

Spring 2009 Newsletter



Practice News

Some of you may have noticed an all female presence at Shaw's Veterinary Hospital over Winter – David has been in the U.K. studying, working, holidaying and funnily enough watching the cricket. He will be back with us from mid-September, refreshed and ready for the busy season.



Belinda has yet again postponed her Africa trip and opted for a new car instead (plenty of room in the back for animals including Dan). She recently impressed everyone by having an article published in 'The Australian Veterinary Practitioner' (a first for Shaw's Veterinary Hospital) entitled 'Beta-blocker therapy as a treatment for canine dilated cardiomyopathy' – lots of research and big words went into this!



Vet nurse Jayne recently managed a holiday in the sun with the family, while trainee nurse Sandi is keeping busy with her 'Ballina Pet Minders' business.

Shaw's Veterinary Hospital recently donated \$2,500 to the Lennox Head-Alstonville Surf Club, a club with which David and Anne have a long association. Below is Anne Shaw and 'London' presenting head coach Lou Wilson with the cheque, which has been used towards the purchase of a new trailer.

Tick Alert

Due to the mild Winter and early onset of Spring weather, we have been seeing higher than average numbers of tick paralysis cases for the time of year. Preventative treatments and daily searching should commence now and continue on well into 2010. For more information on tick paralysis and preventative products refer to "Topics of Interest" in this website and check the "Specials" at the end of this newsletter.



Washing Your Dog

Generally speaking we find that most dog owners tend to wash their dogs too often and with the wrong type of product – in fact unless your dog is dirty or has a specific skin condition, it is generally not necessary to bathe him more frequently than every 2-4 weeks. In some cases, less often may suffice, depending on breed, coat type, and lifestyle.



After a trip to the beach, for example, a good hose down should be all that's needed to remove sand and salt. Excessive bathing can also predispose the skin to irritation and more serious problems by interfering with the skin's natural balance of oils and non-harmful bacteria.

The pH of a dog's skin is different to that of a human.

Therefore it is important to use a specifically formulated pet shampoo, not your own. For normal skin we recommend and stock soapless, natural shampoos, such as Dermcare Natural Shampoo and Fido's Everyday Shampoo. We also carry a range of treatment shampoos and conditioners for a wide range of skin problems including sensitive, allergic, and infected skin. Our staff can advise you on appropriate products or best course of action if you think your dog has problem skin.

In conclusion, a sensible bathing program combined with daily grooming, balanced diet, and effective flea control, should ensure your best friend's coat stays shiny and healthy for life.

Noise Phobia & Thunderstorms

With the approach of Summer many dog owners will be on alert for thunderstorms. Some dogs who are perfectly calm and well adjusted normally can turn into panting, slobbering, escaping maniacs at the first sign of a storm or anything they associate with them e.g. rattling blinds, wind, and darkness. These dogs have probably built up this fear over a period of time and sometimes even learned it from their mothers.



Here are some tips for helping your dog cope with thunderstorm fear and can be applied to any noise complaints: -

1. DENNING: When your dog starts to realize a storm is approaching, his first basic instinct is to escape from the source of the fear. This is potentially the biggest problem to owners because the dog will try any means of escape – e.g. over or under fences and gates, through glass doors and windows. So the first thing is to provide the dog with a 'safe' escape route into a secure 'den'. This can be an open door or 'doggie' door into the laundry or small room with minimal sound and light coming from the outside. Covering windows with blankets can help achieve this. For a dog who can't access the inside, a crate or large dog cage covered with blankets may be adequate. The 'den' can be made more attractive to the

dog by the addition of a pheromone aerosol, available from vets, which has a placating effect on many dogs, and may even draw the dog to the den if all other escape routes are closed. Also,, playing a CD loudly within the den can hide the noise of the storm.

2. CALMNESS: All dog owners should be able to teach their dog to be calm under many different circumstances - rewarding calm behaviour from puppy stage can help manage potential problems later on. Owners need to learn what triggers calmness in their own dog – sitting on lap, gentle ear massage, rubbing back of neck, isolating dog briefly. Even periods of calmness during a storm can then be rewarded and built up gradually.
3. TRAINING ROUTINES: If the dog can follow a basic chain of commands i.e. come, sit, pay attention for 5 seconds and then be rewarded with a treat on the ground, at the onset of a storm owners can flood their dog with these commands, repeat the chain over and over in different parts of the house, thus focusing the dog's attention on the owner and commands, and away from the storm. This routine will only help if the dog has done many repetitions of the commands on a daily basis over a period of time under normal conditions, so it becomes second nature to him.
4. DESENSITISATION: This is a process whereby the dog is exposed to gradually louder and more frequent noise stimulus over a period of weeks in a controlled environment, and rewarded for staying calm. It is best done under the supervision of an animal behavioural specialist.
5. MEDICATION: Used on their own or in conjunction with the previous methods, drugs can be of some benefit in some cases of noise phobia. Drugs such as Valium, Prozac, and Clomicalm are examples of medications commonly used by veterinarians to treat noise phobias. There are also some natural remedies available e.g. Homeopet Anxiety drops, which are available at Shaw's Veterinary Hospital.

So, in conclusion there is help available for storm phobic dogs. Puppy owners should do all they can to socialize their puppy, and introduce them to a variety of sounds in a non- threatening way at a young age. Puppy preschool is a good starting place for advice and owner education in these and many other matters relating to the development of a happy and confident pet for life.