

# Say Cheese!

ORCHARD VETERINARY CENTRE

Summer 2017

# news

Do you enjoy capturing on camera those funny and sweet antics of your four-legged friend? Judging by the number of pictures and videos online, we reckon the answer is...yes!

Your cat or dog may not give a 'say cheese' grin at the camera, but they do have a great set of teeth, which actually require the same essential care just like ours!

**Tooth Truths** Within a few weeks of birth, the 'baby' teeth appear. Between 4 and 6 months these loosen and fall out, to be replaced by an 'adult' set, which are designed to last a lifetime. However, almost 80% of dogs and 70% of cats show signs of periodontal disease at just 3 years old!

**This is what happens** A soft sticky substance called plaque, comprised of food debris and bacteria, sticks to teeth. If not brushed away, it gradually builds up to a hard scale called tartar, which can cause inflamed and infected gums, resulting in tooth decay. Bone loss may occur, and your pet could actually lose teeth. In severe cases, infections can spread via the bloodstream to affect other internal organs like the liver, kidney and heart.



**New Staff** Two new staff members have recently joined the Orchard family! **Kristina** started in April as part of our receptionist team, and will be working at both Oldbury and Harborne. She lives with her partner, her two girls, Duke the dog, Princess the cat, Fluffy the rabbit and guinea pigs Annie and Millie! In her spare time she enjoys horse-riding and fishing.

Meanwhile, **Gemma** is the latest addition to our clinical team. She studied Marine Biology before training as a Veterinary Nurse, and will now be working across all three of our practices. At home she has three cats, a guinea pig and an aquarium of marine fish, while in her leisure time she volunteers as a Girl Guide Leader and is a qualified diver.

We hope you'll join us in extending a warm welcome to both Kristina and Gemma.

## Tooth Troubles

bad breath drooling  
inflamed, red or bleeding gums  
yellow/brown or loose teeth  
difficulty or not eating  
sensitive/pawing at mouth

**Notice any of these signs?**

Then it's time your pet had a dental check with the vet.

## Toothbrush Training Tips

It is very important to keep your pet's teeth in good condition. Ideally brushing should begin when they are young, but please be patient, especially if you have an older pet. Don't rush, build confidence and give your pet praise and cuddles!

- Just with your finger, lightly touch in and around their mouth, softly rubbing the front teeth only.
- Once your pet is confident with this, cover your finger with a soft damp cloth to gently rub the teeth.
- Introduce a soft bristle toothbrush with something tasty on the bristles. Allow your pet to lick and investigate the brush while you are holding it.
- When the brush becomes familiar, lightly brush their front teeth.
- Gradually progress to using animal toothpaste, introducing a gentle vertical motion to the front teeth and a circular action for the back.



Some pets enjoy having their teeth cleaned, but others..... well it may take a while! Treat toothbrush time as a fun and happy event for your pet.

We are here to help! If it all seems a bit daunting, our nurses can show you how to brush your pet's teeth. It's never too late to learn!

We are delighted that Orchard Vets have been named **Best in Animal Health and Welfare** in the Global Health and Pharma (GHP) Animal Care Awards 2017. GHP is an information-sharing platform and multidisciplinary members community working across the human, animal and environmental health platform. Its awards acknowledge those who have gone beyond their duty of care to improve the welfare, care and health of animals.

We are honoured to receive this prestigious award, which is a testimony to the attitude and professionalism of our incredible team of staff.

Mandy, Zoe and Gaynor - part of our award-winning team



## HOURS

Church Street

**OLDBURY**

B69 3AF

**0121 544 0404**

Mon to Fri 8:30am - 6:30pm

Saturday 11am - 12pm

Home Farm

Northfield Road

**HARBORNE**

B17 0TD

**0121 428 1777**

Mon to Fri 8:30am - 6:30pm

Saturday 2.30pm - 3pm

210 Holyhead Road,

**WEDNESBURY**

WS10 7DH

**0121 556 6890**

Mon to Fri 8:30am - 6:30pm

Saturday 9am - 10am

# The Cat's Whiskers



A way of saying that something is near perfect!

Cats are remarkably athletic creatures that jump great heights, balance on the thinnest ledges and squeeze through the smallest gaps. Their long beautiful whiskers greatly contribute to this astounding way of life!

**Whiskers are** long, stiff hairs, which grow around the mouth and face, above the eyes, on the jaw line and the back of the front legs. Also known as **vibrissae**, whiskers are actually a cat's own sonar system!

**How do they work?** Whiskers are deeply embedded to firmly connect to the cat's muscular and nervous systems. These stiff hairs send information to the cat's sensory nerves. Whisker tips have sensitive sensory organs called proprioceptors, which assist the cat in judging distance, width and direction. The 'magical' squeezing through a narrow space, gracefully leaping onto a thin ledge, even responding to air vibrations when catching mice, are all the workings of the wonderful whiskers!

It is quite natural for a cat to shed these hairs and grow new ones. **Never cut or trim whiskers**, as a cat would be quite lost, scared and confused without them! These beautiful 'sonar' whiskers are truly an amazing part of your cat's anatomy.



## Tick-Borne Disease.....

### Canine Babesiosis

Media reports last year, informed us of a tick-borne disease, which has appeared in the UK. Some dogs in Essex were infected, and sadly there were fatalities. Ticks require a 'host' to complete their life-cycle, which unfortunately could be your dog.

**Infection** As an infected tick bites and feeds on blood, a single-celled microscopic parasite called **Babesia**, is transferred into the dog's blood stream, where it infects the red blood cells. These cells are then attacked by the immune system, causing severe anaemia.



**Canine Babesiosis is life-threatening, but treatments are available to help fight the infection.**

**Prevention** After any outdoor activity, check your dog's coat and skin for ticks. If you find an attached tick, you can remove it using a tick hook, or bring your pet to us as soon as possible.

**Most important of all, use regular and effective parasite treatments on your dog.**

**Please contact us or visit the surgery, where we can discuss in detail a suitable anti-tick treatment for your pet.**

# Friendly Pets!

If you are looking to have a small pet, guinea pigs are lovely 'daytime' active animals, and very responsive to your attentions. These amazing little creatures are one of the oldest domestic animals dating back to 1000-500BC.

## Guinea Pig Guide

- The average lifespan is 4-8 years.
- Guinea pigs like companions - a neutered pair or small group of the same sex.
- A good-sized hutch with plenty of dust free bedding, and an outside run with tunnels and boxes, as they are flight animals that like to hide!
- Provide protection from the sun, as guinea pigs can suffer sun/heatstroke.
- Ensure they are warm, dry and snug during winter.
- A varied diet is essential - grass, dandelions, carrots, cabbage, spinach, apple and pear. They require a source of vitamin C in their diet. This is found in grass, and also in good quality dried pellet food specifically for guinea pigs. Both are great for their teeth too.
- Give a regular supply of hay and clean fresh water.
- **Warning!** Always identify any plants before feeding your pet, as some may cause illness and sadly could be fatal. If in doubt.....don't let them eat it! Place outside runs away from potentially hazardous plants.

## Healthy Guinea Pigs

Like all pets, they need regular check-ups with a vet. A guinea pig's teeth and nails grow continuously, so may require clipping. Mites and fungal infections are sometimes a problem, so we can examine their coat and skin too, at their appointment.

**If this sounds the right pet for you, there are guinea pigs waiting in rescue centres for their forever homes. For further information on caring for a guinea pig, please contact us.**



### Signs of Babesiosis

- Lethargy ● Weakness
- Dark brown/red urine
- Fever ● Rapid breathing
- Pale gums/tongue
- Enlarged abdomen
- Weight loss

**If you see any of these signs - do not delay in taking your dog to a vet!**