



Welcome to our October Newsletter

We hope you are enjoying our newsletters, we try to incorporate articles that are relevant to the season and we are always interested in your suggestions or feedback. DR Wendy Balmain has had a baby boy called Cameron, he has come a little early but all is well now. Just a quick note that it is baby magpie season and it is always best if you see one on the ground to leave it as once handled the parents will often abandon them. Most of the time they are learning to fly, practice makes perfect!!!.

## **Caterpillars and Horses**

The Eastern tent caterpillars (USA) or Processionary Caterpillars as they are called in Australia are a univoltine, social species that forms communal nests in the branches of trees mostly Box Eucalypts, White Cedars and Acacias. The caterpillars are hairy with areas of blue, white, black and orange. Horses will inadvertently eat the caterpillars and the caterpillar hairs can become embedded into the lining of the alimentary tract. Once the protective barrier of the gut is breached, normal alimentary tract bacteria may gain access to and reproduce in these sites. With an infection in the horses circulatory system, areas with reduced immunity, such as the foetus and placenta can be infected. Foetal death from these alimentary tract bacteria is the hallmark of mare reproductive loss syndrome (MRLS). The time between a broodmares exposure to the caterpillars to abortion is approx 10 days for an early pregnancy or sooner for a mare in later stages. Abortion is very quick and there are no obvious clinical signs. Ingestion of the caterpillars can also cause colic signs as the hairs on the caterpillar contain small spikes and I suspect that they don't taste nice when eaten.

Now is an optimal time for controlling populations because the caterpillars are still gathered in the trees. Currently, small caterpillars are moving to feed on the leaves that have been appearing in trees and have built tents at branch and limb forks. Initial growth of the caterpillars will be slow, the caterpillars in nests will begin to move to the main trunk branches and join together in a

smaller number of large tents on individual trees. The aggregation behaviour can be used advantageously to manage the caterpillars by destroying or treating accessible populations.

After a few weeks, the caterpillars will leave the trees where they've eaten the available foliage and search for food to complete their development. Once the caterpillars have reached these dispersing stages, controlling them becomes more difficult.

There are sprays that can be used to control the caterpillars on your property. Additionally, experts recommend that owners scout their paddocks for the telltale white tents in trees and err on the side of caution by keeping mares away from caterpillar locations.

For more information and images Google: Eastern Tent Caterpillars or Processionary Caterpillars.

## Founder in Horses

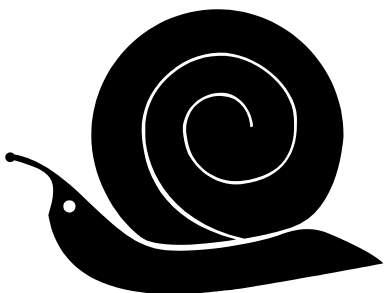
**Founder or Laminitis is inflammation of the laminae of the foot.**

With the recent rain and resulting spring growth it is an optimal time for founder in horses. Keep an eye on their weight; you may need to yard your horse to limit the amount of feed available.

Watch for the thick – crested neck especially in ponies. Any signs of lameness or heat especially in the front feet should be regarded as suspicious. Horses that have foundered are reluctant to move and may spend more time lying down in the paddock due to sore feet. Untreated founder can result in permanent damage to bones in the foot.



## Snail Bait Poisoning



With the onset of spring many of us are spending more time in the garden planting out flowering annuals and vegetables. These tender new plants are susceptible to attack by snails tempting many gardeners to lay snail bait. Snail bait is a highly effective poison and is **lethal** if swallowed by your pet.

The only way to guarantee your pet is not poisoned with snail bait is not to use it. There are several brands on the market that claim to be pet friendly due to the fact they are unpalatable however, we treat dogs every year that have taken these baits.

An animal that has ingested one of these baits will quickly exhibit dramatic symptoms such as vomiting, drooling, shaking, muscle spasms and collapse.

This is an emergency situation and the animal should be taken to the vet immediately.

A phone call to let us know you are on the way will give us the opportunity to have emergency medications and treatments prepared for your arrival.

## Puppy Class and K9 Good Manners

We run Puppy classes and K9 Good manners at the clinic all year round.

Pamela Flynn runs our classes and has been training dogs for 17 years.

Pam specialises in puppy classes and basic training classes, using positive easy training methods.

Please phone the clinic for dates and times.

## ITCHY DOGS

Itchy dogs are one of the most common presentations veterinarians see in practice. Some breeds are particularly prone to itchy skin, such as terriers and poodles. There are three main categories of common causes of pruritis, 'the itchy sensation'. These are ectoparasites, infection and allergies. Occasionally underlying metabolic disease such as Cushing's disease or thyroid problems can also cause skin problems.

### **1. Ectoparasites**

These are little creepy crawlies that live on or in the dog's skin and feed off the blood, skin or skin secretions.

**Fleas:** are the most common parasite seen on dogs. They are most abundant during the warmer months and live both on the dog and more commonly in the dog's environment. We also see fleas during the winter months as house heating keeps the ambient temperature warm enough for fleas to hatch all year round.

Fleas bite the dog to suck blood, causing irritation and pain. Some dogs can develop an allergy to fleas and will react dramatically to a single flea bite.

We now have very effective "spot on" treatments available at the clinic. These differ from most supermarket products as they are able to kill the fleas and larvae in the environment rather than only those on your pet. These products should be applied monthly to prevent flea infestations.

**Sarcoptic Mange:** Sarcoptic mites live in the dog's skin, particularly around the eyes, ear tips, elbows and hocks. They can be spread from other dogs, or from wildlife. Mites can sometimes be detected by a skin scraping (but not always as they are quite sneaky). A single mite on your dog can cause a severe reaction.

**Demodectic Mange:** Demodectic mites live in the hair follicles around the face and feet. Localised infections in young dogs usually resolve without treatment. More severe, generalized infection will need to be treated under veterinary supervision.

## 2. Infections

Infections can cause skin problems by themselves, but are more commonly seen as complications of other skin complaints. When your dog licks and scratches irritated skin it creates a perfect moist environment for bacteria and yeast to grow.

**Pyoderma:** Pyoderma is a bacterial infection of the skin and/or hair follicles. Pyoderma can be diagnosed by your veterinarian by taking samples from the skin and examining them under the microscope.

*Staphylococcus* is the most common bacteria isolated from skin infections... Hypodermal responds very well to treatment with antibiotics sometimes in combination with shampoos. In many cases the infection is secondary to another underlying skin condition such as an allergy, in which case your dog may still be itchy after the infection has cleared. In these cases further investigation is required.

**Malassezia dermatitis:** Malassezia is a yeast that infects the skin, most commonly around the mouth, under the neck, feet and elbows. Like pyoderma, malassezia can be diagnosed microscopically from skin samples. Treatment options include shampoos and medications. Like pyoderma, malassezia can be secondary to an underlying condition.

## 3. Allergies

Allergies occur when the body's immune systems overreacts to a small stimulus. The dog must be exposed to the allergen (the cause of the allergy) multiple times for the immune system to become hypersensitive. If infectious and parasitic causes of itching are ruled out then we need to investigate for allergies.

**Contact dermatitis:** Allergic contact dermatitis occurs when the dog's skin comes into contact with something that it is allergic to. Some things that may cause allergic reaction include plants such as wandering dew or strong bleaches. Contact dermatitis usually affects sparsely haired areas. The best treatment for contact dermatitis is long term avoidance. To try to determine the most likely source your vet will need a detailed description of your dog's environment. Patch testing can be performed by a specialist to confirm the suspected allergen.

**Food Allergy:** Pruritis can be caused by a reaction to something in the dog's diet. The offending allergen is usually a type of carbohydrate or protein (chicken and beef are the most common). It is possible for your dog to develop an allergy to a food you have fed for many years without a problem; in fact, dogs need to be exposed to the allergen for a period of time before the body will develop a hypersensitivity.

*Food elimination trials* are required to diagnose food allergy. There are suitable commercial diets available at the clinic such as Hills z/d. Food trials must be strictly adhered to (no treats at all).

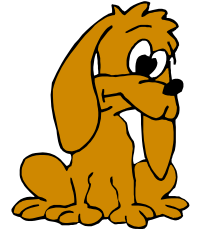
**Atopy:** Atopy is an allergy to airborne allergens such as dust mites, pollens, moulds and insect debris. Dogs usually present with recurrent skin problems, which are often seasonal. Due to the scratching, secondary infections are common. There is no single test for atopy; it is diagnosed by exclusion of all other causes (treatment of infections, skin scrapings, food elimination trials) or referral to a specialist.

Unfortunately, atopy is a life-long disease that we cannot cure, however with careful management your dog can be kept comfortable.

### **In Summary**

Pruritis is a common ailment that causes both dogs and owners a great deal of stress and frustration. To be accurate in our approach to treatment supplementary tests are often required, many of these can be performed in the clinic at the time of consultation. In many cases treatment trials may be used, in some cases the dog will be cured by the trial, but if the itching doesn't stop, please report back to the vet.

Unfortunately there is not crystal ball to give an immediate answer so often your patience, compliance and dedication as an owner is required.



**Cheers from Bannockburn Veterinary Clinic**

