



**YOUR
VET**



SUMMER 2016/17



**NORTH HILL
VETERINARY CLINIC**

NORTH HILL VET CLINIC

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OUR VETS

Dr Sarah Butler

BVSc (Sydney)

Dr Libby Pagan

BVSc (James Cook)

Dr Craig Bailey

BVSc (Brisbane)

Dr Fiona Le Surf

BVSc (Murdoch)

OUR SUPPORT STAFF

Receptionists

Ruth and Lisa

Accounts and Nursing

Julie, Jess, Lucy and Amanda

Are all eager to help you with your appointments, food supplies, flea treatment plans, worming regimes and any other questions you may have about the care and welfare of your pet.

CLINIC HOURS

The clinic can be contacted between 8.30am and 5.30pm weekdays, and between 9.00am and 11.00am on Saturdays.

Consultations are made by ringing for an appointment time.

AFTER HOURS SERVICE

We offer a full after-hours service, 7 days a week.

Either ring the clinic number 6772 1686 or the emergency mobile number 0407 510 309 for assistance.

We do ask that you save this service for emergencies – one time it could be your animal in need.

KEEP YOUR POOCH COOL THIS SUMMER

We all love summer, especially taking the dog out for a walk or run at the local beach or park. But just as you need protection from the sun and heat, so does your dog.

It's important to know the limits of what your dog can handle and be able to recognise early signs of heat stroke. Heat related illnesses can be prevented if you take the right precautions.

WHAT CAUSES HEAT STROKE?

Unlike humans who sweat, dogs eliminate their body heat by panting, and when panting isn't enough their temperature rises. When they are in a hot environment, such as in direct sun or left inside a closed car, they can develop hyperthermia easily and quickly.

An elevated body temperature causes them to release substances that cause inflammation. Hyperthermia is when a dog's body temperature goes above normal range (which varies by breed), so above 39°C is considered abnormal.

HOW TO RECOGNISE HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is a non-fever form of hyperthermia that occurs with excessive exposure to heat.

Signs of overheating include:

- Excessive panting
- Noisy breathing
- Rapid heart rate
- Bright red gums, tongue or eyes
- High body temperature
- Muscle tremors
- Disorientation
- Wobbly movement
- Sluggishness

Signs of extreme heat stroke include vomiting, seizures and collapse.

In a 43°C environment heat stroke leads to weakness, lethargy and can cause failure of vital organs and sometimes death.

HOW TO TREAT HEAT STROKE

Should you witness any of the above symptoms and believe the dog may be suffering from heat stroke, immediately remove the dog from the source of heat.

Wet the dog under a cool shower or hose, or even use a spray bottle. Cover with wet towels and give them as much cool water as they want until veterinary care is obtained.

Do not submerge an overheated dog in ice or ice-cold water. This can cause blood vessels to constrict and actually slow the cooling process.

IS YOUR DOG AT RISK?

Dogs particularly at risk are the very young (up to 6 months) and the very old (large dogs 7+ years, small dogs 14+ years), as are dogs with a coat of thick hair or are overweight, ill, on medication or have poor circulation. Dogs who have a history of heat-related disease are also a high risk.

HOW TO PREVENT HEAT STROKE

- Provide shelter from the sun with a shaded area outdoors.
- Never leave your dog in the car, even under a shaded area.
- Keep your dog well hydrated by ensuring free access to fresh, clean water.
- Try to exercise your dog in the morning or early evening, avoiding peak-sun hours.
- Take precautions when at the beach (provide shade, avoid over-exertion and don't let him/her sit directly on the sand).

If you see someone else's or your own dog showing signs of overheating take immediate action and then call your vet for further advice.



CATS AND MOVING HOME

If you're planning a move, you should definitely take time to think of how this will affect your cat.

Cats are territorial creatures and can find moving a very stressful experience. There are however, a few things you can do to make sure puss has an easy transition.

THE JOURNEY

You want to make your cat as comfortable as possible whilst travelling to your new location. Ask your vet what a suitable distance is to do this yourself. You may need to have the cat transported by professionals if the distance is too long.

To help your cat be comfortable you will need to get a suitable cat carrier and fill it with a familiar smelling blanket, favourite toys and a little treat food.

Most cats dislike travelling and will often be on edge and meowing a lot. To help keep them calm, try reassuring them by talking to them along the way. And don't be surprised if they leave you a little treat to clean up too!

THE NEW PLACE

When you get to your new address, make sure the place is closed up tight, as cats will find any kind of exit, even fireplaces and high windows. Keep noise to a minimum once you let them loose. They will be scared of unfamiliar noises but also want to be stereotypically "curious" and explore every nook and cranny.

Prepare ONE room for your cat with some food and water, this gives them a good beginning territory. Put a familiar bed in there too, with toys and litter as they

won't be going outside for at least a week. Depending on your situation and the age of the cat you may need more or less time inside, but definitely ask your vet for their professional opinion.

While inside, you can encourage your cat to explore the rest of the house comfortably but putting a little bit of dry food in the corners of some rooms.

Your cat will beg to go outside, but don't give in as they might try and go back to your old location, get lost, fall or even come across an aggressive cat, so definitely stick to your guns.

A good tip is to get to know your new neighbours and their animals. When you do decide to let them out, do it in the morning and monitor them as much as possible.

Clever
CROSSWORD

Across

- The term used when a dog's temperature goes above 'normal range'?
- Encourage your bird to engage in this natural behaviour.
- What type of diet is difficult to make nutritionally balanced?
- It is recommended you keep a minimum of two chickens because they what type of creature?
- A non-fever form of hyperthermia that occurs with excessive exposure to high temperatures is heat _____?

Down

- Doing this to your cat during a journey may help to calm and reassure them.
- Days that are this and hot are especially dangerous for small animals.
- What do dogs do in order to eliminate body heat?
- Keep your bird entertained by hiding what inside their toys?
- Contradictory to popular belief, studies have shown this food-type is rarely a cause of food allergies in pets.
- Placing dry food in this area in a number of rooms will help your cat to explore it's new residence.
- You can use chicken droppings as this for your vegetable garden.

KEEP YOUR FEATHERY FRIEND'S DAYS BUSY



Birds are intelligent creatures that need visual stimulation as well as exercise. Unfortunately, due to our busy modern lifestyle, our pet birds are often left on their own while we are at work.

In the wild, birds must constantly forage for food. This natural behaviour provides a varied diet and exercise. In captivity, a food bowl is hardly a workout and the bird can quickly gorge until full and then has nothing to do to fill his day.

When encouraged to engage in foraging behaviour, it can help prevent obesity and reduce boredom. You can encourage this natural behaviour by providing a stimulating and varied diet with lots of fresh vegetables, some fruit and a complete pelleted ration.

Try things such as corn cobs, capsicum strips, carrot tops and wheat grass that can be placed inside objects or dangled from a leather strip. Place a vase in or next to the cage and fill it with small branches and natural vegetation.

Toys can also help to create a stimulating environment for your pet bird. Have on hand a variety of toys and rotate them. Include 'destructible' toys, such as wooden clothes pegs and leather strips that can be chewed. You can also hide food inside toys to encourage foraging.

When living in captivity, interactions like these can provide hours of fun and the activity from a stimulating environment is essential for the good physical and emotional wellbeing of your bird.

BACKYARD CHOOKS - NOT SUCH A SILLY IDEA!

Have you ever thought about owning chooks? They could be more beneficial to your household than you realise.

Most of us enjoy an egg or two for breakfast every now and again, but have you ever thought about the ultimate organic egg, hand picked by you in your own backyard? The average chicken lays around 300 eggs a year. That's breakfast for one for nearly most of the year!

Chickens will do more for you than just lay eggs. They can be good for your garden, your diet and can also help reduce your carbon footprint.

If you have a vegetable garden chickens can actually help your veggies grow. Not only do they scratch around the area picking up slugs and snails, any droppings can be used as fertiliser!

Chickens living on a natural diet of leafy green vegetables, bugs, grubs and grains have been shown to produce nutrient-dense eggs filled with healthy omega-3 fats, fat soluble vitamins and healthy antioxidants. So while feeding your hen the food scraps you throw away, you're also getting the best quality eggs available.

According to waste disposal statistics Australians waste around \$2.64 billion in

fresh produce every year. Having backyard chickens is a great way to reduce your kitchen waste.

Their lively personalities make them great pets; they keep you entertained for hours. Remember that you also need to have the time required for their care. You must provide adequate shelter and protection, not only from the elements but also from predators.

Chickens will thrive in a free-range environment which will require you to have your backyard fenced. Whether you keep your chickens free-range or in a run, you will need a chicken coop. The size of the coop will be dependent on the number of chickens you intend to keep. As they are social creatures, you should keep two minimum.

Coops are available for purchase, ready to assemble or if you fancy a bit of DIY there are lots of innovative ideas and plans online using both new and recycled materials. Even the old kid's fort out the back could be given a new lease on life! It's also worth checking with your local council before starting, in case there are regulations relating to its size and/or location.

Be considerate of your neighbours: they may not be too thrilled with the idea of you

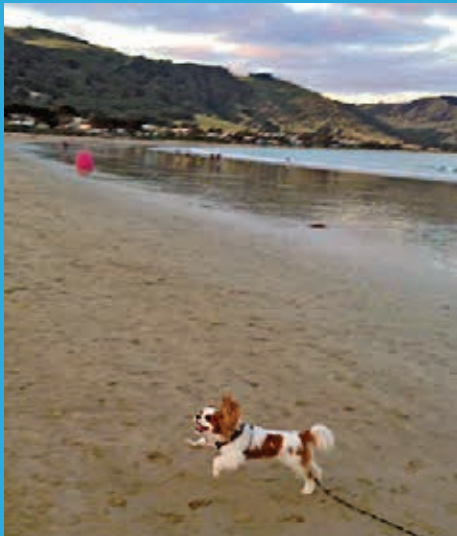
turning your backyard into a mini farm. Cats can cause chooks a lot of stress so make sure any area accessible by your chooks is secure from undesirable visitors.

If you're still not sure if keeping chooks is right for you, ask yourself this: When was the last time your cat not only fed you, but also cleaned up after you as well?!

Finally, before taking that leap into the world of poultry, talk to your vet. There is no better place to obtain information and advice specifically for you and based on your individual situation.



**WE HAVE A
** WINNER! ****



SILVER PET PRINTS PHOTO COMPETITION

Thank you to everyone who entered our play time photo competition. You sent in lots of great photos of your pets enjoying their play time.

The winning photo earns the pet owner a Silver Pet Prints pendant and chain to capture your pet's paw print forever.

Congratulations to Clare who captured this great action shot of Charlie enjoying play time at the beach!

FEEDING TRENDS FOR DOGS AND CATS

It can be quite difficult to work out how best to feed your much loved dog or cat. How do you navigate the pet food aisle and choose the right food for your pet?

There is such a wide range of foods available for purchase, and recent trends in feeding raw or grain free food only add to the confusion.

A number of pet foods promote the fact that they're grain free. Many people believe that because dogs have descended from wolves they are healthier if fed a diet based on raw meat, just as a wolf would eat in the wild. This is not the case, and unless a pet has a specific grain allergy, then grains are indeed a source of nutrients including protein, carbohydrates and vitamins. Over thousands of years, genetic mutations have allowed domestic dogs to adapt to a diet containing more starches. Studies have also shown that grains are rarely a cause of food allergies in pets so there's no need to restrict them on those grounds.

Dogs in particular prefer our foods to their own and some owners like to prepare their pet's meals themselves. This can be challenging because it's difficult to make sure these homemade diets are nutritionally balanced. One study evaluated 200 recipes for dog foods made at home and there were only five that met all the nutrient requirements. This can leave your pet at risk of nutrient deficiencies or excesses.

What about raw foods? Are they better for dogs and cats than dry or canned food?

Because there are many "recipes" for raw pet foods, they can have the same issue with poor nutrient balance as homemade menus but with an added risk to human and animal health. Salmonella and E coli are species of bacteria that can contaminate raw foods and they can make pets very unwell with vomiting and diarrhoea. These bacteria can also be transmitted to people; the elderly, the very young and those with compromised immune systems are particularly at risk of becoming ill.

If you're looking for information on how best to feed your four legged family member, please feel free to ask our veterinarians for advice. They will be very happy to talk to you about the options available that best suit your pet's age, lifestyle and activity level.

1. Axelsson, E., Ratnakumar, A., Arendt, M., Maqbool, K., Webster, M., Perloski, M., Liberg, O., Arnemo, J., Hedhammar, Å. and Lindblad-Toh, K. (2013). The genomic signature of dog domestication reveals adaptation to a starch-rich diet. *Nature*, 495(7441), pp.360-364.
2. Mueller, R., Olivry, T. and Pr elaud, P. (2016). Critically appraised topic on adverse food reactions of companion animals (2): common food allergen sources in dogs and cats. *BMC Vet Res*, 12(1).
3. Stockman, J, Fascetti, AJ, Kass, PH, Larsen, JA.2013. Evaluation of recipes of home-prepared maintenance diets for dogs. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 242(11), 1500-1505.
4. Schlesinger, D. and Joffe, D. (2011). Raw food diets in companion animals: A critical review. *Can Vet J.*, 52(1), pp.50-54.

TAKING CARE OF PET BIRDS IN THE SUMMER

Animals (and people for that matter!) can suffer in the Australian summer heat and pet birds are no exception.

Heat stress, dehydration, and sunstroke can be fatal, and small animals such as birds are especially susceptible. Heat loss is reduced in high humidity, so hot, humid days are especially dangerous.

BIRD PHYSIOLOGY

Most birds have a body temperature of around 105°F (40°C), which is higher than that of mammals. They also eat more than we do for their body size, have a higher metabolic rate, and an energetic lifestyle, all of which generates further body heat.

Although they have no sweat glands, birds are great at regulating their body temperature in other ways. They cool themselves by either physical adaptations, such as having bare areas of skin on the feet, legs, and face, or by behaviour. If they have the opportunity, birds will seek out shade, bath in water or soar at high altitudes to cool off.

SIGNS OF OVER-HEATING

If your pet bird is too hot you might see it breathing rapidly with its beak open (much like panting in some mammals), vibrating the muscles and bones in its throat (known as gular flapping), spreading out its feathers, or sitting on the bottom of the cage appearing weak and listless. Birds have a featherless area underneath their wings, so they aid heat loss by holding their wings away from their body when

they are too hot, allowing air to circulate around the bare skin.

If you see your bird displaying any of these behaviours it may mean they are overheating and possibly suffering from dehydration.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If your pet is displaying signs of heat stress, then you should seek help from your vet. Birds can go downhill fast, and by the time they are showing signs of distress they are already ill, so do not delay in seeking professional help. In the meantime, do what you can to reduce the temperature for them.

Make sure your bird has shade, and access to a bath. Use fans or air conditioning, ensure the room is well ventilated if the bird is indoors and that they are not positioned by a sunny window. Spraying your pet with a water mister can help a great deal, but take care not to scare them. It might also be beneficial to position their cage or perch outside in the shade to allow better air circulation.

The same things that can help a bird in heat distress can also prevent it from



happening in the first place, and, as we all know, prevention is better than cure! If you are feeling the heat, then that means your bird will be too, so do all you can to make summer an enjoyable time for your pet.

1. <http://ornithology.com/ornithology-lectures/7898-2/>
2. <http://birding.about.com/od/birdingbasics/a/howbirdskeepcool.htm>
3. https://www.extension.iastate.edu/cedar/sites/www.extension.iastate.edu/files/cedar/Keeping_Birds_Cool_in_Summer.pdf
4. <http://www.petplace.com/article/birds/general/keeping-your-bird-safe/keeping-your-bird-safe-in-the-summer>
5. http://kb.rspca.org.au/what-can-i-do-in-hot-weather-to-prevent-heatstroke-in-my-pet_353.html
6. <http://www.betterpetsandgardens.com.au/pet-care/birds-and-poultry/keeping-your-bird-cool/>

PRACTICE UPDATE

Fiona Le Surf

We welcome Fiona to our team.

Fiona originally hailed from Western Australia, graduating from Murdoch Uni in 1991. She has also worked in Sydney.

Fiona has been working in and around the New England area for the last 4 years, and will be working full time with us now.

She has worked all her career as a small animal vet so brings a lot of variety of experiences in this field to our clinic

Fiona has a husband, Peter and 2 boys who also enjoy the country living.

She is looking forward to meeting more of our wonderful clients and their pets.

Lisa Borger

Lisa has joined the North Hill Team as a part-time receptionist.

Lisa moved here from Kempsey in early 2006 with husband Chris, and 4 children.

She has worked in a variety of business's including retail Pharmacy, Physio and now with us.

Lisa's brings great retail knowledge to the team, and her warm and friendly manner when dealing with clients is an asset.

Lisa and Ruth will share the front desk control... and we wish them luck.

Ruth McGregor

Ruth has been with North Hill Vets, initially as a client, and then a receptionist, right from the beginning in 2004.

Ruth's family were on the land at Walcha, but she did venture to a life at the Gold Coast for a while when first married.

She has been back in Armidale for a while now and is kept very busy with 2 young boys in primary school, and husband, Peter.

Ruth has fantastic clerical skills, developed over the years, which helps keep our paperwork under control. We thank her for this.

CAT DENTAL CARE

We all know how hard it is to get your pet to anything at all, let alone brush its teeth for good health. But did you know that up to 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats will experience the beginning stages of periodontal disease by the age of three? That means it's time to break out the toothbrushes!

CAT TEETH CLEANING

Don't just jump straight into it at home; you may want to get your cats teeth cleaned



the first time by your veterinarian so they're done professionally. As your cat is unlikely to stay still with its mouth open during the procedure, a scale and polish dental treatment will involve a general anaesthetic.

You can then clean your cats teeth yourself at home, and should examine them on a regular basis keeping them nice and healthy. Stay on the look-out for plaque and tartar; if you're not sure what to look for, ask your veterinarian. They can tell you about reddening of the gums, bad breath and yellow-brown crust (tartar).

There are different types of cat toothpaste available, most with a similar flavour to catfood. Others encourage 'bite down' which makes the paste more effective.

Cats should see their veterinarian twice a year for a check-up, to identify any potential problems early and help ensure your at-home cleaning is doing the trick.