

Pet Perks

Spring 2013

*Dental month is here - what you can do to keep your pet's mouth healthy & happy!
And F.Y.I. - Changes to our veterinarian line-up at the KVC*

Dr. Harold has retired

Many of you will notice the absence of long-time KVC veterinarian Harold Ledermueller from our office and out on the road. Dr. Harold has been enjoying his retirement since the end of 2012 and is already very missed.



Dr. Carly is having a baby

Dr. Carly Telfer is expecting a baby boy sometime in early April! She hopes to be working in the clinic until sometime in March before taking some well-deserved time off to spend with her family. Congrats!



Dr. Lisa has joined our team

Dr. Lisa Aurini is a graduate of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon. She joined us at the KVC at the start of December and will be a familiar face in the small animal clinic and out on the road with our horse clients.



February is Dental Month! (But it's never too late...)

Dental disease in pets is often joked about - "ewww - dog breath" is something many people are familiar with. But the disease process that causes that bad breath isn't really a laughing matter...

Dental disease can affect up to 80% of our pets over the age of three and just like in people can have some serious consequences to their longterm health and happiness.

Bad breath is often the first indicator of dental disease that people notice in their animals. Cats may be noticed to drool excessively or stop grooming themselves. Both cats and dogs may show a reluctance to eat or play with their toys.



These images demonstrate the difference a dental cleaning can make to your pet. Clean teeth mean less gum disease, improved overall health and better breath for your furry family members!

What are some of the consequences of poor dental health??

Infected teeth and gums aren't just uncomfortable in your pet's mouth. Bacteria that live on the tartar and under the gums can be swallowed by your pet and travel to many organs of the body - such as the heart,

kidneys, liver, intestinal tract, and joints. This can lead to a serious infection in any one of these organs - that can be difficult to treat, and cause your pet unnecessary suffering.

How can I improve my pet's dental health?

If you have a puppy or a kitten, talk to your veterinarian about how to safely and effectively brush your pet's teeth. Just like in people, daily brushing can prevent most major dental issues.

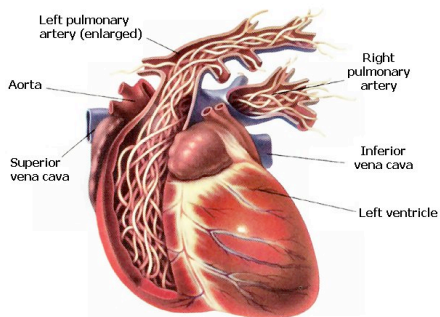
If your pet is older, and already has significant tartar build-up, your veterinarian may recommend a dental cleaning. This process is very similar to what you would experience if you went to the dentist, however because they can't understand what is going on, we anesthetize our pets for the procedure.

To ensure your pet's safety during the cleaning, pre-anesthetic bloodwork is often recommended, and a course of antibiotics may be prescribed to minimize the risk of infection after the procedure.

Prevention is the key...

Spring comes with a list of issues that are key to keeping our pets happy and healthy throughout the year to come. Below are some key concerns to consider.

HEARTWORM



HEARTWORM is a parasite of dogs (and more rarely cats) that is spread from animal to animal through the bite of mosquitoes. Dogs and cats can be exposed to this parasite anywhere that mosquitoes are found - which means the disease is present here in Ontario. What we consider "heartworm season" is most of spring, summer and early fall.

Clinical signs of heartworm are usually only seen once the parasite 'matures' in the bloodstream and the worms become lodged in the pulmonary arteries of the heart. (Often pets infected with the immature form of the parasite show no adverse effects) The first sign of heartworm disease is often a cough heard with exercise, and as the disease progresses symptoms can worsen to include severe weight loss, fainting, coughing up blood and eventually congestive heart failure.

Heartworm disease is difficult and expensive to treat and has significant health risks for your pet, which is why we advocate preventative treatment. These medications are usually in the form of an oral tablet, or a small amount of liquid that is applied to the back of the neck on a monthly basis from May or June through to November.

Heartworm disease can be tested for with a quick and easy blood test - it is recommended that dogs be tested at least every other year, and before starting treatment for the first time.

FLEAS & TICKS



FLEAS are the most common external parasites of the dog and cat. Often the first sign of fleas is persistent scratching (sometimes leaving hairless regions on your pet's hide) but this can progress to actual skin wounds and/or scabbing from persistent grooming/scratching - or an actual flea allergy.

Adult fleas can live from 7-14 days and divide their time between living on your pet (and feeding) and returning to your carpet to lay eggs. Fleas hatching in the carpet will often sense the heat and movement from your pet and jump onto a passing host.

The most effective flea treatments available are often in the form of a small amount of liquid applied to the back of the neck on a monthly basis. These treatments will eliminate adults and immature forms, and last for ~28 days - so no new fleas can climb on! Ask us for your flea prevention today!

TICKS are small parasites that climb onto a host animal from the tips of grasses and shrubs. They bury their mouthparts under the skin of the host animal and feed on the blood. When on a dog or cat, they can sometimes look like (and be mistaken for) a small wart.

Ticks are a health risk to your pets because they can carry certain diseases such as Lyme disease or ehrlichiosis (which are also transmissible to people).

If you find a tick on your pet, it can be removed by using tweezers and grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick straight out with a steady, even pressure. Cleanse the area and your hands after handling the tick and report it to your veterinarian - we may recommend follow-up care.

LEPTOSPIROSIS



LEPTOSPIROSIS is a bacterial disease that can affect many different types of animals, including dogs and humans (and rarely cats). Pets are often exposed to *Leptospira* bacteria that have been shed in the urine of wildlife (such as rodents and raccoons) and has contaminated standing water (puddles or ponds). Exposure can also occur from bite wounds and ingestion of infected bodily tissues.

Once this bacteria enters the body, it spreads out to many different tissues. The immune system often clears the bacteria from most of these tissues, but some can 'hide out' in the kidneys and continue to be shed in the urine. Infection causes damage to the liver and kidneys if left untreated.

Signs of leptospirosis in pets can include: fever, reluctance to move, decreased appetite, weakness, vomiting/diarrhea, frequent urination and yellowing of the eyes/gums. This disease is usually treated with antibiotics once it is diagnosed, but the prognosis varies depending on the amount of organ damage that has been sustained prior to diagnosis.

The best way to protect your dog against this nasty disease is through annual vaccination. Puppies or dogs receiving this inoculation for the first time require a booster 4 weeks after the primary vaccine.

Make sure your dog is protected! Ask us about Lepto at your annual check-up :)