Welcome to the latest issue of the Heathfield Vets magazine!

Spotting the early signs of Heatstroke saves lives

Delightful donkeys, not just ‘small horses’!

Diagnosing and treating FELINE HYPERTHYROIDISM

www.heathfieldvets.co.uk
In this issue we take a look at hyperthyroidism in cats, including how to spot the early signs and ensure that your cat receives prompt and effective treatment for this debilitating condition. You can find out more on page 4. There’s some sound advice to help you take good care of your donkey on pages 6&7, and we look at some of the common health problems that they can encounter.

As summer finally arrives, we’ve also got some top tips for avoiding heatstroke. This condition can be fatal, so spotting the early signs and acting quickly is vital. You can find out what to look for, and what to do in our article on page 5.

We now have an effective new treatment option at the practice - laser therapy. This non-invasive, relaxing therapy can be used to treat and provide relief for a wide range of conditions, and we’ll be starting to recommend it to all our patients who we feel will benefit - there’s much more information on page 9.

Our Star Pet this issue is George - a Springer Spaniel who came off somewhat worse for wear in an altercation with his housemates. With continued treatment and support, both from the Heathfield team and his family at home, George bore his injuries throughout with a waggy tail, and he has now made a full recovery. You can read his story on page 10.

And as usual, we have plenty of special offers for you, and you can find more details on each of these at the back of the magazine.

We hope you find this edition of Tracks both interesting and informative, and we’d love to hear your thoughts, as well as updates on our patients’ progress, news and photos of your own pets.

If you have any suggestions for stories, or want to tell us about your own ‘star pet’, you can speak with our reception team, give us a ring, or email us at vets@heathfieldvets.co.uk

There are lots of ways to keep in touch (apart from dropping in for a chat, of course!) - you’ll find plenty of information about our practice online at www.heathfieldvets.co.uk, and you can make sure you’re one of the first to hear about news and special offers by liking us on Facebook.

With very best wishes to you all!

From Janet Nuttall and the team
Our practice is the only one within 6 miles of Heathfield to provide a dedicated emergency care service run by our own vets at our own practice - other practices in our area use a central out of hours service in Tunbridge Wells or Brighton.

24/7 emergency service with Heathfield Vets guarantees:
• Crucial, life-saving time saved, as you will not have to travel to Tunbridge Wells or Brighton to an out of hours centre
• Home visits are available if required
• You will always see one of our own team of vets and qualified nurses, not a stranger

RECEPTION RE-VAMP!

Our reception area is being completely re-fitted and re-modelled. Thank you to all our clients for your patience whilst the work is completed. We’re doing everything we can to minimise disruption, including carrying out all the work outside of consulting hours.

We promise that any minor inconvenience you do experience will be worth it!

MEET THE TEAM’S PETS!

Our receptionist Sam Mason shares some of the joys of her special boy!

“I have owned Petit Basset Griffon Vendeens for fifteen years now. I have had four altogether, two grizzle and white and two orange and white, or rather you could say that they have owned me! As with any breed, there is a rescue organisation, but I am glad to say that the numbers are low.

I have found them to be a very loyal breed. A secure garden is a must though, as being a scent hound, they will wander if they do get a scent. As for walkies, if you are looking for a breed to be off the lead, a strict training regime from the puppy years is essential, but do remember, his nose will ALWAYS rule his head!

Grooming is an essential part of owning a Petit, even though the coat is harsh and weather resistant. A daily brush to remove dead hair and dirt, along with regular stripping will result in a shiny and healthy coat.

I have shown my current Petit, and he really enjoyed being the centre of attention when we went to Crufts Dog Show. They are a versatile breed and are quite happy to have a go at most things, including agility!

Being a groomer, I have showed Basil in competitions and been very successful - it helped that he was very well behaved and patient!

One thing to know about Petits - they do like the sound of their own voices! Not the quietest of dogs! They have a lovely throaty bark and a beautiful resonant howl, that any hound would be proud of!

All in all, living with this breed is great fun, and they really are a joy to own.”
What is Hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism is one of the most common diseases of older cats. It usually occurs when excess thyroid hormone is released from a benign tumour situated in one or both thyroid glands. When too much thyroid hormone is released into the blood, the cat’s metabolic rate is affected and cats burn up energy too quickly.

1. Normal thyroid gland
2. Parathyroid gland
3. Parathyroid gland
4. Enlarged thyroid gland

How will I know if my cat is affected?

There are many different clinical signs associated with hyperthyroidism, some of which can be very dramatic. The most obvious ones are:

- Increased appetite
- Increased thirst
- Increased irritability
- Hyperactivity or restlessness
- Fur becoming unkempt
- Increased heart rate

Serious secondary problems can arise from hyperthyroidism if it is left untreated as thyroid hormones affect virtually all the organs in the body.

- The rate and strength of the heartbeat is increased by excess amounts of thyroid hormone in the circulation. Over time this causes an enlarged, thickened heart that has to work harder to push blood around the body.
- The cat’s blood pressure is increased, which can potentially cause damage to blood vessels in the eyes, kidneys, heart and brain.

How is hyperthyroidism diagnosed and treated?

If we suspect that your cat has hyperthyroidism, we would begin by giving your cat a thorough clinical exam. At this point we would notice any signs such as enlargement of the gland on your cat’s neck, a quickened heart rate or a generally thin and scruffy appearance.

To confirm a diagnosis, a blood sample to measure one of the thyroid hormones would be needed, along with a full blood profile to assess the status of other vital organs in the body.

We test the blood in our own laboratory so we expect results the same day.

There are three main ways to treat hyperthyroidism:

1. Medical management. Drugs are available to reduce the production and release of thyroid hormones. These drugs do not cure the disease but they do offer both temporary and long-term relief.

2. Dietary management. An iodine restricted prescription diet is available, which must then become the cat’s only diet.

3. Surgical management. This involves anaesthetising your cat and surgically removing the enlarged thyroid gland. This is a very effective way to permanently treat hyperthyroidism, and can be performed once your cat has been stabilised medically.

4. Radioactive iodine therapy. Only used in a couple of practices in the UK, this procedure involves injecting your cat with radioactive iodine to kill abnormal thyroid cells.

If you think your cat is suffering with any of the clinical or behavioural signs detailed here please give us a call at the practice and we’ll be happy to advise you further.
The bottom line is that if you’re going out in the car, think very carefully about what you are going to do with your dog.

You should never leave a dog alone in a car!

It can get unbearably hot in a car even on a mild day - and once outside temperatures reach 22°C, the temperature inside a car can soar to 47°C within an hour.

Under the Animal Welfare Act you have a legal duty to care for your animal, and so if you put your animal at risk, you could face prosecution. You would also have to live with the fact that your actions resulted in terrible suffering for your pet.

Unlike humans, dogs pant to help keep themselves cool. In a hot, stuffy car dogs simply can’t cool down, so leaving a window open or a sunshield on your windscreen won’t keep your car cool enough.

**Dogs die in hot cars, so if you do see a dog in a car on a warm day please call the Police on 999.**

Heatstroke can be fatal - spotting early warning signs and acting quickly is vital

Some dogs are more prone to heatstroke: dogs with short snouts, larger or heavily muscled dogs and long-haired breeds, as well as very old or very young dogs are all more susceptible. Dogs with certain diseases are also more prone to heatstroke, as are dogs on certain medication.

If dogs are unable to reduce their body temperature, they will develop heatstroke. These are the signs to look for:

- Heavy panting
- Profuse salivation
- A rapid pulse
- Very red gums/tongue
- Lethargy
- Lack of coordination
- Reluctance or inability to rise after collapsing
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Loss of consciousness (in extreme circumstances)

**Heatstroke - what to do:**

If your dog shows any symptoms of heatstroke, move him/her to a shaded, cool area and ring your vet for advice immediately. **Heatstroke can be fatal and should always be treated as an emergency.**

The dog’s temperature needs to be lowered immediately, but gradually:

- Douse your dog with cool (not cold) water, to avoid shock – you could put your dog in a shower and run cool water over him/her, or use a spray filled with cool water
- Place your dog in the breeze of a fan.
- Let your dog drink small amounts of cool water.
- Continue to douse your dog with cool water until his/her breathing starts to settle – never cool your dog so much that he/she begins to shiver.
- Once you have cooled your dog down you should take him/her straight to the veterinary surgery.

**Top tips for avoiding heatstroke**

- Your dog should always be able to move into a cooler, ventilated environment if he/she is feeling hot.
- Never leave your dog alone in a car. If you want to take your dog with you on a car journey, make sure that your destination is dog-friendly
- If you have to leave your dog outside, provide a cool shady spot where he/she can escape from the sun at all times of the day.
- Make sure that your dog always has a good supply of drinking water, in a weighted bowl that can’t be knocked over.
- Carry water with you on hot days and give your dog frequent small amounts.
- Never leave your dog in a glass conservatory or a caravan. Even if it is cloudy when you leave, the sun may come out later in the day and make it unbearably hot.
- Groom your dog regularly to get rid of excess hair.
- Give long-coated breeds a haircut at the start of the summer, and later in the season, if necessary.
- Walk your dog early in the morning or later in the evening.
- Never allow your dog to exercise excessively in hot weather.

**Heatstroke**

caused by leaving dogs in hot cars can be FATAL!!!
Much as their physical appearance is very similar, donkeys and horses are very different beasts, as every donkey owner knows.

Behaviourally, donkeys are herd animals. In times of danger it’s every horse for himself, but if a herd of donkeys are attacked they will band together rather than separate and flee.

They are social animals and will bond with a pair mate (of either sex) for life. If another donkey is not available, then they will often bond with another animal such as a goat.

Donkeys who lose a pair mate will grieve and can often stop eating and can become seriously ill.

There are a few simple things to remember in order to ensure that you are taking good care of your donkey:

**Worming**

Donkeys carry all the same worms as horses, along with an additional one, the lungworm. If you have both horses and donkeys together then this worm can cause severe problems in the horses, making worming doubly important.

There are two important factors in any worming regime:

1) Accurate weight estimation - under dosing with wormers promotes resistance in the worms
2) Running worm egg counts throughout the grazing season, rather than blanket worming which also promotes resistance.

*Estimating your donkey’s weight accurately*

Two measurements are important, depending on the age of your donkey - height and heart girth. Heart girth (HG) is the circumference of the donkey’s barrel, measured at the wither (with the chest measurement taken at about one hand’s width behind the front legs, at the same point where a saddle girth would be placed).

For an adult donkey: weight = 0.000252 x height^{0.240} x heart girth^{2.575}

For a donkey under 2 years: weight = 0.000283 x heart girth^{2.778}

*The worming regime*

Heathfield promotes a simple but effective worming regime, as follows:

**Spring** (March/April) - Eqvalan Duo (covering redworms and their emerging larvae and tapeworms and lungworm)

**Summer and Autumn** - Worm count every two months after this, only worming if the count is high

**Winter** (Oct/Nov after the 1st frosts) - Eqvalan Duo (covers redworms, tapeworms, lungworm and bots)

**Vaccinations**

Donkeys are prone to the same diseases as horses. We commonly vaccinate against two:

- **Tetanus**. The bug that causes tetanus (clostridium tetani) is found everywhere. It is present in the soil and is also found in large quantities in animal droppings. In the gut it causes no harm to the animal, as it needs to enter through broken skin to cause tetanus. However, cuts and grazes are commonly found in donkeys at pasture therefore protecting against this disease is very important. Two injections 4-6 weeks apart are needed for the primary course and then a booster is only needed every three years with the vaccine we use (Equip).

- **Equine Influenza** (flu). This virus is not just spread by direct contact between horses and donkeys; it can spread over relatively long distances in the air. If horses rode past your property, or there are horses or donkeys on neighbouring properties, then your donkey may be at risk. The primary course requires three injections – the first two given 4-6 weeks apart (this can be combined with tetanus) and then a third six months later. Boosters are then required yearly. Protection is vital as there are more and more outbreaks of Influenza every year in the UK, including one in Sussex last year.
White Line Disease and Laminitis

These two problems go together. Donkeys are naturally adapted to the deserts of northern Africa and Arabia and do not cope well on the lush pasture of southeast England. Obesity in donkeys is a huge problem in this country, leading to many disease processes. The most common of these is laminitis. The Donkey Sanctuary website has diagrams to help you assess your donkey’s condition, as well as offering specific dietary advice.


Unlike horses, obese donkeys lay down fat in the neck and along the back, causing a problem called hyperlipidaemia, which is usually fatal. They also become much more prone to laminitis and, ultimately, white line disease (or ‘seedy toe’). This is where the sole begins to separate from the wall of the hoof. The white line should only be 2-3mm thick and, as the name suggests, should be white! Any blackness or separation of this line needs to be dealt with promptly by your farrier to avoid irreversible hoof damage such as loss of the whole hoof wall. Donkey feet are a lot more upright than horses’ feet and it is important to find a farrier that is experienced in dealing with donkeys.

We also sell ‘Solution For Feet’ at the practice, which is painted on every three days and helps to treat deep-seated infection and prevent the development of foot abscesses.

These two x-rays show the devastation that laminitis can cause to a donkey’s foot. The x-ray on the left is from a relatively normal donkey foot (the tape marks the front of the hoof and the drawing pin marks the tip of the frog). The x-ray on the right shows a foot post-laminitis. The hoof is broken (the darker areas) and the pedal bone has rotated and has lost density (like osteoporosis in humans) as a result of having the wrong pressure forces placed on it. Obesity laminitis is sadly a common reason for donkeys being put to sleep in the UK.

Colic

Donkeys are prone to Colic like their equine cousins, and just as in horses, Tapeworms can often be involved. Twice-yearly tapeworm treatment is therefore very important. Unlike horses however, donkeys don’t often show overt sign of colic, such as kicking or rolling. Instead they tend to become dull and show little interest in what’s going on around. Dullness is the usual response to most painful problems in donkeys, so if you notice that your donkey’s demeanour has become subdued, do call us out rather than leaving it for a couple of days.

Donkeys like to eat little and often rather than big meals. Never feed them grass clippings or mouldy hay these frequently cause colic problems. Also avoid diets rich in sugar. Donkeys tend to far outlive horses and often towards the end of their life they end up with fewer teeth. Regular tooth rasps should therefore be an important part of your donkey’s health regime, and we can do these at the time of vaccination.
Our fully qualified nurses run regular free clinics covering some of the more common health care issues. You are always welcome to come along with your pet, and you can find out details of dates and times at reception, or by calling 01435 864422.

- Weight clinics and basic nutrition
- Dental clinics – post dental checks and guidance on dental care
- Puppy parties – socialisation and fun!
- Post neutering checks
- Suture removal

We also offer the following services at minimal fees:
- Kidney, liver, thyroid and diabetes advice and monitoring
- Administration of tablets
- Nail clipping
- Ear cleaning
- Minor de-matting
- Expressing anal glands
- Re-dressings
- Blood sampling

Have you heard about our Loyalty Discount Scheme - a monthly payment plan designed for the preventative healthcare needs of all the special pet(s) in your life.

This PET CARE PLAN is an easy and efficient way to budget for your pet’s preventative healthcare, while making sure they are receiving the best possible care.

The following essentials are all included in the cost of the plan:
- Annual vaccination, including Kennel Cough vaccination
- A year’s worth of Advocate flea treatment
- One year’s worm treatment (Drontal Plus OR Milbemax)
- A microchip
- A health check every 6 months
- A routine health screen blood test once a year if needed
- 10% discount off dental items and treatment, neutering and foodstuffs, as well as products on our waiting room display

The plan only takes about 10 minutes to set up and there is a £1 discount for subsequent pets added to the Pet Care Plan.

Please ask one of our friendly reception team for more information today!

You can also find out more information by visiting our website www.heathfieldvets.co.uk

www.heathfieldvets.co.uk
Laser therapy has been in use in medical circles since the 1970s, but recent advances have now made it possible to deeply penetrate tissues in a relatively short time, making it a practical proposition to treat animals.

Before introducing laser therapy, several of the Heathfield staff volunteered as guinea pigs and we were very impressed with the positive effects on our collection of aches and pains. After two weeks of trials on a range of patients (cats, dogs and ferrets!) with a variety of complaints, we were so pleased with the results that we have now purchased a deep tissue laser therapy unit for the practice.

Laser therapy offers a simple, non-invasive way to reduce pain and inflammation and accelerate healing. The procedure is non-invasive, with no need to clip fur, restrain or sedate the patient and most find the experience pleasant and relaxing. The only sensation felt during treatment is soothing local warmth, and unlike many medicine-based therapies there are no side effects. The owner is encouraged to be present and protective glasses are worn by all in the treatment room.

Acute conditions are treated until resolved, with many needing only one or two sessions. Although improvement is often seen after the first visit, most patients with a longstanding complaint, such as osteoarthritis, require several treatments for the greatest benefit.

A treatment programme typically consists of three sessions during the first week, then two sessions during the second and the third weeks. Thereafter, periodic top up treatments may be administered as required.

Because laser therapy stimulates cell growth, it cannot be used over a tumour, but otherwise, its application is virtually limitless and it can be used in any type of patient. We will be offering laser therapy as one of the treatment options for suitable conditions, including pain relief and rapid healing after surgical and dental procedures.

Conditions known to respond to this type of therapy include:

- Osteoarthritis
- Degenerative joint disease
- Joint pain/stiffness
- Neck and back pain
- Muscle, tendon and ligament injuries
- Muscle weakness
- Hip/elbow dysplasia
- Fractures
- Neurological problems
- Post-traumatic injury
- Puncture/bite wounds or abscesses
- Non healing wounds
- Skin/wound infections
- Burns
- Eczema
- Hot spots
- Lick granulomas
- Ear infections
- Sinusitis/rhinitis
- Gingivitis/stomatitis
- Cystitis
- Anal gland problems/furunculosis
Poor George, a 12-year-old Springer Spaniel, had been attacked by one of their other dogs and was covered in blood. As soon as they found George, his owners called our out of hours service and arranged to meet the duty vet at the surgery.

Ian checked George over and put him onto intravenous fluids overnight, along with pain relief to make him more comfortable. The next morning, once the shock had subsided, the plan was to administer a general anaesthetic to debride and suture the wounds. George was re-examined to make sure he was stable. He appeared brighter, but the vet was concerned as he was unable to weight bear on his right fore leg.

Once George was anaesthetised, an x-ray of the leg showed all was clear, so the process of debriding and suturing the wounds began.

The first wound was on his right elbow - some muscle had been shredded, more was missing, and there were visible nerves along with a small puncture wound around the elbow.

The second, larger wound was over his left shoulder and this was flushed thoroughly and stitched back together with a drain in place to enable fluid to escape and reduce pressure.

The third wound was on George’s left elbow. This was a lot smaller and more superficial than the others, and required simply flushing and suturing.

Poor George came round from the anaesthetic well, despite his age.

Later that day George was taken home with antibiotics and plenty of pain relief, where he was given lots of TLC and was looked after like royalty! At his check-up a couple of days later, George was very bright and came strolling in with a waggy tail. He was still knuckling and limping slightly on his right fore leg, and there was marked bruising around the wounds with fluid still oozing from the drain. However, he was taking all his medication well, although the dreaded buster collar had to be put on as George was starting to lick his wounds!

One week later George made his last visit to us. All the wounds had healed well and he was even walking normally on his right foreleg. With the love and care of his family, George was soon able to get back to his normal life - having fun and causing mischief!

If you would like to submit your pet’s photo and story for our Autumn Star Pet, then please see any member of the practice team, or email us at vets@heathfieldvets.co.uk
We thought it would be great to feature a pet who is close to our hearts on the front cover of the next issue of Tracks, so if you would like to see your pet gracing the magazine, then please send us a photo of your favourite ferret, pampered pooch, cute cats, gorgeous Guinea pigs or any of the other lovely animals in your life.

We'll choose one to appear on the next front cover, but we regret that we can’t be held responsible for any resulting diva behaviour from the winner!

If you have a digital image, please email it to us at vets@heathfieldvets.co.uk, or otherwise simply drop a copy of your favourite photo in at reception.

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VACCINATION AMNESTY FOR DOGS & CATS
2 FOR THE PRICE OF 1!

We are often asked “is it really necessary to vaccinate my pet?”

The answer is YES.

The simple fact is that a programme of vaccination and regular boosters helps protect against a whole load of diseases, many of which have no effective treatment and can be fatal.

Vaccination can also help protect you from unexpected bills!

The good news is that for many of these conditions there is a simple method of protection, via vaccination and regular annual boosters, so it’s easy to keep your pet safe.

Throughout July, August & September we are running a special offer for dogs & cats whose vaccination protection may have lapsed we’ll provide the first and second vaccinations for the price of a normal annual booster.

Take advantage of this special limited offer and book your dog or cat in today, simply give us a call on 01435 864422
Office opening hours:
8.30 - 7pm  Mon - Fri
8.30 - 11am  Saturday

Surgery hours by appointment:
9am - 12.30pm, 2pm - 7pm  Mon - Fri

Surgery hours open surgery:
9 - 10am  Saturday morning

Our emergency service operates
24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
Simply call 01435 864422 - our answering service will take your details and get our own duty vet to call you back.

Out of hours calls are carried out only by our own veterinary team.