

Viking Vets

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017



- LATEST GOSSIP** All the news from the Viking team
- SENIOR PETS** How to keep your ageing pet healthy
- CASE REPORT** Vinnie the brave cat hit by a car
- IN THE NEWS** Are cats as smart as dogs?

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Viking Vets Newsletter.

There has been a lot happening so far in 2017 and as usual the practice has been very busy. Find out what the team has been up to in our latest gossip pages, read about one of the interesting cases that we have seen and as March is our senior pets month read all about what you can do to help your ageing pets stay as fit and healthy as possible.

In the spring pets naturally become more energetic and playful. The best way for them to show this is through play and as an owner you need to provide them with enough opportunities to exercise. Boosting their physical stimulation also has socialisation and mental benefits, and in older pets keeping moving helps to protect joints and improve mobility. Speak to one of us to find out how much exercise is ideal to keep your pet happy and healthy.

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

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

Team paints their pots



On 14 January we all went along to Flying Saucers in Clifton to try our hand at pottery painting. It was a fun afternoon that revealed some hidden talents. Among the

finished items were dog bowls, owl ornaments, a vase, bowls, mugs and even a little gnome. With an expert in our midst in the form of James, we all had a lot to live up to!

Upcoming promotions and events

We have lots of campaigns and promotions to look forward to over the next few months. Keep an eye out in reception for our displays and information.

March is our senior pets month. Read more about how to look after your older pets to keep them healthy on p5.

We will be holding a Senior Animals Talk on Tuesday 4 April at Henbury Village Hall, starting at 7.30p.m. There will be four short talks from our vets covering important aspects of your older pet's care: 'Decisions, Decisions...Clinical Decision Making and the Senior Pet' by Andy; 'Mature Moggies' by Denise; 'Eyes' by Vicki; and 'Moving Forward in the Veterinary World' by Maria. There will also be offers on Hills food orders on the night and we will be introducing details of our Health Plan Plus. Entry

is £3 with all proceeds being donated to Badger Care People wildlife charity. Please call or email us to book a place.

April is bunny month here at Viking Vets. We will be offering discounted consultations for all rabbits during the month so phone to book your bunny in for a check-up.

In May we will be highlighting the risks of pet travel, in particular the dangers of foreign parasites and diseases and how to avoid them.

June is our vaccine amnesty. If your pet's vaccination schedule has lapsed and you wish to restart, then throughout June the cost of restarting and receiving the initial vaccinations again will be charged at the much-reduced cost of a booster vaccine. The perfect reason to make sure that your pet is protected.

Cockapoos celebrate with Orla



On Sunday 22 January our head receptionist Laura organised a doggy group walk to celebrate her cockapoo Orla's first birthday. More than 30 cockapoos and their

owners took part in the walk around Kingsweston House in Shirehampton. It was a lovely sunny winter's day, perfect for walkies and a lot of fun was had by all.

Petplan award nominations

This year we have had more nominations in the Petplan Awards than ever before. The awards provide an opportunity for pet owners to recognise the hard work and dedication of veterinary staff by nominating their practice, practice manager, support staff, vet nurse and/or vet.

Viking Vets has been nominated for Best Practice every year since the awards started. And this year we have individual vet nominations for Vicki, Denise, James and Maria.

Three of our nurses – Lisa, Emma and Charlotte – have also been nominated in the Nurse of the Year category.

Nominations are judged by an independent panel of



Award nominees Charlotte (left) and Emma (right).

leading professionals from the veterinary industry including presidents of the veterinary and nursing associations, and previous award winners.

The winners are announced at a ceremony on 6 April so fingers crossed that we get a winner!

Staff news

There are lots of big events happening in the Viking Vets team over the next few months.

Head receptionist Laura got married on Friday 17 March to her fiancé Mike. After lots of wedding talk and finalising plans the day went perfectly and we are all wishing them a happy future together. We will have pictures in the next newsletter!

We have two babies due very soon. Amy, one of our vets (along with her husband Andy, another of our vets), is expecting a girl in April. She will be a little sister to two-year-old Elia. Also expecting is one of our student vet nurses, Jeri. Her little boy is due in May.



We said goodbye to Lucy, one of our student vet nurses. She is leaving to continue her veterinary nursing and bioveterinary

science degree, which she is due to complete in 2018. Lucy has been a very popular member of the team with staff and clients and we are very sad to see her go, but wish her all the best with the rest of her studies.



One of our student vet nurses Emily recently passed her first-year exams with an amazing score

of 72%. We are very proud of her and know she will sail through the next two years.

Growing old gracefully

We will soon be launching our Health Plan Plus, which can help you with the costs associated with your pets as they get older or if they have a chronic illness. Ageing pets have their own specific health needs and requirements, but there is a lot you can do to look after them.

When your pet reaches the senior stage of their life you may start to notice a few changes in behaviour and lifestyle. It is also important to consider your pet's overall health and nutritional needs as these can differ greatly from those of an adult animal.

Senior cats

Cats are classed as senior from 7 years old and geriatric from the age of 11. A senior cat should still be in good condition, with an air of confidence and experience, even if they do nap a little more often. You may find that they are more sedate and know you and your routines well. Your cat may not rush about so much and may rest more, but they are still sharp and ready to play.

When your cat reaches geriatric age they might be a little thinner than in their prime, but although they might be sleeping a lot more these days, they can still demand interaction when they want it. Unlike senior cats, older cats can become thin and lose weight with age, so maintaining their vitality and body condition, as well as ensuring a healthy immune system, is very important.

Senior dogs

Dogs are classed as senior when they reach a certain age in



CHANGES TO LOOK OUT FOR

Cats

- Is your cat struggling to groom or are they less likely to jump up onto high surfaces?
- Are they drinking more than usual?
- Are they toileting more than usual?
- Does your cat seem to find eating difficult or uncomfortable?
- Has your cat gained or lost weight recently?
- Has your cat's behaviour changed suddenly?

relation to their size:

- Toy and small breeds are classed as senior from nine years of age
- Medium breeds are classed as senior from eight years of age
- Large breeds are classed as senior from seven years of age
- Giant breeds are classed as senior from six years of age

Your dog should still be enthusiastic about walks and

Dogs

- Is your dog very stiff after a period of resting or after lots of exercise?
- Are they drinking more than usual?
- Are they toileting more than usual?
- Does your dog seem to find eating difficult or uncomfortable?
- Has your dog gained or lost weight recently?
- Has your dog's behaviour changed suddenly?

in fine condition generally. You might find that they are getting a bit stiff after exercising or after a long period of rest and they will probably be sleeping more. As your dog gets older they will start to slow down. Sleeping and resting more is completely normal. Your dog should still initiate play and interaction with you although this might be less frequent and probably won't be as vigorous or last as long.

How you can help your pet

- Regular vet examinations are vital as we can monitor your pet's weight and performing a physical check can help us spot early signs that might need further investigation. We can offer screening tests to identify problems early on such as blood tests, a urine test and blood pressure monitoring.
- Maintaining the annual booster vaccination is important as the immune system weakens with age so your pet becomes more susceptible to diseases.
- You should offer a good quality senior pet food. This has the correct balance of nutrients and calories to reflect the changing needs of a senior animal. A good senior diet will have concentrated high-quality protein, be lower in fat and contain easy-to-digest carbohydrates for energy. Key vitamins, minerals and protein help to support ageing joints and help fight off infections. High levels of antioxidants are also beneficial in maintaining a good immune system. If your pet is diagnosed with a medical condition it might be advisable to change to a special prescription diet.
- Preventative dental treatment will keep your pet comfortable, prevent pain and reduce infections.
- Regular exercise and gentle games will help your pet maintain a healthy weight, improve mobility and provide mental stimulation to keep the brain active.
- Regular grooming will maintain a good coat condition, aid circulation and enable you to identify any problem areas or painful spots.
- Providing somewhere warm, padded and cosy to sleep will help your pet feel more secure and allow them to rest when they need to.

COMMON DISEASES AND BEHAVIOUR IN SENIOR PETS

Cats

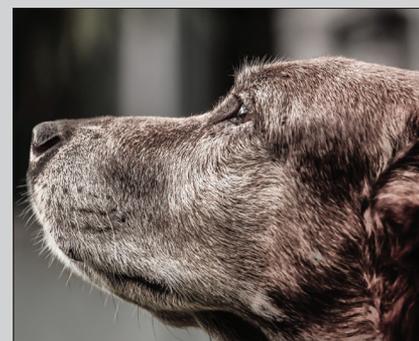
- Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid gland)
- Chronic renal (kidney) disease
- Arthritis
- Dental disease
- Diabetes
- Inappropriate soiling
- Calling at night
- Scratching

Dogs

- Arthritis
- Dental disease
- Chronic renal (kidney) disease
- Liver disease
- Urinary incontinence
- Pyometra (infection of the uterus)
- Chronic heart failure
- Barking and disturbed nights
- Temperament changes

CARING FOR YOUR ARTHRITIC DOG

- Keep them slim – it is important to keep your dog slim as excess weight will cause more wear and tear on the joints. If they are overweight then diet is crucial as older dogs might not be able to increase their exercise to shift those extra pounds.
- Regular, gentle exercise – this helps to keep your dog mobile and stops the joints 'seizing up'. The exercise should be the same each day, avoiding long runs on days off, so a routine is useful.
- Joint supplements – these are designed to protect the joint from further damage, help in healing, reduce inflammation and pain, and improve mobility. They don't have side effects or upset the stomach so are best to try before starting anti-inflammatory painkillers.
- Anti-inflammatory pain relief – we use non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs)



specifically for dogs. Arthritis is a painful condition so painkillers can produce a significant improvement. They do have some side effects though and your dog will need to be monitored closely whilst on medication.

- Alternative therapies – there are various therapies that can be tried and each dog responds differently. Treatments available include acupuncture, homeopathy, osteopathy, hydrotherapy and the use of magnetic collars.

Looking forward to the future

Despite your pet being a bit older, you can still have many more wonderful years ahead! Keeping your pet mentally fit and part of family life with games, grooming and cuddles in frequent short sessions will maintain a good quality of life. Allow them to rest as much as they need, but also try to keep them involved and as active as possible. Monitor

your pet's weight and general body condition and if you are concerned about anything please contact us.

More information about our Health Plan Plus will be available soon so please speak to one of our reception team to find out more. We are also hosting an evening talk about senior pets on Tuesday 4 April (see p3 for more details).

Vinnie Milmine

Vinnie was seriously injured when he was hit by a car in October. Against all the odds he has made a great recovery. Read all about this brave cat's devastating injuries and his fight to regain his health.

Vinnie was brought in to us in early October 2016 by a member of the public who had seen him being hit by a car. It took them two hours before they were able to reassure him enough to pick him up from under the bush that he had been hiding in.

Vinnie was in a very critical condition and had suffered a huge head trauma. He was poorly responsive as well as hypothermic due to shock and the cold weather. Emergency treatment was started and he was given strong pain relief, oxygen and was placed on a drip to treat his shock. He was also started on a course of antibiotics to prevent infection of his wounds. He was very closely monitored by our nursing team and remained stable overnight.

The next day Vinnie was much more stable and had recovered from shock, so he was anaesthetised so that we could examine him and take radiographs of his head to assess his injuries. His right eye had ruptured and was irreparably damaged, so removal at a later date was expected to be necessary. He had severe fractures to his cheek bone, eye socket and jaw. There was a lot of soft tissue swelling and trauma, and damage to two teeth, which were removed. A feeding tube was also placed under a general anaesthetic to allow our nurses to syringe food directly into his oesophagus and therefore prevent the need for Vinnie to eat solid food as this would have been very painful and would have worsened the numerous fractures.

Vinnie recovered well from



his anaesthetic and was kept comfortable with pain relief, had continued intravenous fluids via his drip and was fed via his new feeding tube overnight. Luckily Vinnie is insured and so a decision was made to refer him the next day to specialist vets to undergo a CT scan. This would allow his fractures to be examined in more detail and an assessment made as to whether they could be treated surgically to speed up the healing process. Unfortunately the CT showed that none of the fractures were able to be treated surgically and it confirmed that his right eye needed to be removed, so this was performed under another

general anaesthetic a week later.

Vinnie recovered well again and he started to become interested in food, although he was still unable to eat for himself. Vinnie was discharged to his owners three days later and continued to improve at home. He adapted well to having just one eye and his owner continued his tube feeding until eventually Vinnie was able to eat sloppy but solid food. He was so eager to eat that he decided to pull his feeding tube out himself after a few days of being at home!

Vinnie has now completely recovered and is even keen to go outside...but hopefully he will be avoiding cars.

Cats' intelligence could rival dogs

A study by Japanese researchers has produced evidence that cats really are as smart as dogs. The experiment showed that our feline friends have memories of specific events – a trait that dogs are known to possess. So could your cat match the intelligence of its canine companions?

It has long been believed that dogs are more intelligent than cats, although cat and dog owners have fought over this for centuries. But a Japanese study has reignited this debate after showing that cats match the intelligence of dogs in certain memory tests, confirming what cat owners everywhere have always thought!

The study set out to test whether cats could display episodic memory. As humans we show this type of memory when we consciously remember past events, for example an important episode like a wedding or even something as simple as what we ate for dinner last night. The memories are unique to each person as they are viewed from the individual's perspective.

Saho Takagi, a psychologist from Kyoto University, tested domestic cats and concluded that they are able to remember a unique pleasant experience, for example eating their favourite food. This can be seen as evidence of them using episodic memory and displaying a "type of consciousness". "An interesting speculation is that they may enjoy actively recalling memories of their experience like humans," said Saho.

The experiment was carried out



Cat owners now have evidence to back up their belief that their pets are as clever as dogs.

on 49 cats and involved testing their ability to remember which bowl they had eaten from and which they hadn't after a break of 15 minutes. The cats were found to remember information about "what" bowl as well as "where". It has also been suggested that they are able to remember this information for much longer than the 15 minute period used in the test. Future studies could examine how long cats' memories are and whether they remember other events in their lives like humans do.

Dogs have already been shown

“Cats may be as intelligent as dogs, as opposed to the common view of people that dogs are much smarter”

to be able to recall unique memories of a specific event, showing episodic memory. The same team of Japanese scientists previously found that in similar tests, dogs had memories of food bowls from which they had eaten. And last year, a team from Hungary found that dogs were able to recall their owner's actions, even when they were not specifically instructed to do so.

Cats are thought to be able to rival dogs on other intelligence tests as well, such as responding to human gestures, facial expressions and emotions. This is important in better understanding cats as pets and may have practical applications. "Understanding cats more deeply helps to establish better cat-human relationships," said Saho. "Cats may be as intelligent as dogs, as opposed to the common view of people that dogs are much smarter."

The research was published in the journal *Behavioural Processes*.

- Maria has always thought that cats are the Masters of the Universe!

Spring colouring fun

