

Seasonal Itches!

As the weather improves and we head out of lockdown, spare a thought for our pets who often start to itch more – here we look at a couple of possible causes:

Skin allergies are reasonably common in dogs, especially at this time of year. Pollens from plants, grasses and trees irritate the skin. The most common places for sore spots to develop are where pollens land – typically the feet, stomach, armpits, groin and ears. Underlying skin allergies are a very common cause of ear disease (see back page). Affected areas are usually pink and variably itchy.



Allergic irritation and foot chewing in a dog.



Fleas are another seasonal culprit! They can be found in abundance on wild and domesticated animals, jumping effortlessly onto your pet. Affected pets will often groom excessively, making fleas paradoxically hard to find!

So, if your pet is showing signs of skin problems, come and see us for a check-up! We can check for fleas (and a range of other possible parasites) and advise you on the best preventative products. Diagnosis of allergies is more tricky, but blood tests and skin testing can help us identify the allergens. It is usually difficult to *cure* allergies, but modern treatments can be very effective in making pets less itchy.

Preventative treatments are covered under our Health Care Plan, advise to look on our website www.mavenvets.co.uk/health-club for more information or call us on **0208 3372214**.

Should I have my pet neutered?



As life slowly starts to return to normal after a tumultuous year, one of the things to consider as a pet owner is the subject of neutering. In fact – as well as preventing unwanted pregnancies, there are a wide range of other benefits to neutering and we've outlined some of these below:

Dogs: In female dogs, heat periods (or seasons) usually occur twice a year and last about three weeks. In both sexes, the urge to mate can lead to roaming, which can result in them becoming lost, injured or worse. There are also health benefits to neutering such as a large reduction in the risk of them developing mammary (breast) cancer if the neutering is done at a young age and also the prevention of otherwise life-threatening infections in their uterus, which occurs in around 1 in 4 entire bitches.

In male dogs, castration eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and makes prostate problems less likely as well. Also, for some it can have very positive effects on their behaviour.



Cats: Female cats will start their first season from as early as four months of age and may come into heat every three weeks during the breeding season (in the spring and summer months). By neutering your cat early, as well as avoiding unwanted litters of kittens, you will also reduce the risk of mammary cancer later in life, which is often aggressive in cats.

Un-neutered male cats are more commonly involved in fights, putting them at increased risk of viruses such as FIV and Feline Leukaemia. They also mark their territory by "spraying" objects inside and outside your house with strong smelling urine.

As you can see there are a wide range of benefits to neutering your dogs, cats, rabbits and guinea pigs. Contact us for further information or to book your pet in for an operation.

Clients will benefit from a 10% discount off neutering when part of the Health Care Plan.



What about 'small furrries'?

Guinea Pigs are sociable animals and should be kept in groups or pairs; males reach sexual maturity at 9-10 weeks, females even earlier at 4-6 weeks so it is essential that the male, at least, is neutered to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Housing guinea pigs with rabbits is not recommended.

Rabbits will also generally benefit from being neutered. Both sexes make much better, calmer pets and are also much more likely to live peacefully with others. Entire rabbits will often fight, even if related. Also over 80% of older un-neutered female rabbits may suffer with, and often die from, uterine cancer.

Don't get caught out by Kennel Cough!



As the weather improves and pets and their owners get out and about more, so the risk of Kennel Cough increases. In fact – wherever dogs meet (out on walks, at the beach, training classes, dog shows and of course boarding kennels), this highly contagious cough is readily spread.

More correctly called "infectious tracheo-bronchitis" the condition can involve several viral components, plus a bacterium – *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. It causes a harsh cough, an inflamed throat and sometimes nasal discharge. The signs can be dramatic, and it is not uncommon for owners to become concerned their pets have something stuck in their throats. The cough is often self-limiting, but can still persist for several weeks.

To give your dog the best protection against Kennel Cough, a vaccine is available to reduce the risk of developing the disease and reduce clinical signs. This is given *in addition* to your pet's standard vaccines. Please contact our helpful team for further information.

Our opening hours

Monday – Friday 8am-8pm

Saturday 9am-4pm

Sunday 10am-2pm

In an Emergency day or night – call us on 0208 337 2214

www.mavenvets.co.uk

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Cat friendly corner

It may seem hard to believe cats feel stressed when they have such a care free life, however just the same as us they do. Cats are incredibly good at hiding the fact that something is in fact wrong. Changes in their usual pattern and daily routine can be the first clues that something isn't right;

- Your cat may have previously happily sat with you on the sofa and is now suddenly quite, withdrawn and instead is now choosing to hide under the bed.

- You might notice they have started over grooming, constantly licking their fur more than usual and possibly even pulling fur out to the point that bald patches have appeared.
- Your usual hungry cat is now not eating as they previously were and in some cases not eating at all. This is a real tell tail sign that something isn't right.

Another common way cats show signs of stress is in their toileting behaviour. You might start finding accidents in unusual places and often there are simple adaptations that can be made. If the litter tray is shared with another cat in the same household this can create stress.

Cats are solitary creatures and they do like their own privacy and separate areas. With two or more cats in the same home the ideal situation is two trays plus one extra to avoid any conflicts with toileting. Trays should ideally be kept in quiet areas, away from noisy household appliances such as washing machines or dishwashers and also busy areas of the home. Cats who don't live in the same household but come into their territory can also be a stress concern. For this reason litter trays should not be in view of windows or doors where another cat could be looking in from.

Food and water bowls should be kept separate so there is no risk of contamination.. Cats are creatures of habit and do like the day to day routine to stay the same. Any change of litter tray and type of litter can also lead to accidents. Cats use urine as a scent signals, scent marking is very different than choosing to urinate to empty their whole bladder.

Any concerns relating to unusual toileting behaviour or sudden change in your cats behaviour which is concerning you, should be discussed with your Veterinary Surgeon to determine if there is a medical condition or if in fact this is behavioural, which will need further investigation as to what may be worrying your cat.

Please see our website for further advice and tips. You can also speak to one of our Veterinary Surgeons or Veterinary Nurses by calling us on **0208 337 2214** or email info@mavenvets.co.uk

By Gemma Hewitt RVN



As we head out of lockdown, and at long last start to embrace our new-found freedoms, we can also (hopefully!) look forward to some beautiful summer weather with warm sunny days and balmy BBQ evenings. But we do also need to consider our pets, who can often find the warmer summer months quite a challenging time.

The dangers of some foods such as **corn on the cob** and **bones** from BBQs.

Keeping it cool – it is vital to ensure your pet keeps cool in hot weather. Dogs should only be walked early or late in the day to avoid heat stroke. If you have space, dogs love cooling down in a paddling pool. Frozen ice treats are also a good way of cooling your dog down on a hot day. Remember, **NEVER** leave your pet in a warm car – with their furry coats they can over-heat extremely rapidly.



Guinea pigs and **rabbits** are also at risk of heat stroke and it is vitally important that they have access to lots of shade at all times, plus ample cool water – preferably in a bowl (not a bottle).

UV Alert! Cats with white noses and white ear tips are at risk of getting these areas sunburnt and this can lead to cancerous changes. High factor special pet safe sun creams applied to the at risk (white) areas, helps to minimise this risk.



Ear tip of a cat showing early cancerous changes

Flystrike is a very serious problem. Rabbit rear ends often become damp and this moist area attracts flies, which lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch out into maggots which can cause life threatening infections. Rabbit rear ends should be inspected daily for fly eggs and maggots, and soiled bedding should be cleaned out daily. Additionally, there is also a preventative treatment which can be of help – please contact us for more information.



Tick alert! It's important to check your pet after every walk to spot if any **ticks** have become attached. These can be anywhere – around the head, under the belly or in armpits. Ticks can be removed using a special tick device or in the surgery. There are a range of tablets, collars and spot-on products to kill ticks. Using prescription strength veterinary only medication (which very rapidly kills ticks) is key to preventing a range of deadly diseases that ticks can transmit.



Rabbits: don't get caught on the hop!



Just like other pets, rabbits benefit from regular vaccinations and health checks to keep them fit and well. Did you know they can be **vaccinated** against two potentially fatal infectious diseases?

Myxomatosis is a viral infection spread by blood sucking insects such as rabbit fleas and mosquitoes. This is a horrible disease and can lead to blindness, difficulty eating and often death.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is another highly contagious and deadly viral disease. The virus is spread both by direct contact between rabbits, or via contaminated hutches, bedding or food. Symptoms include loss of appetite, lethargy, nose bleeds and sudden death. There is now a new deadly strain of VHD, called VHD-2.

We recommend vaccinating your bunnies against all of these horrible diseases and can advise you on how to do this most effectively, just give us a call!