



CASTLE VETS PETS

Newsletter – September 2024

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New Faces



Mandi Goddard – Small Animal Department Manager

Mandi relocated to Devon from East Anglia in 2023, having worked in the veterinary industry for 17 years for an independent practice in Suffolk.

Mandi has 3 cats at home, Binx, Bobbie and rescue cat Mr Flashy Pants!



Caroline Sapietis – Small Animal Head Receptionist

Caroline relocated with her family to Cornwall in 2021 from Kent, where she worked as an RVN in small animal practice.

She enjoys spending her spare time exploring the countryside with her two Labradors, as well as gardening. She also has a cat and chickens.



Isabelle Orrell – Veterinary Surgeon

Izzy grew up in South Devon and graduated from the University of Liverpool in 2024. In her spare time, she loves to ski, ice skate, ride her horse Tudor and bake cakes.

Autumn Dangers

Autumn is a wonderful season, both for humans and our pets. With the arrival of cooler temperatures and crisp mornings many of us will be keen to get out with our dogs and enjoy some muddy woodland walks. Unfortunately, not all of this season's offerings are safe for inquisitive dogs. When out on an autumnal dog walk it is helpful to know what hazards to look out for so that you can keep them safe and well.

- **Acorns** are poisonous to dogs if eaten. They can cause an upset tummy and because they are hard and sometimes spikey, they can cause damage or a blockage in the stomach. Although fatalities are rare, if your dog has eaten acorns, it could still pose a serious threat and you should contact your vet straight away. In general, the more acorns eaten, the sicker your dog may be.
- **Conkers**, like acorns, are very poisonous to dogs if chewed and eaten and can also cause stomach blockages. Conkers contain a chemical toxic to dogs called aesculin. This chemical is found in all parts of the horse chestnut tree, including the bark and leaves. As with acorns, you should contact your vet straight away if you think your dog has eaten a conker.
- **Toadstools** come in all sorts of shapes, colours and sizes. Some types of wild fungi are edible, but it is often very hard to distinguish these from the poisonous types. If your dog were to eat an unknown fungus it could make them very poorly. Some types may only cause a mild stomach upset, while others can be deadly. If your dog eats an unknown wild fungi take them to the vet immediately. Symptoms of poisoning can vary depending on the type of mushroom consumed and can be anything between minutes, days, or in rare cases weeks. **Never wait for symptoms to appear.**
- **Fallen fruits** can be tempting for dogs to eat. As autumn sets in, trees drop their fruit and could make your dog sick if eaten after they have begun to ferment or have gone mouldy. Some seeds, pips and fruit stones (apples, cherries, plums etc) contain toxins that could also make your dog ill.
- **Rotting leaves** are the perfect breeding ground for bacteria, fungus and mould to grow. If your dog loves playing in leaf piles, they are at risk of consuming that bacteria when they later lick themselves, so make sure you wash your dog down after they have been jumping through fallen leaves.
- **Fireworks** are not just a problem to dogs because of the loud noise they make, they also contain chemicals which are toxic to dogs if chewed on or ingested. It is therefore



imperative to keep fireworks out of your dog's reach including any spent fireworks which could be lying on the ground. If you suspect your dog has ingested fireworks, call us immediately.

Fireworks! Be Prepared!



Firework season is nearly upon us again and approximately two thirds of our pets are scared of fireworks. So how can you help your pet deal with this potentially scary time of year?

Monitor your animal for signs of distress:

Signs of stress in dogs include:

- Increase or decrease in resting
- Yawning
- Lip Licking
- Head turns
- Hiding
- Barking
- Trembling
- Seeking out people/other dogs
- Panting
- Salivating
- Elimination of urine/faeces
- Vomiting
- Freezing
- Fidgeting

Signs of stress in cats include:

- Excessive grooming and scratching
- Meowing
- Urinating outside the litter tray
- Hiding
- Running away and refusing to eat
- Darting around the house
- Acting aggressively towards owners
- Aggressive to other pets

Be prepared:

Natural calming products such as Calmex, Zylkene or Pet Remedy can be used. These can be very supportive. We also advise the use of *pheromones*. Adaptil and Feliway are synthetic copies of natural pheromones and have been scientifically proven to provide support in challenging and stressful situations, including during firework season.

ThunderShirts can also be helpful, a bit like swaddling an infant. They act by applying constant gentle pressure to the upper body which can release calming hormones.

We no longer recommend the use of older classes of sedatives as they have no beneficial effect on an animal's emotional state, and just affect their mobility. This results in a terrified animal with no ability to do anything about it! A secondary effect of sedatives is that they reduce inhibition (a bit like alcohol does in people). Reduced inhibition has caused dogs to attack (and sometimes kill) other animals in the household.

We do, however, have other drugs available that provide effective short-term support. These are prescription only products so a discussion with your vet will be necessary.

On the day:

These are Castle Vets top tips for keeping your animals safe and helping them to cope

- Walk dogs before it gets dark and make sure they are on a lead with a well-fitting harness or collar.
- Make sure collar tags and microchip details are up to date.
- Ensure all windows and doors are shut and close any curtains.
- Lock or block cat flaps to stop pets escaping.
- Switch on a television or radio to drown out some of the noise.
- Don't leave your pets alone in the house if possible.
- Provide hiding places (such as a den, lined with used blankets or clothes).
- Provide activities that involve licking, chewing and sniffing (such as Licki Mat, snuffle mat, stuffed Kongs) which are all calming behaviours for dogs. Start using these before the fearful event so that your pet becomes familiar with them.
- Let your animals hide if they want to - don't try and force them to go in or come out.
- Keep in mind that cats feel more comfortable in high resting places.
- Try not to react to the fireworks or show concern.
- Stroke and talk to your pets in a calm manner (if they are looking for interaction).
- Provide extra litter trays for cats.
- Never punish or get angry with your pet.
- Never take your pet to a firework display.
- If you have rabbits or guinea pigs either bring them indoors or cover hutches with a blanket but make sure there is sufficient ventilation. A cardboard box with holes in filled with hay placed in the hutch makes a great hiding place.



Be proactive:

Animals that are scared of fireworks can also become increasingly reactive to other sounds that are similar - such as thunder, doors slamming and gun shots. Desensitisation programmes are very effective for both cats and dogs who find loud noises stressful. These programmes need to be started in a period when it is unlikely that they will be exposed to fireworks, so we recommend starting this in Feb/March time. We have a qualified behaviourist on the team that can discuss this further with you.

There is increasing evidence of a link between noise phobias and other health conditions including chronic pain. An appointment with your vet is recommended initially to rule out other health conditions, especially if this is a new phobia.

For more information about any of the products mentioned or to make a vet appointment contact Castle Vets on 01566 772211

Responsible Use of Antibiotics

Antibiotic resistance is a global health issue, and everybody needs to help to keep antibiotics working!

The veterinary profession is coming together again this November to hold an Antibiotic Amnesty. Castle Veterinary Group is taking part, and throughout November 2024 we are asking pet owners to return any unused or leftover antibiotic medications to us. This will allow correct and safe disposal of the antibiotic medications, which will avoid contamination of the environment and help prevent antimicrobial resistance due to inappropriate disposal. The campaign is organised by RUMA CA&E (Responsible Use of Medicines Alliance Companion Animals & Equine) whose aim is to reduce antibiotic use and help protect important medicines for future human and animal use.



Please drop off any unused medications to the practice. You can hand them in to a vet, nurse or the reception team. This medication might be left-over from a recent prescription, antibiotics that you didn't need or out-of-date medication.

Let's keep antibiotics working, together!

DID YOU KNOW?

UNOPENED, UNUSED AND OUT OF DATE MEDICATION CAN BE RETURNED TO US FOR SAFE DISPOSAL.



Liquid medications - Ideally, these should be placed in a sealed, leak proof bag. Please ensure the tops or lids are secured tightly on any spot-on pipettes, bottles or jars.

Unused tablets - These should remain in their original packaging (blister packs) if possible; otherwise, tablets of the same type should be gathered together and placed in a sealable, child proof container.

We encourage our clients to bring unused medication with them to their appointments rather than making an additional trip. We are passionate about protecting our environment and this is why we are working hard to encourage our clients to dispose safely of their pet's unused medications.



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