

# the latest

news from maven veterinary care



## Winter Hazards!



With the colder weather setting in, it's a good idea to start making plans to avoid some Christmas calamities and keep our pets healthy throughout the festive season. Here are some top tips:

**Winter walks:** Although the weather can be miserable, it is still important to ensure dogs get their walks. Make the most of the shorter days by playing games while you are out to give your pet mental as well as physical stimulation and short coated breeds like greyhounds and whippets often benefit from wearing coats. Take care though in snowy or icy conditions, as both can ball up in hairy paws and be painful. Also bad for feet is grit, which can really irritate the skin.



**Outdoor pets:** Rabbits and guinea pigs should ideally be housed in a heated garage, shed, or brought indoors during colder weather. Ensure they have plenty of warm bedding and that their water supply is refilled twice daily. Check your small pets at least once a day to confirm they are bright, eating and well. If you have a rabbit or guinea pig who lives alone, now is the ideal time to think about getting a friend of the same species so they have someone to cuddle up with!

**Festive alert!** Items such as string, tinsel, and turkey bones should be kept well out of reach, as ingestion can lead to intestinal blockages and may require life-saving surgery. Similarly, broken baubles or light decorations pose a significant risk if chewed or swallowed. During the festive period, we also see an increase in cases involving pets consuming harmful foods such as chocolate, Christmas cake, and mince pies. These can all cause serious illness. For further information, please speak to a member of our practice team who will be happy to help!

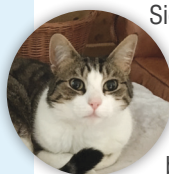
## Arthritis – is your pet affected?



With the onset of cooler, winter weather, many owners begin to notice subtle signs that their pets may be struggling with arthritis. Also called degenerative joint disease, arthritis is a painful and debilitating condition caused by inflammation and damage to

the joints. It can affect all species and breeds, most commonly appearing in older pets – but it can strike at any age.

Arthritis most commonly affects the synovial joints, such as the hips, knees, and elbows. These joints allow free movement between the ends of the bones. When this cartilage becomes worn, pitted, or cracked – whether through general wear and tear, injury, or joint malformations like hip or elbow dysplasia – the underlying bone is exposed, leading to pain, inflammation, and stiffness.



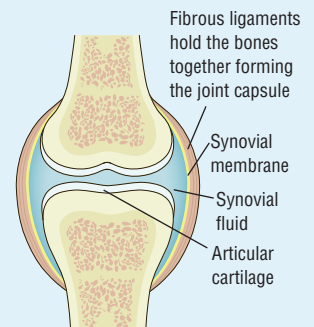
Signs of arthritis can vary. Dogs may show lameness, stiffness after rest, reluctance to climb stairs and a general slowing down on walks. Cats often jump less, spend more time sleeping, or may struggle to reach their litter trays. Some pets may also become quieter or grumpier due to ongoing pain.

Arthritis is usually diagnosed using a combination of a clinical examination (looking for stiffness, pain and roughness in the joints), plus a history of changes compatible with the disease. X-rays can also be very helpful in assessing the joints.

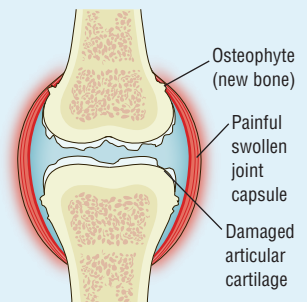
To help your pets with sore joints, especially in the winter, make sure they always sleep on a deep, soft bed and keep the ambient temperatures warm. A key consideration is **weight loss** for any pets carrying excess weight, as this hugely impacts on the joints. Many pets also benefit from **anti-inflammatory medication** to reduce the pain, plus **dietary supplements** are often beneficial as well. Many arthritic pets struggle with long **walks**, so little and often is the key.

So – if you are concerned your pet may be struggling with arthritis, please come and talk to us!

### JOINT ANATOMY



Healthy synovial joint with smooth articular cartilage



Arthritic synovial joint with damaged articular cartilage

## Season's Greetings from All at Maven Vets!

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the whole team at Maven Vets!**

We hope your pets stay happy and healthy over the festive season, but if you do need us, we're here to help. You can reach us as usual on **0208 337 2214**. If we're closed, your call will be directed to our trusted out-of-hours emergency provider, **Vets Now**.

### Christmas and New Year Opening Hours:

<b>Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December</b>	... OPEN 8am – 7pm
<b>Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Day)</b>	... CLOSED*
<b>Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December (Boxing Day)</b>	... CLOSED*
<b>Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December</b>	... OPEN 9am – 4pm – Normal hours resume
<b>Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December (New Year's Eve)</b>	... OPEN 8am – 7pm
<b>Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January (New Year's Day)</b>	... CLOSED*
<b>Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January</b>	... OPEN 8am onwards – Normal hours resume

\*During closed periods, emergency care is available via **Vets Now**.

### 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](http://www.mavenvets.co.uk)

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609-613 London Road, North Cheam, Surrey, SM3 9DF



## Can you pinch an inch?

It's easy to see why, when the weather turns cold and wet, both pets and owners are more inclined to stay cosy indoors rather than head out for a walk! This is a problem because while it's all too easy to gain weight, losing it again is much harder!

With obesity becoming increasingly common, it's a good idea to look objectively at our pets and see if they have gained a few pounds. In a healthy pet with an ideal condition score, the ribs should be able to be felt but not seen, and there should be an obvious 'waist'. By contrast, if you can pinch an inch or more, and if your pet's tum sags down and bulges out, then a diet may be in order!

Carrying extra weight places extra demands on virtually all the organs of the body. Long term, this can have health risks since carrying excess weight can cause or worsen a range of conditions including skin, heart, respiratory and joint disease (see front page). Your pet may also be more prone to develop problems such as raised blood pressure, diabetes and pancreatitis.

There are simple ways to check your pet's body condition score. For both dogs and cats, you should be able to feel their ribs under a thin layer of fat without pressing hard. Viewed from above, they should have a defined waist behind the ribcage, and from the side, an abdominal tuck rather than a sagging belly.

If you're concerned that your pet may be getting a little portly, we're here to help. Our team can assess your pet's condition, rule out any medical causes such as an under-active thyroid gland, and advise on a healthy target weight. To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of a specially formulated calorie controlled diet (often down to around  $\frac{2}{3}$  their previous calorie intake) and more exercise. All pets need regular exercise, and increased walks, more frequent play, or increased access to outdoors are all of help.

Preventing weight gain in the first place is always easier than losing it. Measuring meals accurately, choosing a diet appropriate for your pet's age and lifestyle, keeping treats to a minimum, and avoiding table scraps can all help. Making mealtimes more interactive by using puzzle feeders or slow bowls can also slow eating and make feeding more enjoyable. And as the weather improves, try to encourage more activity – longer walks, extra playtime, or more opportunities to explore outdoors can all make a difference.

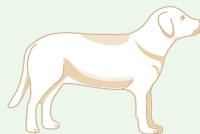
The good news is that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. So, if your pet has gained weight, or seems to have slowed down, then why not give us a call – we are here to help!

### IDEAL WEIGHT



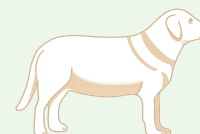
Outline of ribs can be easily felt through a slight fat cover

### OVER WEIGHT



Ribs difficult to feel through a moderate fat cover

### OBESE



Ribs very difficult to feel and cannot be seen through thick fat cover

## WINTER CAT CARE TIPS FROM MAVEN VETS



### INDOOR COMFORT

Cats may be less keen to venture outdoors in cold weather, so make sure they have everything they need inside:

- **Litter trays are essential** – even for cats who usually use the toilet outside. This helps prevent urinary issues, including potentially serious bladder blockages in male cats.
- In **multi-cat households**, provide **one tray per cat plus one extra**. Place trays in **quiet, low-traffic areas**, away from noisy appliances and busy walkways.

### HYDRATION

Outdoor water sources like puddles and bird baths may freeze, so:

- Ensure your cat has **access to fresh water indoors**.
- Consider a **cat water fountain**, as many cats prefer running water.
- Keep **food and water bowls separate**, and away from litter trays – cats instinctively avoid eating near their water source due to the risk of contaminating their food.

### PREVENTING BOREDOM

With more time spent indoors, cats need stimulation to stay mentally and physically healthy, it is important for them to have things to entertain themselves, either on their own or with their owner:

- Rotate a selection of toys to keep things interesting.
- Cats enjoy **short, frequent play sessions**.
- Choose toys that mimic prey – small, textured items with fur, feathers, or catnip are ideal.

### OUTDOOR SAFETY

- Try to **keep cats indoors after dark** – they may see well, but drivers often don't. Road traffic accidents are more common in winter.
- Outdoor cats may seek warmth in dangerous places like **car bonnets or wheel arches**. Always check your vehicle before driving.

### WINTER HAZARDS

- **Antifreeze** (containing ethylene glycol) is **highly toxic** to cats – even a small amount ingested from grooming can be fatal.
- **Grit and salt** used on roads can also be harmful if licked off paws or fur.



If you have any concerns or need emergency support this winter, please contact us on **0208 337 2214**. We're here to help keep your pets safe and well this season.

By Gemma Hewitt RVN

## Be sure to insure!



Pet insurance is something we strongly advise all owners to consider for their pets. Veterinary bills are often unexpected and can quickly mount up over time, so having a good insurance policy can relieve the worry of affording your pet's care – whether it's a one-off accident or a long-term condition such as a skin, heart, or joint problem.

There are several types of pet insurance policies available, including **time-limited cover** (typically providing 12 months of protection), **money-limited policies** (covering up to a set amount), and **lifetime cover** (where the allowance renews each year). As you can see there are a wide choice of policies and it's important to consider which option best suits your needs. We strongly recommend insuring your pet, since having appropriate cover aims to offer you **peace of mind** that treatment decisions are made based on your pet's needs, rather than cost. For further information, don't hesitate to give us a call – we are here to help!

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