

Mark Maltman MRCVS
Josie Cosham MRCVS

with nurses

Cindy Winter RVN
Rebecca Norman RVN
Mandy Chard RVN
Emma Akehurst RVN

and

Claire Martin



PRACTICE NEWS:

By far the most exciting piece of news to share in this newsletter is the fact that head nurse Cindy tied the knot with long term boyfriend Ant when they married on 6th October in Las Vegas!

We have expanded our staff in the last quarter. A new nurse, Emma Akehurst, has been added to complete the quartet of qualified veterinary nurses. Emma has two dogs herself, Ollie and Dudley, Meanwhile, Claire Martin has joined us in reception and quickly settled into what has become a very busy environment.

We have seen an increase in the incidence of kennel cough over the last few weeks. Similar to human infections, canine ones rise at this time of year, We include vaccination against this nuisance disease, without extra cost, as part of our routine annual booster.

OPENING TIMES:

Mon 0800-1930

Tues 0800-1800

Wed 0800-1800

Thurs 0800-1930

Fri 0800-1800

Sat 0800-1200

And of course in an emergency you can be seen 24/7—simply ring 01403 791011

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PLATELETS—a case showing the importance of these tiny blood cells

Platelets are the smallest blood cells in the body, measuring about a tenth the size of a red blood cell at three thousandths of a millimeter!

The function of these cells is to help blood clotting, making them vital for survival. When a wound leads to bleeding, certain chemicals in the bloodstream attract large numbers of platelets to the injury.

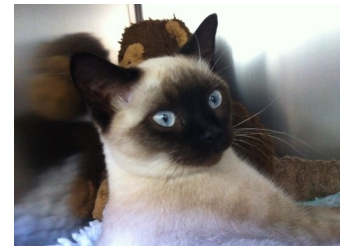
The platelets bind together to form a matrix which plugs the damaged blood vessel. Clotting factors are then activated to generate a protein called fibrin which is woven into the platelet plug to strengthen and stabilize it, leading to a permanent repair. A lack of platelets,

either in number or function, means the body is unable to repair small areas of damage in capillaries.

In such cases, blood will ooze from capillaries and may be seen as bruising under the skin, bleeding from the gums or lining of the nose, rectum or urogenital tract. Life threatening blood loss can occur.

Josie recently met Dipstix the cat in her clinic showing the tell tale signs of bleeding from the gums and extensive bruising under the skin (as can be seen in the photo, right).

Josie admitted Dipstix to allow her to perform tests to identify that it was a lack of platelets, rather than another part of the



clotting system, causing the problem. Dipstix's platelet numbers were nearly zero as a result of the cat's own immune system erroneously attacking them as if they were bacterial invaders. Following treatment to suppress the immune system, Dipstick has made a full recovery.



Fireworks and stress in pets



The coming 3 months are the ones in which pets and their owners can be tormented by the noise of fireworks. Whilst most of us can enjoy such a

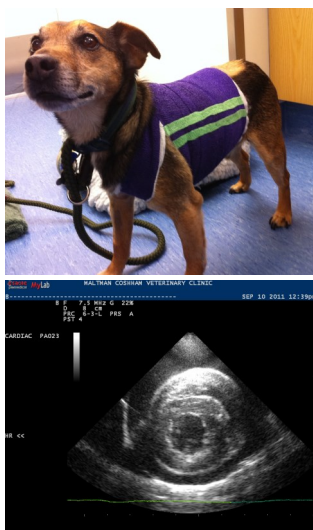
display, Bonfire Night and New Year are very stressful for many dogs, cats and other pets.

The traditional advice is to keep your pet in a darkened bedroom, but this does little if they are very stressed.

One trick though is to take them out for a drive in the car in which they will not be able to hear the noise due to the movement of air around the

vehicle, or have other background noises, such as the TV or music, on to distract them. For others, there is a range of natural and pharmaceutical treatments available which one of the vets can prescribe to reduce anxiety.

When more time is available, one can try to desensitise affected animals with behavioural therapy which aims to "normalise" loud noises.



A bandaged Barney in the practice colours! The ultrasound image shows a cross section of the heart in the middle with the fluid, seen as black, surrounding.

OPEN CHEST SURGERY!! - Barney the survivor...

Barney was first seen in Mark's clinic on a busy evening in July. He was suddenly off colour and had developed a large amount of fluid within his abdomen. After admission to the clinic, we confirmed that Barney was suffering from a pericardial effusion, which is a build up of fluid around the heart. This constricts the heart so it cannot beat effectively and the fluid in the abdomen results as it cannot be taken back into the heart and recirculated. This condition can occur for no

reason whatsoever, but it can also be associated with a cardiac tumour. Thankfully, after extensive ultrasound scanning of the heart, the vets were able to determine that Barney did not have a tumour and the fluid was drained from around the heart with a special catheter. In some cases, this is all that is required and indeed Barney was well for some time, but then suffered two relapses which prompted us to consider operating on Barney. On 19 September, we carried out

an operation in which we opened Barney's chest, meaning that our veterinary nurses had to actively ventilate him to keep his lungs working. Mark and Josie cut away the pericardial sac around the heart which contained the fluid, so that it can now drain into the much larger chest cavity which can then absorb it. We have monitored Barney closely over the last few weeks and are thrilled to say he has made a full recovery and is most definitely a star patient!!

"Independence and compassion in modern veterinary care"

Our view on raw diets for dogs and cats...

There is a growing trend to feed raw diets to dogs and cats and many of our clients do indeed follow these regimens. We do not wish to condemn such choices, but we do want to offer some words of caution as there is another side to the story. The usual argument put forward for the feeding of raw diets is that their wild counterparts would eat raw food. However, we must consider that the domestic dog has evolved away from the wild wolf over sev-

eral thousand years, meaning that they do not necessarily have the same resilience. This is less so for cats, who have continued to eat wild prey despite their domestication. Undoubtedly, many dogs will cope with raw food, but we do see a number of patients where they cannot and develop diarrhoea as a result. The risk for these is that they acquire the organisms *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, which can lead to lasting inflammation in the bowel. A

further, perhaps more significant, concern is these organisms colonizing the dog's intestine without signs of diarrhoea. This poses a risk to the owners of contracting them from their dog and becoming ill themselves. Everyone must make their own decisions as to what is right for their pet, but these words should offer a note of caution, especially if an owner is immunosuppressed. Put simply, would you eat raw chicken yourself?!!



Oscar pictured here at 4mths of age, still looking more like a puppy than his littermates.

The smallest kid in town...

Oscar was first seen as a 10 week old puppy at 5.30am one morning! He was collapsed and seizing. After admission, we found that his blood glucose level had dropped dangerously low. He was too small to have a catheter put in his legs and so we had to put a catheter in via the jugular vein in his neck, something called a central line. Fluids and glucose were administered and he was stabilised within a few hours. However, once the crisis had passed,

we started to notice quite how small he was for his age and, on further enquiry, it transpired that he was only 50% of the size of his littermates. The breeders had considered he to be the runt but the vets wondered if it may be something more and after a number of blood tests we confirmed that he is a pituitary dwarf. The pituitary gland in his brain is underdeveloped and not producing enough growth hormone. This is extremely rare with

neither of our vets having seen it in their careers before. Treatment involves supplementation with growth hormone which is very expensive. Alternatively, canine mammary tissue can produce growth hormone if artificially stimulated with progesterone. However, both solutions can lead to more problems than they solve and so we have decided to leave Oscar untreated as he is currently living a happy enough life.