



## updates from the field

### NEWS

#### Geriatric Pet Month

**Don't miss out!** Make an appointment before the end of July to bring in your ageing pet (dogs and cats 7 years and older qualify as seniors) for our annual geriatric pet special: a **free** consultation and health check, **half price** geriatric blood screening test and **entry into the draw** to win veterinary services valued at \$100.

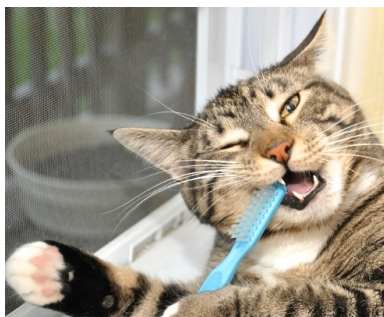
#### August is Dental Month

Each year CVH participates in Dental Month by providing a **free dental health check** by our trained nursing staff and **complimentary dental health gift pack**. Make sure your pet has healthy teeth and gums - ring us on (02) 4832 1977 to make an appointment during August.

#### Faculty Mentor Program

CVH Director Jennie Churchill is a mentor with the University of Sydney Faculty of Veterinary Science Mentor Program. Final year vet students select their preferred mentor and both work together until the student graduates (and often after). The final year of vet science is incredibly busy and often stressful – a mentor is there for their student should any life, work or study issues arise. Jennie's current mentee is Hannah Edwards, a typically high achieving student who came to veterinary science equipped with a Bachelor of Science (Advanced), Honours class I (Physics). A volunteer at Taronga Zoo Wildlife Hospital the past six years, Hannah is passionate about working with exotic and native wildlife species after graduation. She's spent time at wildlife centres in South Africa (big cats) and New Zealand (birds of prey). Many students also undertake an Honours project and Hannah's thesis is in the field of diagnostic imaging. She's also into her 6<sup>th</sup> year of the martial arts practice of Wing Tsun kung fu! Jennie says being a mentor is a rewarding and privileged opportunity to work with outstanding students. She has no doubt the future of veterinary science is in good hands.

### Dental disease



August is Australian Veterinary Association Dental Month – see NEWS for the CVH special offer. Dental health is critical for our pet's wellbeing. We check out our teeth as we brush in front of the bathroom mirror every day, but how often do we take a peek inside our pet's mouth?

Cats in particular are susceptible to periodontal (gum) disease. Gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) can indicate early periodontal disease.

Without proper care or a diet that exercises the teeth and gums, plaque can build up on the teeth – this forms from the food, bacteria, mucous and other debris that collects on teeth surfaces. Plaque becomes solid tartar (calculus) and both can cause gums to separate from the teeth, allowing bacteria to infiltrate. The gums become inflamed, red, swollen and painful.

Untreated, dental disease can also result in bacteria from the cat's mouth travelling via the blood stream to infect organs such as the kidneys, liver and heart. In ageing cats with already compromised kidneys, this added burden of bacterial shedding can hasten kidney failure.

A diet of soft food can encourage plaque formation, old age and genetics are factors and feline viral diseases and diabetes may exacerbate gingivitis.

#### Symptoms

Cats and dogs are remarkably good at coping with pain – often to their detriment. Many cats with dental disease show no obvious signs of illness or discomfort until the disease is quite advanced.

Bad breath is often an early sign of gum inflammation. Taking a regular sniff of your pet's breath is an easy way to monitor dental health. Lift the lips and check for red or swollen gums and signs of plaque or tartar. Severely affected cats will drool, paw at their mouth and, while they go readily to their food dish, they may drop their food as eating is too painful.

#### Treatment and ongoing care

An annual check-up, especially for ageing cats, allows us to develop a dental home care plan to help decrease plaque and prevent tartar formation. This may include adding to your cat's diet some hard biscuits, the occasional treat of raw (never cooked) bones, chewy treats such as cat Greenies or feeding a specialised dental diet such as Hills Science Diet T/D (available at CVH). We stock veterinary toothpaste and toothbrushes. We'll show you how to use these to prevent plaque build-up. Human toothpaste must NOT be used in animals, it can cause nausea and vomiting in cats.

Severe gum and tooth disease requires more intervention. At CVH we undertake professional ultrasonic teeth cleaning and removal of tartar under general anaesthetic – this alone can improve a pet's wellbeing. If the inflammation and damage has progressed too far the only option is to remove diseased, non-salvageable teeth surgically and allow the gums to heal. Pets cope remarkably well, even after multiple tooth extractions.

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## Winter livestock alerts



The combination of heavily pregnant ewes and pasture with low nutrient values can lead to pregnancy toxemia.

CVH vets are currently treating pregnancy toxemia in ewes and grass tetany in cattle, both conditions seen when pastures look green and lush after rain but contain lots of water and little in the way of nutrients.

### Pregnancy toxemia in ewes

Ewes in late pregnancy must have access to adequate high quality, high energy feed. Lush watery pastures frequently can't satisfy these nutritional needs and ewes are unable to consume enough to meet their energy needs. This combination of inadequate nutrition and heavily pregnant ewes creates the perfect scenario for pregnancy toxemia and we're seeing outbreaks right now.

Pregnancy toxemia or twin lamb disease is a direct result of energy deficiency in late pregnancy. Low levels of blood glucose lead to brain damage, dehydration, kidney failure and potentially death.

Initiating factors include ewes in late pregnancy, often bearing twins; low energy diet - green pastures high in water and low in dry matter and nutrients; and severe weather impacting on the ewe's capacity to feed.

### Symptoms

Affected ewes separate from the mob, become lethargic, dull and stop eating. Nervous signs develop, including tremors, staggering and blindness. The ewe goes down and lies on her side for 3 to 4 days, becoming comatose before death.

### Treatment of pregnancy toxemia

It's essential to increase the affected ewes' energy intake as soon as possible. Drenching with 50mls of propylene glycol night and morning provides a rapidly available energy source and if administered early in the course of the disease, can reverse the condition (Ceton is one product).

The prognosis is far better if the ewe is still standing when treatment is initiated. If the ewe returns to eating and gives birth to her lambs, she will usually survive.

### Prevention

If environmental and flock factors are creating conditions favourable to pregnancy toxemia, start the flock on a high energy ration – grain or sheep nuts are effective but must be introduced slowly.

Minimise stressful situations when managing ewes in late pregnancy. Avoid sudden changes in feed or periods of starvation from unnecessary yarding or transport. Make sure ewes receive supplementary feed and shelter during extreme weather.

### Hypocalcaemia

Be alert to similar symptoms caused by low blood calcium. Often the two diseases occur in similar circumstances, although hypocalcaemia usually occurs after the ewe has lambed and she goes down quickly, remains alert and responds much more quickly to treatment (intravenous or subcutaneous calcium) than ewes affected by pregnancy toxemia.

### Grass tetany in cattle

CVH vets are also treating grass tetany in cattle. Often initiated by the same feed conditions – lush, watery, poor nutrient pastures – grass tetany results from low magnesium. The incidence increases in severe weather conditions.

Symptoms of hypomagnesaemia vary but affected cows are always excitable, and sometimes dangerous. Early cases show slight muscle twitching, a stiff gait and appear wary. This progresses to staggering, charging, falling to the ground and paddling with head stretched back. The animal may appear blind.

Prevent grass tetany by supplementing cows in late pregnancy with magnesium. Feed magnesium oxide products such as Causmag at 60gm to 100gm per head per day. Routinely providing hay for cows and calves is also good practice – legume hay supplies nutrients that help reduce the incidence of grass tetany.

Grass tetany is an emergency. Treatment involves intravenous administration of magnesium and calcium and it needs to be delivered quickly. The prognosis following treatment is unpredictable, and severe cases may still die.

## Contact us

Opening hours 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday | 9am – 12pm Saturday

**24 hour emergency service on (02) 4832 1977**

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