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## OUR VETS

### Dr Sarah Butler

BVSc (Sydney)

### Dr Fiona Le Surf

BSc, BVMS, MVS (Murdoch)

### Dr Craig Bailey

BVSc (Brisbane)

### Dr Hannah McRae

BVSc (Sydney)

## OUR SUPPORT STAFF

### Reception

Jess

### Nursing

Jess, Zoe, Eddie & Cath

All qualified and experienced to advise you on flea treatment plans, worming regimes, food supplies as well as any other questions you may have about the care and welfare of your pet.

## CLINIC HOURS

Opening hours are 8.00am to 5.30pm weekdays, and 9am to 11am on Saturdays.

Consultations are by appointment, so please call the clinic to book in.

## AFTER HOURS SERVICE

We offer a 24 hour emergency service now sharing with Creeklands Vet clinic, 7 days a week.

You will need to ring the emergency mobile number 0407 510 309, or our clinic number 6772 1686, and you will be directed to the vet on duty.

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



## YOUR VET WINTER 2020



## Cat-scratch disease – what you need to know

Cat-scratch disease (CSD) is a bacterial infection that you can catch from your feline friend. However, knowledge and precautionary measures can make all the difference to your risk.

It's believed that up to 44 percent of all cats will carry the fever-causing bacteria, *Bartonella Henselae*, at some stage in their life. Those cats can transmit the bacteria to humans, causing cat-scratch disease. It's estimated that worldwide the disease affects about nine out of every 100,000 people, with 80 percent of those being under 21 years old. Being aware of the condition can make all the difference to its frequency in your household.

### HOW DO CATS GET INFECTED?

Cats can get the bacteria through flea bites, or flea dirt getting into their wounds. If another cat has the bacteria, they can transmit it to your cat through scratching and biting. They can then easily pass the bacteria onto their human companions. If a cat is infected, they only need to scratch or bite you hard enough to puncture your skin, or lick at any open wound you may have, and you're at risk of contracting it.

### HOW TO TELL IF YOUR CAT HAS CSD

Your cat can carry the bacteria for several months without any issues or symptoms, but the disease can sometimes appear when your cat has another illness, trauma, or surgery. In severe cases your cat may suffer from inflammation of the heart, resulting in laboured breathing. It can also cause infection in the mouth, eyes, and urinary tract, and other organs can become inflamed.

### HOW CAN CSD BE PREVENTED?

You can prevent your cat from getting the bacteria by restricting their access to other cats – including strays. Try to prevent fleas by regularly applying a flea product approved by your veterinarian.

You can also teach family members not to play fight with cats in a way that may result in scratches and bites; and limit your children's access to your cat if you suspect the bacteria. If you do get bitten or scratched, you can reduce the risk by cleaning the wound out with soap and running water.

### HAVE YOU CONTRACTED CSD?

If a cat has wounded you, and you have some of the following symptoms, you may have CSD. Usually, within three to ten days of the injury, the wound will become infected and swollen, and a lump or blister will form around the site. You may also have fever, headache, poor appetite and tiredness. One to seven weeks after that, your glands will begin to swell and become painful.

### TREATMENT

Non-prescription medicines can relieve the pain and lower a fever, or your doctor may prescribe antibiotics. In rare cases serious complications can occur, and will require intensive treatment.

If you suspect your cat may be infected, consult your veterinarian for diagnosis and advice; and contact your doctor if you have any of the symptoms.

# The truth is not all **black and white**



For many years, people were led to believe that dogs could only see in black and white. In fact, many people still think that today. In reality however, a dog's eyesight might not be too different from your own.

There has been much speculation over the years regarding what a dog can and can't see. Some people believe they see the same vivid colours as we do, but, more commonly, others think their colour range is limited or non-existent.

The eyes of both humans and dogs operate in a very similar fashion. The components of both human and dog eyes are similar;

however the amounts of these differ. This variance is enough to make what you see different to that of your canine companion.

Both human and dog eyes contain cells in the retinas called cones and rods – both of which are known as photoreceptor cells. When you're in a brightly lit environment, this is where your cone cells work their magic. They are responsible for seeing colour, and function better in bright light. Rod cells, on the other hand, provide no colour vision and function better in low light. They're found around the outer edges of your retinas for use in peripheral vision.

Knowing that both dogs and humans have these cells, it can be challenging to work out why a dog's colour range is considered to be different. However, it all comes down to the numbers of both rods and cones. Human eyes feature more cone cells than that of dogs, whereas dogs have more rod cells. As a result, dogs can see better in low light than humans, but the colours they see are less defined.

Most people have three types of cone cells, whereas those who have colour blindness, and likewise, dogs, only have two. Therefore, people with all three can see all colours on the spectrum, whereas those with two can't. As a result, it's presumed that dogs see colours on a similar level to people with red-green colour blindness. Blue, yellow and grey can all stand out to a dog, but other colours, such as red and green, can all blend into one.

Your dog's perception of colour may not seem like a big deal, but when it comes time to train them, it's important to be aware of this. When it's crucial for your dog to pay attention to you and see you, wear bright blues, yellows, and distinct greys. Avoid other colours that make you blend in with the surroundings, such as green and red. Your dog's colour blindness won't affect its life, but it can play a significant role in how you get your dog to pay attention.

## Crossword Corner

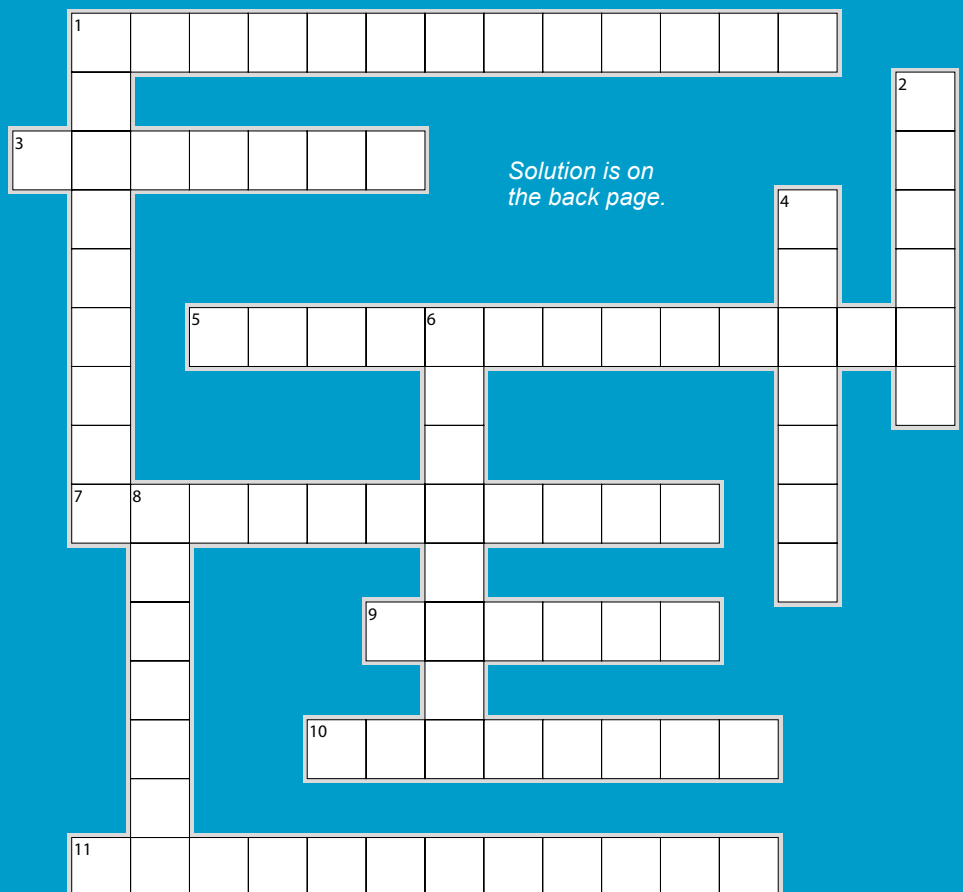
Answers to clues can be found in this edition of Your Vet.

### ACROSS

1. A cell or organ that responds to light
3. Tube that conducts air, or windpipe
5. Meeting and interacting with others in a friendly way
7. Claiming ownership of an area
9. Relating to dogs
10. Range of coloured light
11. Relating to the nervous system

### DOWN

1. Of utmost importance
2. Kind and compassionate
4. Quickness and dexterity
6. Somebody who acts for, or supports others
8. Difficult to find or catch



## Putting **your pets** first

Australia has one of the highest pet ownership rates in the world, but that doesn't mean everyone is ready for everything it entails.

When you first decide to adopt a pet, there are many practical things to consider; from choosing a breed and gender, to registration and vet care. However, there is a lot more involved in pet ownership, so have you asked yourself if you're ready for a pet?



If you decide to include an animal in your life do you know what makes it happy? Do you know how to give your pet a fulfilling and meaningful existence? It's easy to make your new pet fit into your lifestyle, but you also have to fit into theirs.

Many domesticated animals retain their basic instincts, no matter how deeply buried those may be now. Even though pets rely on their owners to care for them, they also need the freedom to do what comes naturally to them.

Take a cat, for example. Some people want their cat to be their faithful companion, but this can disrupt a cat's natural instincts. Cats tend to prefer brief interactions with humans, and are often elusive and independent. They also like to hunt, hide, and explore. Cats are territorial and prefer to stay in the same place, so if you move house or take your cat on holiday, you aren't allowing them to act naturally.

Showering your pet with hugs, kisses, snacks and toys can make you feel better, but showing your love for them this way doesn't always cover all their needs.

## How to make your **pet happy**

Every pet has five welfare needs, which you should aspire to fulfil to the best of your ability.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Providing a suitable place to live.

### **DIET**

Supplying the best food for your pet, and the right amount.

### **BEHAVIOUR**

Letting your pet behave normally and naturally.

### **COMPANY**

Providing companionship for pets that prefer a connection with others.

### **HEALTH**

Protecting your pets from pain, disease, and injury.

If you would like to know how to help your pet live a happy, healthy and fulfilled life, consult your local vet — they are expert at understanding all of your pet's needs.



## Is that **dress** causing **stress**?

Many pet owners love dressing up their pets for different occasions, but how does your pet feel about it?

When you've found a cute outfit for your dog, cat, horse, or other animal, it's tempting to put it on them for the inevitable social media fame to follow. People love seeing pets dressed up in outfits and costumes, and there is no shortage of retail shops that stock them.

However, before you pick out the perfect poncho for your pooch or tutu for your



tarantula, it's worth factoring in their comfort level. Will your pet appreciate being poked and prodded into their new attire?

Even if you're only putting a costume on your pet for a photo before removing it, it's paramount that you focus on the signs of your pet being uncomfortable or distressed. Take note of their body movements. Are they tensing up and refusing to move? Are they trying to shake the costume off? Is their tail between their legs?

Dogs, in particular, use their body to communicate, and when they're prevented from doing this they can get frightened. Read the signs, and if they don't align with a happy dog, then remove the costume immediately. The same rule applies to cats and other critters. If they are not happy, then it's kinder to cancel the photoshoot and let them be comfortable in the skin they're in.

### **WHEN DRESSED IS BEST**

There are going to be times when dressing up your pet is actually beneficial for them. Hairless dogs and cats, for example, can benefit from layers of protection from the sun and cold weather. Dogs with minimal body hair, such as greyhounds, may also be warmer with a dog jacket. Breathable,

waterproof jackets for horses are also necessary in colder climates. Older pets who suffer from joint stiffness and arthritis may also find relief from a suitable jacket.

### **HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST CLOTHING**

If clothing is important for their warmth and comfort, then make sure you choose the right apparel for their needs. Pay attention to the type of material. Anything itchy can be a significant source of irritation for any pet, and anything too warm or lacking breathability can cause them to overheat. Anything your pet can chew, such as pom-poms or buttons, should be removed in advance to avoid choking.

Clothing should just cover their body, not their face as this could cause trouble breathing. The piece of clothing should fit snugly against their body to reduce the risk of tripping them up, but not too tight as to restrict their normal movements or behaviour. Make sure you choose outfits and costumes that have been made for pets – and with their health and safety in mind.

Pets don't need outfits or costumes to look adorable. If you are going to treat your animal to their own wardrobe for health reasons, be careful with your garment choices. When in doubt, consult your local vet clinic.

# Say **no** to prong collars

It's not always easy to train a new puppy or dog, but some methods are better than others.

For those who are new to dog training, you'll likely face some struggles. Puppies and dogs don't always know what you expect of them, and it can take time, patience, encouragement, and reinforcement for them to understand.

The market is full of different training tools to guide you, but unfortunately, some of these don't promote the right behaviour, and are not recommended by most training professionals. One of these tools is a prong collar; it's paramount that you're well informed about what it is and why it's not the best option for your dog.

A prong collar, also known as a constriction or pinch collar, has metal prongs with blunt ends on the inside. These prongs are designed to press into a dog's loose neck skin when pressure is applied. Many people think prong collars can correct poor walking behaviour or pulling, but they are not regarded as a useful or humane tool for doing so.

Prong collars are illegal to import into Australia but are only forbidden to use in Victoria. As

such, importers can purchase them in pieces to rebuild and sell. RSPCA Australia's stance on these collars is that they have the potential to cause injury, pain, and suffering. Some dogs have suffered from soft tissue damage, strangulation, eye and neurological problems, and tracheal damage.

The use of a prong collar for training promotes negative reinforcement with punishment. This can result in damaged animal-human relationships with long-lasting consequences. More humane methods such as rewards-based training are considered better options. Dogs are ignored for bad behaviour, but rewarded with treats, pats, and toys when they choose good behaviour.

Over time, dogs learn that bad actions do not result in something for them to enjoy, but good ones will. Through such methods, a valuable relationship with trust and love can be maintained.

Dog training takes patience, hard work, and dedication, but there are plenty of beneficial tools out there to assist. If you require a helping hand, contact your local vet or training institute for advice or recommendations.



## PRACTICE UPDATE

Well, where to start? Drought, fires, Covid-19 and a Parvo outbreak. We sure are living the dream here at North Hill Vet Clinic.

Like everyone, Coronavirus and lockdown threw us some curveballs. Deemed an essential service, we are committed to providing ongoing care to your animals, albeit in slightly changed circumstances.

Our staff and client health and well-being are paramount, and as such we have reduced access to our building, aiming for no more than one client inside at any one time.

We also have a 'sneeze screen' on the reception desk and have set up an 'air-lock' room at the rear of the building, which some of you may remember as a grooming room in days gone-by. This room can be used for drop-off and collection of patients and products with no direct contact.

We are also able to do animal and food/medication pickups and delivery if need be. Some services that may be rescheduled to a later date include grooming, nail trims, pre-purchase exams and health checks.

Well timed rain in the Summer/Autumn period saw a nice rebound in paddock coverage, and with it came grass seeds lodged in pets' eyes, noses, ears, armpits, paws and, ahem, even vulvas! We'll be retrieving them for some time to come, although sometimes, try as we might, they remain elusive and difficult to locate.

Parvo has reared its very ugly head on top of everything else, striking down puppies and adult dogs, in town and on properties.

Vaccination is the ONLY effective way to prevent this disease, and in the face of an outbreak, it is imperative that we follow the World Small Animal Vet Association recommendations of 3 vaccines for puppies, finishing at 16 weeks followed by annual boosters.

In all cases we have seen, there has been an incomplete or non-existent vaccination history. Please speak to us about your individual animal needs.

## Spice up your dog's **exercise regime**

Just saying the word "walk" is often enough to send your dog into fits of excitement, but do you think they might tire of the same old routes? Spice up their exercise regime, and yours, by giving your dog some options.

While walking your dog is mostly for the benefit of their physical health, it's also a chance for them to experience sights and sounds beyond their own backyard. However, over time, both you and your dog may tire of the same old route, and it may benefit you both to have a change. Here are a few ways to add variety to your pet's exercise regime.

### TRY AN OBSTACLE COURSE

While obstacle courses aren't suitable for all dogs, many can benefit from challenging their agility and fitness. You can create your own course at home with logs, tunnels, poles and other items for them to climb, jump, or weave around. You can also incorporate some into your walk by making them run around a tree, or jump over a fallen log. They're sure to enjoy the change of pace.

### PLAY FETCH

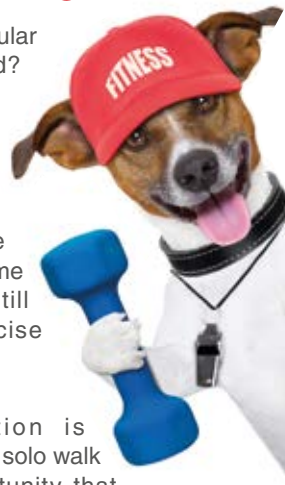
If your dog loves a game of fetch, but finding the time to dedicate to it is challenging, why

not swap your regular walk for it instead? You can spend the same amount of time throwing a ball or toy for your dog to run after. They'll be taking part in a game they love while still getting the exercise they require.

### DOG PARK

Dog socialisation is essential, but on a solo walk it's not an opportunity that often arises. Instead of heading around the block, take your dog to a dog park instead. Here they can interact and play with other dogs. However, if your dog struggles with socialisation, it's a good idea to consult your vet or a professional trainer for advice first.

Exercising your dog is essential, but you can do more for them than just taking them around the block. Get inventive with your exercise options and let your dog experience something new every now and again.



ACROSS: 1. PHOTORECEPTOR 3. TRACHEA 5. SOCIALISATION  
DOWN: 1. PARAMOUNT 2. HUMANE 4. AGILITY 6. ADVOCATE 8. ELUSIVE  
7. TERRITORIAL 9. CANINE 10. SPECTRUM 11. NEUROLOGICAL



**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this newsletter is for educational purposes only, and is not intended as a substitute for sound health care advice. We are not liable for any adverse effects or consequences resulting from the use of any information, suggestions, or procedures presented. Always consult a qualified professional in all matters pertaining to your pet health.

How well do you **WORD SEARCH?**