

Consideration when acquiring a new pet.

There are more things to consider when getting a new pet than a soft cuddly friend. First you need to assess what type of lifestyle you have. If you are at work all day, then a cat may be a better choice than a dog, unless you can arrange for someone to call in and take your dog for a walk during the day. If you decide that a dog is suitable, then take time to do your homework with regards to what breed to choose. Things to consider include how much exercise they need; is grooming required, life expectancy of the breed, how much time you have available for training (some breeds are easier to train than others), size when fully grown etc.

So your new pet has arrived. What next? Both cats and dogs need vaccinating and this involves 2-3 injections, 4 weeks apart. They are then protected for 12 months until their first booster is due. From then on, the time between boosters is dependent on risk and exposure, so we will discuss what is appropriate for your pet in the consultation.

Your pet will need to be wormed every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age, once a month until they are 6 months and from then on every 3 months. Dogs that run on fields where sheep are grazing will need monthly worm treatment for life to cover them for sheep measles. Treatment for fleas is best achieved with a spot on preparation from your vet. Some of these even cover treatment for worms and ear mites.

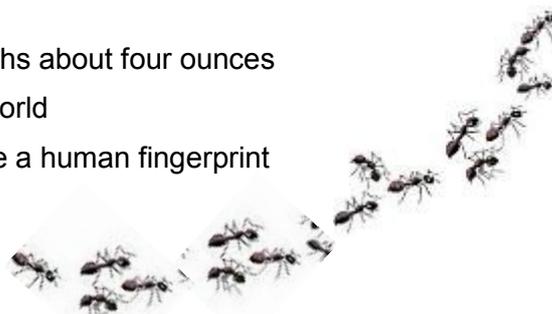
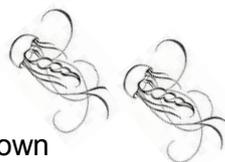
Cost of keeping a pet per year is dependent on size. Feeding a small dog is roughly the same as feeding a cat, but if you decide to go for a larger breed then the financial commitment becomes much longer. You also need to consider the potential cost of veterinary bills for when your pet gets ill. Surgery to remove a foreign body from the intestines after your dog swallowed a stone, or even a corn on the cob can be quite substantial. If your pet develops a chronic condition, then vet bills for ongoing medication and monitoring blood tests can be expensive. If you decide against pet insurance, then it would be sensible to set up a savings account dedicated to these unexpected events. You may also be able to put money towards your account at the vet clinic for use when you need it.

As cats are often left to roam freely in the neighbourhood, it is best to get them neutered or you could end up with several litters of kittens to rehome. It is also recommended to neuter dogs that are not intended for breeding. (Covered in the article: "Neutering of dogs".)

Micro chipping is now required by law for dogs over the age of 3 months. They need to be registered with the council by July 1st every year. They then get a registration tag to wear on the collar, and this tag is a different colour every year.

Did you know.....

- > Jellyfish have tentacles around their mouths
- > A flamingo can only eat when it's head is upside down
- > Despite fearsome looks, the tarantula is actually harmless to humans with a venom weaker than that of a bee's sting
- > At birth, a panda is smaller than a mouse and weighs about four ounces
- > There are 1,000,000 ants for every human in the world
- > A cats nose is ridged with a unique pattern, just like a human fingerprint
- > A flounder swims sideways



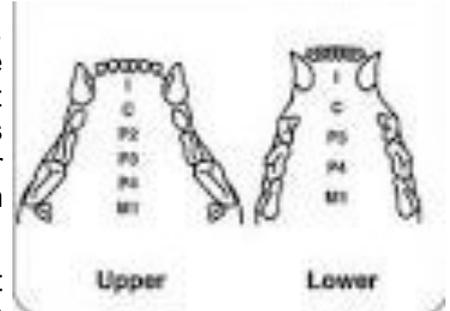
Pet Dentistry

Cats and dogs get tartar build up and gum disease just as humans do. Teeth brushing works well in preventing this, but not all pets are willing to cooperate. However, if started early in life, you may find that they actually enjoy it. Perhaps the chicken flavoured tooth paste has something to do with this? You can also add 'Aquadent' to their drinking water which will reduce build-up of plaque and freshen breath.

On the other hand, if you are unable to brush their teeth, then the next best option would be to provide a sensible diet and chews such as raw hide, greenies or similar. If you choose to feed your dog bones, make sure they are not cooked, and chicken bones should be avoided at all costs. Large cattle thigh bones are the best. Not for overweight dogs though!

Should your pet develop dental disease, then you may notice bad breath and sometimes some blood stained saliva at feeding time. Other symptoms may include swelling of the face, usually below the eye, suggestive of a possible tooth root abscess. If you notice any of these symptoms, then contact your vet for a check-up. Your pet can then be booked in for a general anaesthetic to perform a dental should this be appropriate. During a dental, all teeth will be scaled and polished and any diseased or fractured teeth can be removed.

Untreated dental disease can lead to systemic illness. Bacterial infection of the gum can enter the blood circulation and settle in the liver, kidney or heart. It is for this reason that an annual health check at vaccination time includes a check of your pets teeth to complete the clinical examination.



Neutering of Dogs

It is a known fact that most cats are neutered in order to keep the feral cat population to a minimum. Neutered cats are also less likely to roam and get into fights, so they are often healthier than entire cats.

But what about the dogs? They are not free range to the same degree as cats and breeding is easier to keep under control. However, bitches in season give off pheromones that a dog can smell for miles. They are happy to jump very high fences, and you only need to turn your back for a few seconds and the deed is done. A bitch may even back up against a fence and the dog may manage to mate her through the fence. An entire male dog on the hunt for a bitch in season could easily get run over by a car when crossing the road.



Early neutering of bitches (before the second heat) will greatly reduce the risk of mammary tumours later in life. Plus, a neutered bitch does not come into season and hence no blood-stained discharge. Older entire bitches that start having irregular seasons are more prone to a condition called Pyometra. This is an infection of the uterus and the best treatment is neutering. Neutering of a healthy bitch is routine with few complications but in the case of a bitch with Pyometra, the risk of complications is higher. An untreated case of Pyometra frequently results in ruptured uterus, peritonitis and death.

As for male dogs, castration also has health benefits. They cannot get testicular cancer in testicles that have been removed. Non-cancerous prostate enlargement is related to testosterone levels and can lead to constipation due to subsequent narrowing of the rectum and also cause the dog to feel quite sick with a high temperature. These dogs may need a manual enema under general anaesthetic and antibiotics. Castration at this stage is advisable. This can be achieved by an injection as a chemical castration but surgical castration is a better option long term. Better still; prevent it happening in the first place by having the dog castrated at an early age.



KENNINGTON CLINIC 11 CLAPHAM ROAD (03) 230 4689
EDENDALE CLINIC 14 SWEENEY STREET (03) 206 6170

