food allows the body to absorb glucose from the gut into the bloodstream. This causes a rise in blood sugar levels and in response the pancreas releases insulin. Insulin lowers the blood sugar levels by storing the glucose in cells and removing it from the circulation. The role of insulin is to keep the blood sugar level within defined limits.

Diabetes occurs when your pet does not produce enough insulin (type-1) or when their body's cells become resistant to the action of insulin (type-2). Either way, glucose levels in the blood become very high and remain so.

High blood glucose levels result in abnormal "leaking" of glucose through the kidneys, which is then lost in the urine. The high levels of sugar also cause an increase in urine production and your pet will drink more to replace the fluid that is lost.

Because of the reduced effect of insulin in diabetic patients, the body's cells cannot use the stored glucose as fuel. Instead it will break down fats as an energy source, which has two complications. First, your pet will lose weight even if it is eating more than usual. This requires dietary management to control and there are specialised diets



available. Second, the waste products from breaking down fats are ketones, which can build up in the bloodstream and cause harm to your pet's body systems.

Type-1 diabetes

Type-1 diabetes occurs when

“Type-1 diabetes is not caused by diet – but diet is a huge factor in preventing and managing it.”

the pancreas fails to produce insulin properly. This means glucose can't get into the body's cells to be used for energy. It's quite dangerous, and it usually requires lifelong treatment with insulin injections. Type-1 diabetes is not caused by diet – but diet is a huge factor in preventing and managing it.

Type-2 diabetes

Type-2 diabetes is often related to diet and weight. There is plenty of insulin production, but the body becomes resistant to it because there is too much sugar coming in. This type of diabetes is reversible in some cases. Type-2 diabetes is the most common in people, and it's also the type of diabetes that cats get. However, most diabetic dogs have type-1 diabetes.

Symptoms

The earlier that diabetes is diagnosed, the better it can be treated in your pet. The common symptoms to look out for include:

- Frequent urination and increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Weight loss
- Vomiting – this can occur if your pet also has pancreatitis
- Weakness or fatigue
- Loss of coat condition

As soon as you notice any of these symptoms it is best to book an appointment with your vet.

Obesity

Obesity in pets is increasing year on year, and it is a significant health issue. Excess weight can cause arthritis, heart disease and skin problems as well as being a risk factor for diabetes. Fat cells secrete hormones and chemical messengers that promote inflammation so obesity is a chronic pro-inflammatory state that contributes to the risk of diabetes. Obesity is also a risk factor for pancreatitis, which in itself can lead to diabetes.

Weight loss is essential for good diabetes management in overweight animals. What your pet eats and how much exercise they get can also make a big difference to their risk of developing diabetes.

Age

Diabetes in older pets is more common. It is one of the most common endocrine diseases and affects about one in every 160 dogs. Diabetes commonly affects dogs aged seven to nine, and cats older than six.

Because older dogs and cats are more likely to develop age-related diseases or conditions, some of which could be confused with diabetes, regular examinations by a vet can keep your pet healthy and detect problems before they become severe.



Increased thirst can indicate diabetes.

Treating diabetes

Diabetes in your pet can be controlled with regular injections of insulin. It can take a few weeks of alterations to find the correct dose. However, even after this, it can take three to six months to stabilise. When the diabetes is under control it will restore a good quality of life for your pet. Insulin has to be given by injection, which you may find daunting at first. However, with a little practice it is straight-forward.

In unneutered females the levels of hormones during seasons can affect insulin production. These fluctuations make it harder to stabilise diabetes and it is advisable to neuter them. Unneutered males do not have the same dramatic changes in hormones and castration is unlikely to improve diabetic management.

The most important aspect of controlling your pet's diabetes is keeping a consistent daily routine. It is a balance between energy intake, exercise and insulin. Large changes in any of these three factors are likely to cause instability.

It might be beneficial to switch your pet's diet to a more diabetic-

RISK FACTORS

There are some risk factors that make it more likely that your pet will develop diabetes. These include:

- Auto-immunity
- Breed or genetics
- Inflammation
- Obesity
- Pancreatitis
- Toxins
- Diet

friendly constitution. There are specialised diabetic foods available, which raise the protein content, lower energy content, raise both soluble and insoluble fibre, and include additional vitamins and minerals to help control the weight and improve the health of your pet.

In dogs, meals should be fed at the same time each day and typically insulin is given at the same time as food. Cats should have access to food gradually throughout the day to encourage grazing. If you believe your cat has not eaten all day or you suspect signs of hypoglycaemia, contact your vet for advice before injecting with insulin. It is important not to change the amount or type of food given without advice from the practice. It is also important not to give treats to your pet and make sure that family, friends and visitors are aware of this. Fresh water should always be available to your pet at all times.

Exercise is important for your pet's health and quality of life. It is vital to ensure that the level of exercise is consistent from day to day. Bouts of strenuous exercise (such as a 12-mile hike at the weekend) are to be avoided. This can be harder to control in cats and therefore you have to be especially observant for any changes in characteristics or demeanour that point towards blood sugar instability.

Is your dog making eyes at you?

Scientists believe that they have solved the mystery of how our faithful companions got their puppy dog eyes.

Researchers have found that the evolution of dogs' facial muscles was influenced by the canine domestication process over the last 33,000 years, as those that had the sad puppy dog eye expression were preferred by humans.

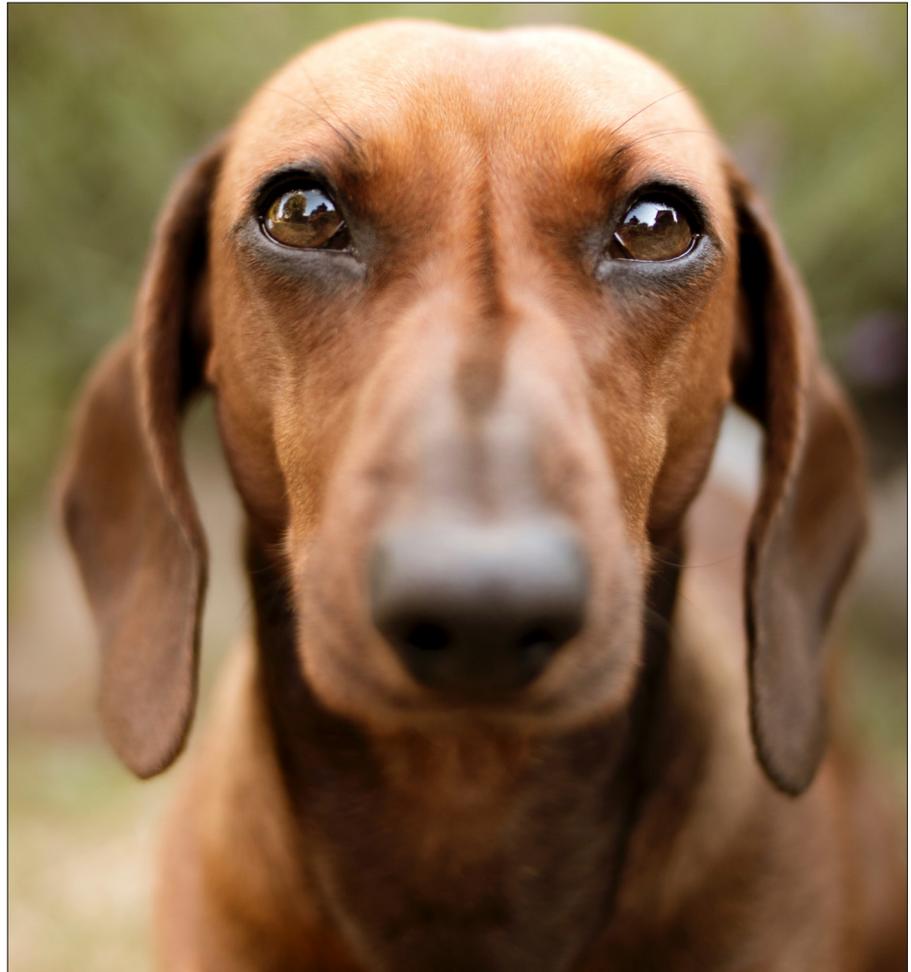
As a result dogs gradually acquired a new muscle in the forehead – known as the LAOM muscle – and they have used it to manipulate humans ever since!

“They are very powerful animals in how they capture our hearts,” said Prof. Bridget Waller, the director of the Centre for Comparative and Evolutionary Psychology at the University of Portsmouth. “We pay a lot of attention to faces, they are meaningful to us, and this expression makes dogs look juvenile and sad. It induces a nurturing response. It’s a cute factor.”

The puppy dog eyes expression is achieved by the LAOM muscle raising the inner eyebrows. This movement makes the eyes look larger and the face more babyish. Humans produce a similar expression when they are sad, which may explain why it brings out the carer in people.

The UK-US research team investigated how the look developed in dogs by dissecting wolf and dog cadavers to compare the facial muscles (the cadavers were obtained from taxidermists and no animals were killed for the study).

The six dogs – a chihuahua, a labrador, a bloodhound, a German shepherd, a Siberian husky and a mongrel – all had the LAOM muscle. But in the four grey wolves studied, the



muscle was missing. As all dogs are derived from wolves, the comparison suggests that the LAOM muscle arose during the domestication process.

“Dogs that had the sad puppy dog eye expression were preferred by humans.”

There was another difference found during the dissections. The RAOL muscle, which pulls the eyelids out towards the ears, was less prominent in wolves than in dogs. According to the paper, which was published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the Siberian husky (one of the most ancient breeds) was the only dog found to lack this muscle.

After finding the differences between the facial muscles in wolves and dogs, the researchers went on to film the animals to observe how their expressions varied. They filmed nine wolves in animal parks and 27 dogs in animal shelters (mainly Staffordshire bull terriers). A

specialist reviewed the footage and recorded when the animals made the puppy dog eyes expression and rated how intense the look was on a five-point scale.

Dogs pulled the sad expression far more frequently than wolves, but there was an even more striking finding in the intensity of the expressions. While dogs and wolves both produced “low

intensity” expressions, only dogs appear to have harnessed the look to achieve “high intensity expressions”.

The sad expression has a real impact. In a previous study, Waller showed that the more dogs deployed the expression, the faster they were rehomed from animal shelters. Puppy dog eyes were found to be more effective than tail wagging or the

speed at which dogs bounded over to visiting humans.

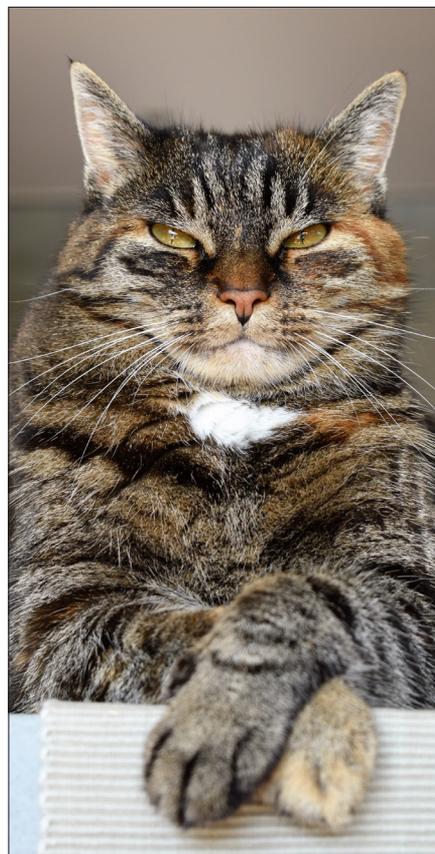
Waller does not believe that dogs originally produced the expression to win humans over. More likely, she said, is that animals that happened to deploy puppy dog eyes tapped into a response humans had evolved over millennia of living in large groups, where reading facial expressions was crucial.

Diabetes can be detected in cat guts

Cats are the only animal, apart from humans and primates, that can spontaneously develop type-2 diabetes. Researchers are keen to study how this occurs in cats so that they can learn more about diabetes in general.

A team from the University of Copenhagen has shown that cats suffering from diabetes have a different composition of gut bacteria to healthy cats. “We can tell that the diversity of gut bacteria is reduced in cats with diabetes. The same has been detected in humans, and there thus appear to be more similarities in diabetes across species than previously assumed. In fact, our results disprove another, smaller study,” explains PhD Student Ida Nordang Kieler from the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences.

The researchers studied 82 cats from Denmark and Switzerland and they received interdisciplinary input from researchers in other fields. “We would not have been able to complete this study without interdisciplinary collaboration. It has really strengthened our results that we have been able to get feedback in the process



and develop the study design together with experts from different fields,” says Professor Charlotte Reinhard Bjørnvad from the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences.

The researchers collaborated with leading researchers from

the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research and the Natural History Museum of Denmark. The collaboration provided the veterinary experts with valuable ideas on genetics across species as well as gut bacteria and diabetes in humans.

The researchers hope that in the future they can use studies like these to better understand and treat diabetes in cats, while also increasing our knowledge of the disease in humans.

“We hope that more researchers want to collaborate on studying diabetes in cats, because in some respects these studies are easier to control than studies involving humans. You can control the nutrition of the cats meticulously and thus remove any disturbing elements and, with fewer animals, get more stable results,” she elaborates.

The researchers are continuing to collaborate with the Natural History of Denmark to compile a library of intestinal bacteria in cats, which can be used as an encyclopaedia for cat studies. These kinds of libraries are already available for humans and dogs.

Kid's colouring

