

Parklife

for the pets in your life - your vet for life Vets@Park



Chocs away!
4 is the new 6

Parklife

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WELCOME



Welcome to the latest edition of Vets on the Park's practice magazine, Park Life, packed with tips and information on pet health, as well as plenty of special offers for you and your pet.

In this issue we have plenty of practical information to help you keep the pets in your life in the best of health. Now that spring is springing, Easter is not far away and that means chocolate! Chocolate is poisonous to pets, and you can find out more on page 5.

We also take a look at new guidelines for neutering cats. Those of you who have felines in your lives will know that in the past, neutering has always been carried out around the age of 6 months. Vets on the Park, on the advice of all the major cat welfare bodies, now recommend that neutering is undertaken at 4 months, reducing the risk of 'accidents' and minimising the number of unwanted kittens born. The article on page 10 explains more.

And whilst it may seem premature to be planning for the summer holidays, it pays to be organised when it comes to arrangements for your pets. If they are staying at home whilst you're away you'll need to organise a sitter or book a kennel or cattery. And if they are lucky enough to be going to Europe with you, they'll need a pet passport. Find out more on page 12.

In order to do our bit for the environment, we're trying to cut down on the amount of paper we use. We'd like to send you reminders by text or email when your pets' worm treatments are due, as well as keeping you up to date with any new services that may benefit you and your pet. With this in mind, please can you let our reception team have your full contact details, including mobile numbers and email addresses? Thanks for your help!

We're also going to be putting Park Life online, so you can view and download copies from our website, vetsonthepark.co.uk

Many of you have been with the practice for some time now, and we'd like to take this opportunity to say a big 'thank you' from all the team for your continued support and friendship. If you're new to the practice, then welcome along!

Vets on the Park, for the pets in your life - your vet for life

Useful information

Opening hours

We know that many of you have plenty of things to fit into your busy lives, so we work hard to ensure that you can get an appointment with us at a time convenient for you, with late evening opening and Saturday clinics.

Our opening hours are 9am - 7pm, Monday to Friday and on Saturdays we are open from 9am - noon. To book your appointment, simply call 01242 517199

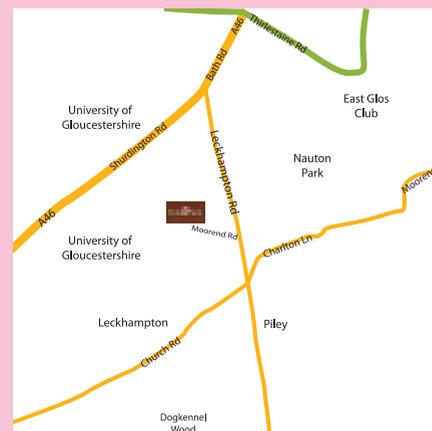
When the surgery is closed, the emergency out of hours clinic ChelVets begins. The service is run from the Surgery at Cheltenham Racecourse. Simply call 01242 522022 for help and advice in the event of an emergency.

We also offer free home visits! Coming into the surgery can sometimes be difficult so we are pleased to offer a free Vets at Home service to our clients who live within an 8 mile radius of our surgery. You can find out more on our website

www.vetsonthepark.co.uk

How to find us:

Moorend Grove, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL53 0EX
01242 517199 www.vetsonthepark.co.uk



SPECIAL OFFERS



Recommend a friend and you both save £5!
If you recommend Vets on the Park to a friend, we'll give each of you a voucher for £5 off *

Recommend us to a friend and we'll give you BOTH **£5 off***

or you can donate your £5 to our chosen charity
Please ask staff for more information
Vets on the Park Limited, Registered Office: Moorend Grove, Leckhampton, Gloucestershire, GL53 0EX
Tel: 01242 517199 www.vetsonthepark.co.uk



Simply fill in your details in part A of the form and pass it to the friend you wish to recommend us to.

All your friend needs to do is fill in part B and hand in the completed form when they register their pet with us.

How to claim your £5 voucher

Simply fill in your details in Form A, and give this card to the friend you wish to recommend us to. All your friend needs to do is fill in Form B, and hand in this card when they register their pet with Vets on the Park. Once they have had a consultation with us, they can collect their £5 voucher* and we will send your £5 voucher* by post.

A	
Name	Address
Telephone	Postcode
B	
Name	Address
Telephone	Postcode
Date	

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Once they have been in for a consultation, they can collect their £5 voucher* and we will send you your £5 voucher* by post.

*Please see our website for terms and conditions, www.vetsonthepark.co.uk





SEARCH FOR A STAR

Every year we send you a reminder card when your pet's annual health check and booster vaccination is due. We have decided it would be nice to have some photographs of our clients' pets on these vaccine reminder postcards. So, if you fancy seeing your dog, cat or rabbit on the next batch of postcards we send out simply email us a good quality high-resolution photograph to petphotos@vetsonthepark.co.uk

We will upload all the images we receive onto our Facebook page and ask our Facebook friends to vote for their favourites. There will be a prize for the winning pictures each month too. So get snapping!

Staff News

We are delighted to announce the arrival of a new member of staff to join the team at Vets on the Park. Alice Bennett is a qualified veterinary nurse who joined us in November of last year. The daughter of a veterinary surgeon, Alice is originally from Bridgend in South Wales, and previously worked for five years in a large mixed practice, where she completed her nurse training. After qualifying as an RVN in 2007, and having a keen interest in horses, she moved to Gloucestershire to work in an equine practice for a year, before moving to a small animal practice in Cheltenham, where she worked for four years as senior nurse.

Alice spends pretty much all of her spare time and money caring for her horse Freya and competes in show jumping with her most weekends. What time she has left is spent with her partner and their whippet Fly, going on long walks. A British blue cat Elmo, who doesn't mind the odd cuddle (on his terms, of course), completes the family.



KEEPING STANDARDS HIGH

At Vets on the Park we are committed to the provision of the very best care at all times, both for you and your pet. This is evident in our attainment of the RCVS Practice Standards approved clinic status.



We ensure that each of our vets and nurses undergoes regular training and development in all the latest medical and clinical advances. And because we strive to give all our clients a professional, friendly and empathic service that always goes just that little bit further, our customer care team receive frequent coaching and hands-on practical training.

Recently all our nursing team attended a customer care course where they all took part in the dreaded role play! Our veterinary surgeons don't escape the need for continuing professional development. Last year Rhian attended a three day specialist feline medicine conference and brought back lots of hints and tips for the whole team.

We always welcome your feedback, as every comment helps us improve and aim higher. If you would like to pass on any feedback or suggestions for improvement, then please email us at vetpchemt@hotmail.co.uk or send us a message via Facebook (search for Vets on the Park and 'like' us!)

We'll bring you more practice news and pictures in the next issue, and in the meantime, if there is anything you'd like to see featured, please do drop us a line at vetpchemt@hotmail.co.uk or give us a call - we'd love to hear your suggestions.

11 Years and counting.....

Case study by Julie Irons RVN

Kenny is the greediest dog I have ever known - so when he refused to eat his tea one night, I knew he must have been feeling unwell. The next morning he also refused his breakfast, then went into the garden to hide.

This was completely out of character for Kenny, so I took him to work with me that morning for a check over.

His blood tests came back clear, and nothing was found on an examination. The next thought was that a foreign body was causing an obstruction. However, as greedy as he is, he had never chewed anything - even as a puppy. It seemed unlikely that he could have a foreign body or an obstruction.

We took x-rays, and to my horror, an enormous round mass was seen in his stomach. We opted to proceed to surgery and Kenny was taken into theatre.

You could cut the atmosphere with a knife (or scalpel!) when Alison opened up his stomach and had a look inside. A tumour the size of an orange was found at the bottom of his stomach. Due to its size and position it was inoperable, and I had to make a choice that no one ever wants to make. We decided that Alison should send samples of the tumour to the laboratory in the hope that it was treatable, and crossed our fingers

It was a weekend, so we had an agonising wait for the results to come back. In the meantime I took Kenny home to look after

him, and the family began to say their goodbyes in case of bad news - we even took him to the seaside for his 'final' day. He had lost an awful lot of weight by now, and had begun to vomit. He couldn't keep anything down, even water, so I attached him to a drip in his crate.

On Monday we had the results back, and it was diagnosed as a malignant tumour. We were told that a new drug used in human medicine was worth trying for this type of tumour, so we started Kenny the next day. We have not looked back since! He never vomited again, and he regained weight, which is nothing short of a miracle. To think that I nearly made the decision to put him to sleep on the table makes me so grateful for the huge support I received from every member of staff at Vets on the Park.

Kenny has been on the drug now for six months, and he is thriving! Thank goodness we have insurance, as these new tablets cost £350 every month! We don't know how long he might have, as this drug is so new in dogs, but he certainly doesn't look like he's going anytime soon. I never thought he would see his next birthday but on December 28th he turned eleven.

At the end of the day, Kenny is my miracle dog and every day with him and his brother is special. We treasure the time we have left with him.



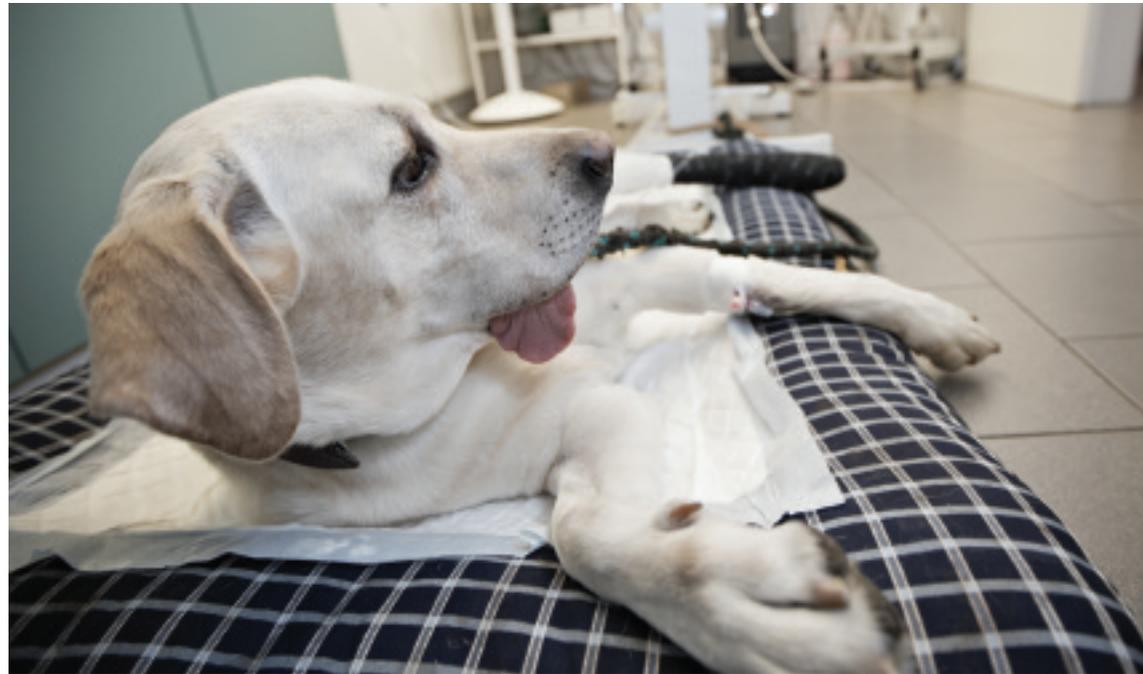
A night in the life of an emergency vet

Nicole Blakey MRCVS lets us behind the scenes at ChelVets, who provide excellent emergency care to Vets on the Park clients when our own surgery is closed.

"ChelVets has operated from the vet clinic at the Cheltenham racecourse for about eight years now. We are open from 7pm, with a duty vet and nurse onsite at all times. Our first job is to do the rounds of the animals that we will be caring for during the night, and then the phone calls start! Vets on the Park is the only vet clinic that allows us to view their clinical notes during the out of hours period, which we are able to access securely online. This ensures that the care we deliver complements any treatment regimes that your own vet has already established.

Soon the patients from other vet clinics arrive; sometimes the vets will bring them directly to us (especially if they're very poorly) or arrange a pet taxi to bring them over. As these patients start to arrive, consent forms are filled in, beds arranged for the night, the patients are examined and initial treatment plans are formulated.

It can be quite busy during this first hour, depending on how many patients are sent to us directly from their own vets, because we are also getting phone calls from clients at the same time. We're always more than happy to speak to people on the phone and we don't charge for giving advice, in fact we much prefer it if people ring if they do have a concern - we can tell very quickly if it's a problem that you need to worry about or something that will be fine and can wait until your regular vet opens.



Sometimes if we're very busy we will take a phone number and call people back so we have more time to talk with them.

Once the animals are settled in their cages we can take care of the routine tasks whilst we wait for clients to start arriving. However, these administrative duties always take a back seat to our patients - their care comes first. We run the

out of hours clinic on an appointment basis, and luckily most clients know to ring first before coming down so we can organise a time to see them that is convenient for them and us. This means that we can spread the consults out so that people don't have long to wait, and it also lets us plan procedures. For example, if we need to anaesthetise an animal for any reason we will wait till we know that no clients are due to be seen before we start, or if we know a very sick animal is due to come

down, we will start to get drugs and other treatments set up.

Usually sometime between 10pm and midnight we get a chance to have spot of dinner or a snack. It is also during this time that the owners of patients that we have hospitalised with us will give us a final call before they go to bed. We tend to say to

people to give us a bell before they go to sleep so that we can give them an update so they can (hopefully) get a good night's sleep. This means that we won't disturb people with an update if they go to bed early!

Sometime after midnight, if we aren't working in and around the kennels and treatment room, we will turn the lights off or switch them to a dimmer setting to allow our patients to rest and get some sleep. They will be woken up as we do checks on them through the night and take them for walks and toilet breaks, but being able to rest and recharge their batteries is also very important. Occasionally the lights will stay on all night if we have a very poorly animal that needs constant care.

From 7am we start to discharge our inpatients, after updating their clinical notes and checking temperatures, pulses and respiration, along with any final walks before they go.

By 8.15 we are ready to switch the answering machine on and go home to have a snooze and prepare to do it all again that night!

On behalf of all the staff at ChelVets, I'd like to thank all the clients who have come to us over the years and allowed us to treat their friends. I love my job, and I consider it a privilege to be able to help patients and clients in situations that range from the humorous to the very stressful and distressing.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we lose a patient, but this is tempered by remembering the many that we are able to send home again, healthy and happy."

If you have cause to need emergency care for your pets outside our normal hours, simply call ChelVets direct on 01242 522022 for help and advice.

Chocs away! Don't run the risk of inadvertently poisoning your pet

With Easter just around the corner, many of us will be buying and receiving chocolates, especially those of us with children. As we treat the ones we love to something sweet, it can be tempting to offer your pets a square or two of Green & Blacks, but please do resist the temptation! Many people are unaware that chocolate is poisonous to animals, and that even a small square of dark chocolate can prove fatal.



Why can't my pet have just a little of my chocolate?

The cocoa beans that chocolate is made from contain theobromine and caffeine, which deliver the sensation of the natural high that we enjoy. However, humans are able to break down and excrete these substances much more efficiently than animals can, which means that if your pet does eat chocolate, these toxins can very quickly begin adversely affecting his or her internal organs.

What are the symptoms of chocolate poisoning?

The theobromine and caffeine present in chocolate will start to act straight away, and will cause some or all of the following in your pet:

- Stimulation of the central nervous system
- Quickening of cardiovascular activity
- Increased blood pressure
- Nausea and vomiting
- Convulsions

What should I do if my dog or cat eats chocolate?

It is important to get advice immediately from your vet. Retain the wrapper of any chocolate your pet has eaten and call us straight away on 01242 517199. If you need

advice outside of our normal opening hours, please call the ChelVets emergency service on 01242 522022. It may seem like an over-reaction, but chocolate consumption can cause fatal convulsions, especially in smaller animals or those pets that have



consumed a particularly large amount of chocolate. We are always happy to advise you, so please don't worry about calling us.

What can I give as a treat instead?

If you like the idea of a chocolatey treat, choc drops which have been specially formulated for cats and dogs are widely available. Or why not try one of the range of

nibbles and chews that we stock at Vets on the Park, or which can be found in pet stores and supermarkets? These have the added advantage of providing dental care and additional minerals and vitamins that will help keep your pet healthy and happy.

Many human foods can be toxic for our pets, for example grapes and nuts can cause stomach upsets and even kidney failure, so it's always best to stick to foods and treats that have been made specifically for pets. We don't recommend giving dogs bones, as splinters or small fragments can

become lodged in the throat and intestines, which is not only very painful for your pet, but can cause inflammation and infection and ultimately may even require surgery to remove.

The good news is that by keeping your chocolates safely out of your pet's reach, not only will you avoid a potential trip to the vets, but you'll also have more left for you to enjoy!

4 is the new 6

- the importance of neutering your cat early

Unless you are planning to breed we highly recommend that you have your cat neutered. This will:

- Prevent unplanned, unwanted and expensive kittens being born
- Remove the risk of several types of cancer and diseases
- Reduce aggression, straying, spraying, calling and other anti-social behaviour

What is neutering?

Neutering is a term that covers the removal of the reproductive organs in both males and females.

In **males** it's called 'castration'. We remove the testicles and the spermatic cord. The male is then unable to produce sperm and cannot father any offspring. The testicles are the main producer of the hormone testosterone, which can influence behaviour. By removing them, the level of testosterone in the males' blood is reduced, which should lower the chance of your pet straying and reduce dominant behaviour such as fighting and spraying. It does take approximately 6 weeks for the sperm and hormones to work their way out of the pet's system,

so you will still need to keep a close eye on him during this time to avoid any accidents!

In **females** it's called 'spaying'. We remove the ovaries and the womb (the uterus). A small patch of fur will be shaved on your pet's side for the operation, and she will have to wear a collar afterwards to prevent her scratching and biting at the wound.

Spaying means that the female can't produce any eggs, come into season or become pregnant. The ovaries are the main producer of the hormone oestrogen, so removing them lowers the oestrogen levels in your pet's blood stream, resulting in more docile behaviour and a reduced chance of straying.

Both spaying and castration are routine surgical procedures, and we carry out hundreds of them every year. Pets are only in the practice for the day, although we like to see all patients the next day to ensure that they are healing well and have fully recovered from the anaesthetic.

When should I have my pet neutered?

Historically, the advice has always been to neuter cats at 6

months, however, following a comprehensive reassessment by The Cat Group, this is now changing to 4 months. The Cat Group is a collection of professional organisations dedicated to feline welfare through the development and promotion of policies and recommendations on the care of all cats.

In all cases, the recommended timing for neutering is at four months.

Pedigree kittens bought from a breeder are rarely homed before 14 weeks old, and are already fully vaccinated. We recommend that you allow two to three weeks for your cat to settle into its new home before neutering, at around four months.

'Moggies' are usually obtained at six to seven weeks onwards. Our advice is to book the cat in for neutering two to three weeks after vaccinations are complete, i.e. at about four months old.

You can find more information and advice at fabcats.org. And if you want to book your cat in for neutering, or wish to discuss this further, then please just ask any of our staff and we will be pleased to help.

Summer's not far away! Time to plan your holidays!

Now that Christmas is over, the papers are full of holiday adverts. Summer may still feel a long way off, but if you are going away on holiday, whether or not you're taking your pets with you, there is still plenty to arrange in advance.

Pet passports

The good news is that from January 2012, DEFRA made life a lot easier for pets travelling within the EU and listed non-EU countries. If you meet the rules of the UK Pet Travel Scheme (PETS), you can take your pet cat, dog or ferret abroad and return to the UK without the need for quarantine. However, before travelling, you must take your animal to a vet so that it can be:

- Fitted with a microchip
- Vaccinated against rabies
- Issued with a pet passport (if it's travelling in the EU)

You must wait 21 days from the date of the rabies vaccination before travelling.

Dogs must also be treated by a vet for tapeworm, not less than 24 hours and not more than 120 hours before its scheduled time of entry into the UK.

Full details on the Pets Travel Scheme can be found at gov.uk/take-pet-abroad/overview

Kennels and catteries

It's always a good idea to ask family and friends for recommendations before choosing a kennel or cattery. However, even if one comes with glowing testimonials, you should always visit yourself to ensure that you are happy for your pet to be left in their care. There are also some specifics to consider:

- Do they have a licence? All kennels and

catteries should have an up-to-date licence from their local council.

- Do they have insurance cover in case your pet needs emergency care?
- Are the facilities clean, dry, draught-free, secure and do they provide shade?



Family and friends

When someone else is looking after your pet they have a legal responsibility to ensure your pet's welfare, and you should make sure that they understand your pet's needs and any special requirements that he or she may have. You'll need to leave clear instructions regarding diet, feeding regimes and exercise requirements,

along with specific details of any grooming and health care needs. Remember to leave contact details so that your pet's carer can reach both you and your veterinary practice in the case of an emergency.

Pet-sitting services

If you do not have family or friends who can look after your pet, another option is to arrange for a pet-sitter. The National Association of Registered Pet sitters (NARP) can provide you with a list of their members.

The RSPCA advises that when choosing a pet-sitter, be sure to:

- Meet them first. You need to be confident that they will care for your pet's needs properly, and that your pet gets on well with them
- Ask to see a copy of their police check or CRB certificate
- Check their references
- Check that they have insurance to cover your pet in case of an emergency.

ONLINE ALL THE TIME!

At Vets on the Park we work hard to ensure that you always have access to help and advice when you need it - we offer evening opening and Saturday clinics, as well as 24 hour emergency cover through our partnership with ChelVets, so that you can organise your pet's care to fit in with your busy life.

However, we know that sometimes you might remember the appointment you meant to book, or the repeat prescription you needed to arrange, just as you're putting the children to bed, or washing your hair. Or is that just us?!
If so, you'll be pleased to know that you can book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and so much more on our new website: www.vetsonthepark.co.uk

We also have a facebook page where we add news and special offers that we think might be of interest to our friends. You can share photos and funny stories, as well as ask for advice, so don't forget to 'like' us at Vets on the Park.

Vets on the Park

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for the pets in your life - your vet for life