

# Viking Vets

## NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2017



**LATEST GOSSIP** All the news from the Viking team

**LET'S TALK TEETH** The causes of dental disease and how you can help

**IN THE NEWS** Deceptive dogs, affectionate cats and soppy men

# Welcome

Welcome to the Summer issue of the Viking Vets Newsletter.

Read all about our recent staff comings and goings, weddings and baby arrivals in our latest gossip pages. As September is dental month here at Viking find out all about the causes of dental disease in cats and dogs and what you can do to help your pets (p4-5). Plus read about some recent pet stories and research in our In the News section (p6-7).

Summer is a great time to take stock of your pet's health for the year. Preventative care is vital, including vaccination and management of common conditions such as dental disease, skin complaints and behavioural issues. Booking an annual check-up with a vet is important as potential health issues can be diagnosed and managed early, leading to happier pets (and owners!).

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

# Two babies and a wedding!



Our head receptionist Laura became Mrs Hayne on 17 March when she married her new husband Mike in a ceremony at Eastington Park in Gloucestershire. She looked beautiful and the day was

perfect. The Viking team went along to help her celebrate her special day, and there was lots of fun and dancing. We wish them all the best in their future together and hope she has fun on her honeymoon in Cyprus.



Baby Lori with big sister Elia.

We welcomed two new Viking babies during April.

Our vets Amy and Andy had a new baby daughter on 21 April. They have named her Lori and she weighed 7 lb 8 oz. She is a new little sister for their two-year-old Elia, who is getting used to sharing her Mum and Dad's attention. Andy is now back working four days a week



Baby Finley.

and James will be working some Thursdays to cover while Amy is on maternity leave.

Jeri, one of our trainee veterinary nurses, gave birth to a little boy on Saturday 29 April. He is called Finley and weighed 7 lb 2 oz. This is her first baby so she is getting used to the sleepless nights and nappy changes!

## Upcoming promotions and events

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

July is our body and mind month.

August is cat month here at Viking Vets. We will be offering 25% off Hills metabolic food.

September is dental month. Book your pet in to receive 50% off a scale and polish. Read more about dental disease on p4-5.

We are excited to be offering our feline clients boarding in

July and August in our purpose built, quiet cat kennels. This is best suited to cats that require daily medication, TLC and monitoring. We recommend a stay of no more than five days as we do not have a run. They will be looked after by our veterinary team with a vet on site at night. Our price will be £18/day with nail clipping and basic grooming available for a further £20 during their stay. Please call us on 0117 9505888 or send us an email at [thevets@vikingvets.com](mailto:thevets@vikingvets.com) for further enquiries.

## Farewell to deputy head nurse Emma

We were all sorry to say goodbye to our deputy head nurse Emma who left us in April. Emma started at Viking in 2013 and was a popular member of the team, so she has left a large gap to fill, but we wish her all the best in her new job. We would like to congratulate our lovely nurse Charlotte who will be taking over the position of deputy head nurse. We are sure she will be fantastic in her new role.



## Vikings on the run for charity



On 2 July a team from Viking will be taking part in the Bristol Race for Life. The 5k event takes place on The Downs and raises money for Cancer Research UK. We have a sponsorship form in reception so please support us if you can

as we are running in memory of our dear colleague Carolyn who many of you will remember.

We would love to see some of our clients cheering us on on the day as well. We will be dressed as pink Vikings so I'm sure you won't miss us!

## Staff news



We have a new trainee veterinary nurse, Sam, who joined us in March. She is currently

studying for her veterinary nursing diploma at Bath College. In her spare time she enjoys indoor bouldering - an extreme version of climbing without ropes! She has a rescue kitten called Kame (which is Japanese for turtle) and has taught him tricks.



We have a new vet nurse student, Katy, who is with us on placement from the University of Bristol until

the end of the summer. Katy likes playing rugby and eating out at fine-dine restaurants. She also has a pet tortoise called Joseph who is 35.



Chloe started in April as a veterinary nurse. She has worked in two veterinary practices while

she has been training with the University of Portsmouth. She enjoys knitting and has just started making hats for premature babies. She also loves walking with her boxer dog Sassy, and has a leopard gecko called Kudu!

In the coming months we have two more vet nurses starting - Natasha and Sam. Look out for them and say hello. Amy Smith also starts as a qualified vet in July. She has been working at Viking since 2015 so will be a familiar face to many.

# Let's talk about teeth

Dental disease is the most common disease in dogs and cats, with more than 72% of all pets over the age of three having some form of it. The most common problems are due to periodontal disease and gingivitis, and in cats feline resorptive lesions (FORLs). So what signs should you look out for, what are the causes and what can be done?

There are a number of signs that should alert you to dental disease or other mouth problems in your pet. Your pet may show a decreased interest in food or approach the food bowl and then show a reluctance to eat. They might chew with caution and discomfort, drop food from the mouth, or swallow with difficulty. Dribbling might also be seen, possibly with blood, and there could be an unpleasant odour to the breath. In some cases your pet might be seen pawing at their mouth or shaking their head. A reluctance to eat may lead to weight loss. Many cats will refuse dry food and prefer moist or canned foods.

## What causes dental disease?

The most common cause of dental disease in cats and dogs is tartar and calculus accumulation. As in humans, cats and dogs accumulate bacterial plaque on the surface of their teeth. If the plaque is not removed quickly, it becomes mineralised to form tartar and calculus. The bacterial products and decaying food stuck to tartar are one potential cause of bad breath. Tartar is easily



identified by its tan or brown colour. It normally starts at the gum edge, especially on the back teeth called the premolars and molars. In severe cases, tartar and calculus may cover the entire tooth. The tartar presses on the gums, which recede, causing inflammation and infection called gingivitis. The gums recede until ultimately the tooth socket is infected and the tooth is lost.

As the oral infection increases, tonsillitis and pharyngitis can also occur. In addition, the bacteria are absorbed into the bloodstream and can be carried to other organs. Heart valve infections (endocarditis), and kidney and liver problems are frequently caused by "bad teeth".

## Can tartar be prevented?

Plaque becomes mineralised in some cats and dogs much quicker than in others. Special canine chew toys as well as feeding specifically formulated dental diets might help reduce tartar build-up, as can

regular home care such as toothbrushing.

Do not try to remove tartar from the teeth yourself using any form of metallic instrument. Aside from potentially harming your pet's mouth or the pet harming you, you are likely to damage the tooth surface by creating microscopic scratches, which will provide areas for bacteria to cling to and encourage more rapid plaque formation, thus making the problem worse. Once tartar has formed it will be necessary to remove it by professional scaling and polishing under anaesthesia.

The most effective way of reducing plaque and tartar is to brush the teeth. With patience and perseverance it is possible to regularly clean some pet's teeth. In addition, or as an alternative to brushing if this cannot be achieved, a range of antibacterial mouthwashes and gels can be applied to the teeth and mouth to reduce the number of bacteria. Please ask us about dental products for your pet.

### Will dry food remove tartar?

The wrong kinds of food can cause dental disease in pets. Feeding your pet a dry food rather than a moist, canned one will, through its mild abrasive action on the teeth, help remove the bacterial plaque that can harden into tartar. Dry food also provides chewing exercise and gum stimulation. Avoid giving your pet sweets and table scraps as they may also increase plaque and tartar formation. We can recommend the use of special dry foods designed to reduce plaque and tartar build-up, especially if your pet is prone to dental problems due to breed or individual genetic history.

### Periodontal disease in dogs

In dogs, tooth decay represents less than 10% of all dental problems. The most common dental problems seen are caused by periodontal disease. The accumulation of tartar and bacteria on the teeth surfaces leads to infection and gingivitis or inflammation of the gums. If the disease is caught at an early stage and a thorough veterinary dental scaling and polishing performed, most of the teeth and gums will have a full recovery. However, if gingivitis is allowed to persist untreated, then irreversible periodontal disease will occur. During this process the bone and ligaments that support the tooth are destroyed leading to excessive tooth mobility and eventual tooth loss. Infection around the socket causes the formation of pus and a foul odour, and may spread deep into the tooth socket creating an abscess, or even more severe problems.

### Feline resorptive lesions (FORLs) in cats

This common condition affects more than one-third of adult cats. The cause remains unclear but the signs and symptoms are evident on clinical exam. The

## HOW TO BRUSH YOUR PET'S TEETH

- Start by handling your pet's mouth for a couple of minutes each day and reward them with a treat or game.
- After a few days start lifting the lips and rub the teeth/gums with your finger, then give a reward (remember to be patient).
- When your pet has accepted this, start introducing a baby brush with some flavoured pet toothpaste (which is usually very palatable).
- If your pet is happy so far, start introducing the larger-head toothbrush. Let your pet play with the brush for a short while so that it is not frightening.
- Remember to praise and reward all the time.
- After a few more days, start using the toothbrush in a



- circular motion over one tooth.
- Gradually increase brushing time so that eventually you are cleaning all of the teeth.
- Ideally you should clean your pet's teeth every day.

Viking Vets has a Youtube tutorial showing you how to brush your pet's teeth. Watch it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbTeao2Vb9k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbTeao2Vb9k)

condition results in one or more teeth spontaneously "dissolving" away. The result is severe pain while the tooth changes.

There are two recognised types of FORLs. Type 1 lesions are associated with periodontal disease. They occur at the neck of the tooth, just above the gumline. The gum surrounding the lesion is usually inflamed. X-rays show that the crown (the portion of the tooth seen above the gumline) undergoes resorption but the root (the portion of tooth below the gumline) remains intact.

Type 2 lesions begin on the root surface. The tooth crown may appear pink with a small rounded portion of bright red "gum-like" tissue protruding from it. X-rays show that the root has been turned into the bone and so cannot be seen.

### Booking a dental procedure

Depending on how advanced the dental disease is you may be advised to consider booking in for a "dental". The process involves multiple steps to decide

on the best treatment for each tooth.

1. Antibiotics might be prescribed prior to the operation
2. Pre-anaesthetic assessment – this might involve a blood screen or intravenous fluids
3. Induction for anaesthesia by a vet and maintenance of the anaesthesia by one of our highly qualified veterinary nurses
4. Radiographs taken as needed
5. Definitive oral examination with charting
6. Application of oral solution and de-scaling each tooth to remove plaque
7. Polishing each tooth
8. Tooth extractions as necessary, possibly surgical and therefore requiring stitches
9. Lavage the mouth and reapply oral solution.

Every dental procedure must be followed by home care, in exactly the same way that we have to brush our teeth to maintain oral hygiene. Without home care the plaque will redevelop within hours and the process of periodontal disease starts again.

# Dogs are masters of deception

It is usually cats that have a reputation for being sneaky, but according to recent research carried out in Switzerland we should be keeping an eye on our dogs' art of deception.

The study, published in *Animal Cognition* by researchers at the University of Zurich, found that pet dogs will deliberately set out to deceive their owners to get what they want. 27 dogs were included in the study, which paired each animal with two human partners – a “co-operative” one who let the dogs eat treats and a “competitive” one who didn't allow them treats.

The researchers explained that: “During the test the dog had the options to lead one of these partners to one of three potential food locations: one contained a favoured food item, the other a non-preferred food item and the third remained empty.

“After having led one of the partners, the dog always had the possibility of leading its cooperative owner to one of the food locations. Therefore, a dog would have a direct benefit



from misleading the competitive partner since it would then get another chance to receive the preferred food from the owner.

“On the first test day, the dogs led the cooperative partner to the preferred food box more often than the competitive partner. On the second day, they even led the competitive partner less often to the preferred food than expected by chance and more often to the empty box than

the cooperative partner.

“These results show that dogs distinguished between the cooperative and the competitive partner and that they are able to use tactical deception.”

Marianne Heberlein, the lead researcher, said that the dogs “showed an impressive flexibility in behaviour. They're not just sticking to a strict rule, but thinking about what different options they have.”

## Cats prefer human company over food

Although dog lovers usually agree that cats tend to smell less, don't need walking and might even be more intelligent, they will tend to say that feline pets are more selfish and don't really like people.

However, cat lovers can take pride in a new study that shows that cats don't just like people, they actually choose human company over food. The research from Oregon State University, published in the journal *Behavioural Processes*, found that cats enjoy human contact more than eating.



The researchers tested 50 cats from rescue shelters and home environments by depriving them of food, human contact, scent and toys for a few hours. They then reintroduced them to stimuli from these four groups to see what they would choose.

Contradicting the common belief that cats are antisocial, the majority of the cats chose

human interaction over any of the other stimuli.

The study authors said: “While it has been suggested that cat sociality exists on a continuum, perhaps skewed towards independency, we have found that 50% of cats tested preferred interaction with the social stimulus even though they had a direct choice between social interaction with a human and their other most preferred stimuli from the three other stimulus categories.”

Bear this in mind if your cat is talking to you - they might just want attention. Don't reach for food or treats that encourage obesity. Stop and play or give them a cuddle instead.

# Men behind rise in cat ownership

The number of domestic cats in the UK has increased by 500,000 in the last year to reach 8 million, according to the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA). And this rise has been largely driven by men – the survey by the PFMA showed that 1 million more men got a pet cat last year.

17% of men in the UK now have a cat, an increase from 13% in 2016, with the possibility that celebrity cat owners like Russell Brand and Ed Sheeran could be encouraging this trend.

So why are cats now stealing men's hearts?

One male cat-owner from London said: "I like having a cat because we have loads in common. We both love cuddles and the outdoors. We get on really well. I'd definitely recommend it to other guys."

Another went one step further by rescuing three newborn kittens who had been dumped in a dustbin. "I had always been a dog man, but when my colleague found a box with three kittens inside, my natural instinct was to save them from certain death," he said. "I love how playful they are. Their curiosity, the affection they show. Cats do not need the attention a dog does but when it gives you attention it is real. They select who they want to be with."

One survey respondent said that having cats made his house "feel full" and he loves coming home to them. "We never had pets when I was young so it's something I've always wanted. They always seem to know when you need a bit of attention after a bad day. I'd definitely recommend it but you have to be prepared for the wake-up calls, smelly litter trays and



Men are realising the benefits of owning a cat – 17% of men in the UK now have a cat, an increase from 13% in 2016.

scratched furniture!"

Other comments included having cats because they had them as children, because

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**“Cats do not need the attention a dog does but when it gives you attention it is real. They select who they want to be with.”**

they're cute and cuddly, because they are low-maintenance and because "there is nothing more satisfying than the purr of a happy cat".

Michael Bellingham, chief executive of PFMA, said: "Pet ownership is a rewarding experience for everyone. It's wonderful to see that men are realising the huge benefits of pets with an increase in cat ownership."

Fish are the most popular pets in the UK, with 33 million kept in tanks and ponds. This is followed by 8.5 million dogs. There are also 900,000 rabbits, 700,000 birds, 700,000 reptiles, 600,000 domestic fowl, 500,000 guinea pigs and 300,000 hamsters.

(Adapted from a story on BBC News, 30 March 2017)

# Join the dots to reveal the picture

