

## **Bunny Business**

Pet rabbits need vaccinated too!! Rabbit calicivirus/rabbit haemorrhagic viral disease is a highly infectious disease which has a very high fatality rate. Often rabbits are just found dead with foamy bloody discharge from the nose, mouth and anus. Occasionally rabbits will show clinical signs before death which include lethargy, depression, inappetence, difficulty breathing and shaking. When rabbits show signs unfortunately there is not a lot we can do for them which is why vaccination is so critical.

Vaccination is recommended from 10 weeks except in high risk environments where earlier vaccination is recommended e.g. areas when your rabbit has high contact with wild rabbit populations. A yearly booster is then required to maintain protection. There are a few different strains of calicivirus with a new strain discovered to be present in New Zealand last year. Because of this there are different vaccinations available on the market. At Vetco we use the recommended vaccination which covers against the newest strain along with the traditional strain. From vaccination it takes 7 days for immunity to develop, so they are still at risk for the first week after vaccination. The virus can be passed from rabbit to rabbit but also via insects or other objects that the rabbit has come in contact with. It also has the ability to be airborne. These factors mean we can put other precautions in place to help protect our rabbits.

- \* Keep rabbits indoors when possible or if there are lots of wild rabbits around
- \* Ensure your rabbit is in a secure cage with a floor they are unable to dig out through
- \* Regularly clean the cage
- \* Offer fresh food daily, remove uneaten food to deter wild rabbits
- \* Ensure you wash your hands and clothing well if you handle other peoples rabbits



## **A Very Nasty Virus**

Parvovirus is a horrendous disease which affects puppies and occasionally unvaccinated adult dogs. It is a highly infectious virus which can survive in the environment for 6 months and under certain circumstances years. It is only killed by certain disinfectants and can be carried on shoes or other clothing items.

Parvovirus causes depression/lethargy and affected dogs will often have sudden onset vomiting and diarrhoea which will often (but not always) contain blood. Other signs you may see include anorexia, fever and acute weight loss. Without treatment it is almost always fatal and even with treatment some animals won't make it. The vomiting and diarrhoea cause dehydration and gut compromise meaning the pup becomes more susceptible to other infections.

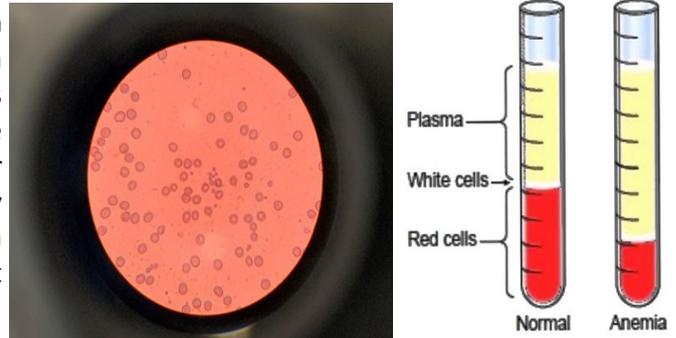
Treatment involves fluids, anti-nausea medications and antibiotics to fight secondary infections. Some animals will be required to be hand fed and if the signs are really severe a stomach tube may be placed. Some animals will require a blood transfusion as red and white blood cells can be markedly reduced. Most animals will require hospitalisation for ongoing supportive care.

The only effective means of protection is vaccination. Puppies are only fully protected when their full course of puppy vaccinations have been completed. It is therefore strongly advised to keep your new puppy on your property or only let it socialise with known vaccinated dogs until the full course is completed. New born puppies do receive some immunity from their mother if she is vaccinated but the level of protection can vary depending on how much colostrum the puppy received and the mothers own immune response. These maternally derived antibodies can last anywhere from 6 to 16 weeks which is why we start vaccinations from 6-8 weeks. Adult dogs also require boosters throughout their life to ensure protection is maintained.

If your puppy is sick and exhibiting these signs please ring ahead for an appointment. We have many sick animals and unvaccinated puppies come through our clinics. If we suspect parvovirus special precautions will need to be taken to ensure the health and wellbeing of all pets.

## Case of the Month

Bob, a 7 year old working dog presented to the clinic with a short history of lethargy and weight loss. A thorough physical exam revealed pale white gums, an increased effort to breath, an enlarged spleen and evidence of broken down red blood cells in the urine. A quick test in the clinic to check Bob's Packed Cell Volume (PCV – number of red blood cells in the blood) revealed that he was severely anaemic, but still above the cut off for a blood transfusion. However, despite starting appropriate medical therapy Bob's PCV dropped to a life threatening level and a blood transfusion was performed. Meanwhile the blood test results confirmed the suspicion that Bob's immune system was attacking his red blood cells, resulting in the severe anaemia. This condition is known as Immune Mediated Haemolytic Anaemia (IMHA), and is caused by the immune system attacking, and destroying the body's own red blood cells. In up to 70% of dogs this is caused by an unknown reason. The treatment for such a condition is most commonly a high dose of steroids to reduce the immune response and may be necessary for months, or for the rest of the dog's life, and in some cases can carry a guarded prognosis. In Bob's case he left the clinic after a week of hospital care and continues to improve with a lot of great care from his owners .



## Doggy Disputes

Bite wounds are one of the more common ailments we see through the clinic. They can range from a small puncture wound to a large obvious rip to internal injuries that can become life threatening. Almost all are worth getting checked out because a small puncture wound may have introduced nasty bugs under the skin leading to infection. Without seeing your pup we are unable to prescribe any antibiotics or pain relief. Larger wounds often require sedation or anaesthesia so the wound can be cleaned well, any compromised tissue removed and the rip stitched up. Sometimes a drain may need to be placed, this provides an exit wound for any debris we weren't able to clean out or any bacteria that have managed to survive the antibacterial flush. Many of the bacteria which get introduced because of a dog fight are anaerobic, this means they don't like oxygen, therefore a drain keeps the wound open so the bacteria can be killed. If you witnessed your dog get into a fight then the vet may ask what happened. If your dog was grabbed and shook this is very important information as this action can cause huge internal injuries with no clues externally. Serious internal injuries can include a ruptured spleen leading to massive internal bleeding, punctured lungs, a ruptured diaphragm or a burst bladder. All these are classified as medical emergencies and without aggressive supportive care or surgery can lead to death.

## Cleo's Croaky Cough

Cleo had been hunting and caught 2 birds and a mouse  
She came back proud as punch and let them go in the house

A tickle in Cleo's throat was felt a week on  
And after another week the cough still hadn't gone  
Her owners started worrying when her breathing turned odd

Maybe she had eaten the hook off the fishing rod!!!  
She was brought to the vet and what did they find?  
There was adult lungworm laying eggs inside  
Her cough brought up eggs which she would swallow and then poo out

A bird can then get infected when they are out and about  
This bird can pass them on when eaten by another cat  
An appropriate cat wormer is needed, talk to your vet about that!

## Fun Facts

- There are no male or female earthworms. All earthworms have both male and female parts – but it still takes two of them to reproduce. 
- Cat fleas can jump to a height of up to 60 times their own body length.
- A female house fly lays batches of around 100–150 white eggs, and may lay more than 500 eggs in her lifetime of just a few days. 
- Dogs have wet noses because it helps to absorb scent chemicals.

