

Winter is here

Have you ever heard your granny or granddad say: "the winter is here, I can feel it in my bones". Cold and damp weather brings on aches and pain in arthritic joints and this goes for cats and dogs as well. Arthritis is a slow, progressive joint disease and you may not realise that your cat or dog has arthritis. Since many people often put it down to the fact that they are simply getting old.

However, if you do notice any of these symptoms:

- > Sleeping more
- > Reluctant to jump
- > Playing less often
- > Getting grumpy if approached



Please bring your pet to the vet for a geriatric check. The vet will complete a full examination, including manipulating the joints and palpating the spine. A blood test may be beneficial in order to establish a baseline of kidney and liver levels before starting on long term medication.

As well as arthritis medication such as anti-inflammatories, there are other options that can be used alone or in addition to medication. The dose of medication can often be reduced if given alongside a joint supplement. Prescription diets are also available that contain joint supplements.

Dogs and cats on long term medication for arthritis need a check up at least every 6 months in order to make sure there are no side effects and that the medication is still keeping your pet happy. In most cases this also includes a blood test to monitor kidney and liver function. This would also be a good chance to discuss with your vet if any alteration to the medication could make your pet even happier.

This old cat is eating me out of the house!

Is your old cat losing weight, despite eating everything in sight and still looking for more? You may have already treated him/her for worms but not seen any improvement. Maybe their toilet habits have changed too, with the faeces now being more like diarrhoea? And instead of slowing down with age, he/she has started to get very active and totally changed their attitude, getting grumpier.

If so, then your cat may have an over active thyroid gland. This is a fairly common condition in older cats and is caused by a benign tumour of the thyroid gland. The effect of the tumour causes overproduction of thyroid hormones, which in turn speeds up the metabolism, increases blood pressure, and elevates the heart rate. The increased blood pressure can in turn cause secondary kidney disease.

If you think this picture fits your cat, then please contact us for a consultation. A blood test will promptly test the thyroid level and if the result is higher than normal, your cat can start on treatment and the response is usually very good. The treatment is based at reducing the thyroid hormone level by blocking production and can be given in the form of a tablet once a day, or by applying a medicated gel on the furless area of the ear once a day. There is also a prescription diet available for thyroid cats, but this is not always practical as your cat can not be allowed to eat anything else. And we all know, cats like to roam and often get fed elsewhere too.

If medication or diet is not your choice, then ask your vet about radioactive treatment, or even surgery to remove the tumour.



Lumps and Bumps

By definition all lumps and bumps are tumours. In fact the latin word for swelling is 'tumor'. Cats and dogs occasionally grow tumours here and there and it is best to get them checked out as soon as you notice them. However, there is no need to panic as not all are cancerous tumours. Some are benign (non-cancerous) and cause hardly any problem at all.

Investigation of any tumour would in most cases involve a biopsy. This can be achieved by taking a fine needle aspirate (FNA) and transfer some cells to a microscope slide that can then be examined under a microscope. An FNA is great, as in most cases it can be performed with little or no sedation but occasionally it fails to achieve sufficient information as the needle may have been inserted just to the side of the actual tumour tissue. In these cases, a surgical biopsy would be better. Depending on the size of the tumour, it can then either be removed totally, or in some cases a slice of the tumour is removed initially and then use the biopsy result in order to decide what size margins are needed for the actual tumour removal.

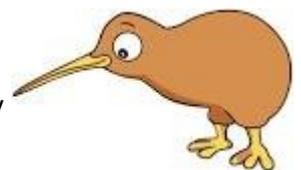
In some cases, a tumour is removed, but the histology indicates that the margins are not clear. In these cases, a second surgery would be necessary in order to best reduce the chance of tumour regrowth.

Finally, some swellings are caused by abscess formation and will require lancing as antibiotic alone would not be enough. Antibiotic cannot penetrate pus within the abscess, so occasionally a drain is placed for a few days to allow continuous drainage post-surgery. Or a swelling may be caused by just bruising or accumulation of blood following trauma.

In any case, if you do notice anything abnormal when giving your pet a cuddle, make sure to ring the vet and book an appointment. If surgery is required, it is easier to perform with less post-op complications if performed before the tumour gets a chance to grow.

New Zealand Animals....did you know

- The Kiwi is New Zealand's national bird and considered an evolutionary oddity. It differs from all other bird species on earth.
- Unlike other birds, the Kiwi has a strong sense of smell.
- The Kiwi lays the biggest egg in proportion to its body-size. Even though the Kiwi is about the size of a chicken, its egg is six times the size of a chicken egg. The largest recorded Kiwi egg weighed 500 grams.
- The male usually incubates the egg. The male of the Brown Kiwi species nurtures the egg alone for up to 80 days – the longest incubation period of any bird.
- The Kakapo can live up to 120 years, and the average life span is 95 years.
- Two species of Tuatara are the only surviving members of its order, which flourished around 200 million years ago.
- The Tuatara features a third eye – a pineal eye – that can detect light. This feature predates the age of dinosaurs.
- Tuataras can measure up to 31 inches (80 cm) from head to tail-tip, weigh up to 2.9 pounds (1.3 kilograms), and can live for a century or longer.
- The Kea is the only alpine parrot in the world. It has evolved a thick plumage and is known for its intelligence and curiosity, vital attributes for its survival in the harsh mountain conditions.
- The Kea is mainly an opportunistic vegetarian feeder but it's also the only species of parrot known to attack and kill other animals.



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