



Welcome to our July Newsletter,

We hope you are surviving the winter days and extra cold nights. In this newsletter we are going to touch on ways to keep your pets warm and in good health over the next few cold months.

We are always interested in your feedback or if you have any topics you would like us to cover please let us know.



Winter and our Pets

Winter can be a time to bring your pets in from the cold and consider their needs. After all, not every pet handles those winter chills with ease. Here are some important tips to help your pets through winter.

Bedtime

- ✚ To keep a pet comfortable and warm at night, why not give it a hot water bottle? To be safe, **don't** use boiling or hot water in case your pet chews the container and burns itself. The bottle must be insulated with a thick covering. A plastic soft drink bottle filled with warm water from the tap works well. Cover the container with a towel, a thick sock or the sleeve of an old woollen jumper and your pet will be as warm as toast.
- ✚ Another alternative is to put a cup of rice in an old sock. Heat the sock in the microwave for a minute or two. The rice is also safe if your pet happens to eat it. The sock must be of thick fabric to prevent burns.
- ✚ Thermostatically controlled heat pads can be placed under the pet's bed and, provided your pet will not chew the electric lead, the pads are a good way of providing soft, gentle heat.
- ✚ If your dog sleeps outside provide them with a kennel. A wooden kennel with an elevated floor, facing away from the weather is ideal. Supply cosy blankets for them to snuggle in to.

Clothing

- ✚ There are a variety of coats available including waterproof and oilskin.

Bathing

- ✚ If you are going to bath your dog, do it before lunch time and make sure it's a sunny day. Long coats can take hours to dry.

Cars

- ✚ Car engines are warm and therefore attract cold cats and dogs. So before you hop into your car it is a good idea to do a quick check.
- ✚ Cats also climb under the bonnet to be extra close to the engine. A little tap on the bonnet should give them a warning that you're about to get in.

Exercise

- ✚ Don't forget the value of exercise for your pet. It's one of the best ways of warming up.

Understanding Heart Disease

If your dog has been diagnosed with heart disease, with your care and suitable medication from your vet, a better, longer life for your dog is now possible.

An important thing to understand is that your dog's condition is not uncommon. Heart disease affects around 10% of all dogs.

A heart problem present at birth is termed a Congenital Heart Disease, or if it develops during the course of the pet's lifetime, often in middle age, it is called Acquired Heart Disease.

Acquired heart disease account for 95% of all heart conditions in dogs.

There are two principal causes of acquired heart disease:

Mitral Valve Disease

Dilated Cardiomyopathy

Both of these diseases result in heart failure. Heart failure in dogs **is not** like a heart attack in people. The term "heart failure" comes from the heart's inability to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

This causes the dog to show signs or symptoms and the heart's performance declines over time.

While there is no cure for heart failure, it can usually be managed with medication and care.

What are the signs?

Signs of heart disease can initially be quite mild and so may be difficult to pick up. However, as the disease progresses, the symptoms can become more severe. These signs occur because of fluid build up or because the vital organs are not supplied with the blood, and therefore the oxygen, they require.

Signs Include:

- ✚ Lack of energy/depression
- ✚ Poor appetite/weight loss
- ✚ Laboured breathing
- ✚ Coughing
- ✚ Weakness
- ✚ Swollen abdomen (ascites)

How it is diagnosed:

It's important that you and your dog pay regular visits to the vet. This gives the vet the greatest possible chance of early detection of heart disease. The vet will pick up clues to any heart-related problems with a thorough physical examination. By listening to your dog's heart with a stethoscope, the vet can assess heart rate and rhythm, and detect a murmur if one is present.

The vet might also recommend radiographs; these tests will help detect fluid on the lungs, or an increase in heart size. An ECG records the electrical activity of the heart this helps diagnose problems with the rhythm of your dog's heartbeat.

Finally, your vet might want an ultrasound taken of the heart. They are ideal for providing a clear 3-D picture of your dog's heart in action, allowing your vet to observe the heart's wall, chambers, valves and blood vessels. Whilst ultrasound is one of the most accurate methods of diagnosing heart failure, it may not be necessary in some of the more straight forward cases of heart failure.

Care and Treatment:

Although your dog may be diagnosed with heart disease, there are many things you can do to help your dog live a full and happy life. It is important to remember that, to date, there is no cure for either of the causes of heart failure in dogs. However, there are treatments that not only greatly improve your dog's quality of life, but can also extend your dog's life span.

Medical treatment may consist of some or all of the following:

- ✚ Diuretics that remove excess fluid from the lungs and abdomen.
- ✚ Medications that allow the heart to work more efficiently
- ✚ Medications that 'open up' constricted blood vessels, so reducing the work the weakened heart has to do.
- ✚ Medications that improve the strength, the rate or the rhythm of the heart.
- ✚ Limiting sodium (salt) intake in your dog's diet can also assist.

Your vet may prescribe more than one medication to help treat different aspects of heart failure, and may need to make adjustments to the treatments (because heart failure can progress over time)

[Cheers from the team at Bannockburn Veterinary Clinic](#)

