

August 2007

Opening Hours

Monday-Friday 8am-6.15pm

Saturday 8am-5pm

Sunday 9am-5pm (Closed 12.30-1.30pm)

All consultations by appointment.
Phone 62884944

Closed Public Holidays.

Inside this issue:

Pain Management	1
Dental month	2
Turtles as pets	2

Management of Pain in Our Patients By Dr Richard Phillips BVSc MACVSc

Understandably, one of the greatest concerns people have for their pets is whether their pet is in pain or discomfort. It is also one of our primary concerns at WCVH. Over the last 15-20 years, veterinarians have increasingly acknowledged the discomfort of their patients and sought ways to alleviate it.

Pain is either the direct result of injury or disease, such as with arthritis, or a consequence of surgical procedures or operations. We can control pain in three stages:

Inhibit pain messages travelling through the spinal cord or the brain,

Block pain impulses in the nerves such as with local anaesthetics,

Prevent the sensitisation of pain receptors that occurs with inflammation.

Patients at WCVH will have a pain management programme that may involve addressing some or all of these stages.

Our surgical patients will receive a pain killer as part of their premed prior to general anaesthesia. Frequently this is a potent opioid type of drug. General anaesthesia prevents the brain perceiving pain but does not stop pain impulses travelling to the brain. Continuous administration of analgesic medication through a drip and the use of local anaesthetics and epidurals during general anaesthesia can make it smoother and safer and reduce post-operative discomfort.

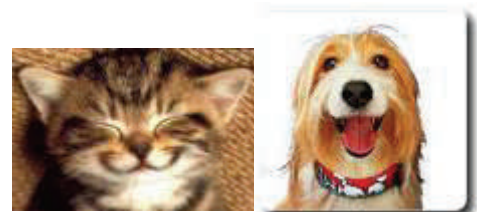
Immediately after recovery from anaesthesia, the patients are monitored by our nurses and vets and further pain relief is provided if necessary. A warm, quiet, comfortable environment also helps during this period.

After surgery, many patients are prescribed oral analgesics for several days. We most often use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for this. For pets who cannot tolerate these drugs, a slow release skin patch containing an opioid may be an alternative. These patches provide relief for up to five days.

Chronic pain, especially associated with arthritis, is a significant problem for many older pets. Arthritis can be successfully managed with a course of joint modifying drugs eg Cartrophen or with daily doses of NSAIDs. Nutraceuticals such as glucosamine may be of some benefit. Weight control and gentle exercise are very important for the relief of arthritic pets.

NSAIDs are very useful drugs for managing pain, but must be used with caution. We advise regular examinations and blood tests for pets receiving ongoing treatment with NSAIDs. It is important to be aware that human pain killers can be toxic to animals even at low doses. Paracetamol is highly toxic to cats and should never be used.

If you have any concerns about your pet's comfort, feel free to discuss it with our vets. We welcome your questions. Current medication and techniques can provide relief for many of our patients.



August 2007

Weston Creek Veterinary Hospital
200 Badimara Street
Waramanga. ACT 2611

Phone: 62884944

Fax: 62889190

Email: feedback@wcvh.com.au

Our pets' require dental care too. Unlike us, pets cannot brush their teeth daily and this can lead to all sorts of problems, such as:

Gingivitis— Inflammation of the gums

Plaque/Calculus— Animals get plaque just like we do, calculus is layer upon layer of plaque, forming a thick, hard brown/grey coating on the teeth

Periodontal Disease— Begins with plaque and can result in bleeding gums, pockets beneath teeth which then trap bacteria, loose teeth and bad breath

August is Dental Awareness Month

Dental problems can cause discomfort and pain in animals, some will even stop eating, but the good news is there's a lot that can be done about it!

Regular mouth checks by our clinic are a good idea. This is included in your pet's annual health check when being vaccinated, but a check every 6 months is ideal.

Dental diets such as Hills t/d (tooth diet) or Royal Canin dental s/o have a hard, dense consistency designed to grind away at calculus and plaque while the animal chews. Treats such as Greenies chews are also good for this.

Some pets will allow you to brush their teeth with flavoured dental paste made specially for animals. We stock a range of brushes and pastes at the practice.

After a mouth check the vet may recommend a dental procedure for your pet, performed under anaesthetic. Any plaque and calculus will be removed, and the teeth will be cleaned with an ultrasonic scaler and polished to finish.

Feel free to contact us with any enquiries you might have about your pet's dental health.



Turtles Make Great Pets—By Jessica Hunt, Veterinary Nurse

If you're looking for a pet which is fun, interesting and easy to care for why not think about a turtle?

With the right care and setup turtles can make great pets. Eastern Long-necked Turtles, the type most commonly kept in the ACT can live for 30 years or more and reach the size of a large dinner plate when fully grown. Turtles are mostly aquatic but breathe air—they can hold their breath for up to several hours at a time!

Turtle Setup

A young turtle needs a tank, preferably a minimum of two feet long. The tank should have mostly water with a platform for the turtle to climb out.

A reptile UV fluorescent light bulb will keep your turtle happy and healthy, as will a water heater and filter to keep the tank clean. Live and plastic plants and ornaments can be used, just make sure your baby turtle can't become stuck!

Feeding

Turtles eat a variety of food including: bloodworm, blackworm, brine shrimp, live fish, water bugs, commercial "turtle dinners" and pellets, lean meat and earthworms. Variety is important to keep your turtle healthy. Turtles should be fed a portion about the size of their head once a day during their first year, and after this 3-

4 times a week during warmer months and once or twice a fortnight during winter.

Health

With the right care and feeding your turtle should remain happy and healthy, however if it becomes lethargic, stops eating or the shell becomes soft it's a good idea to speak to your vet as soon as possible.

