



## AUTUMN 2015

### Raising orphaned kittens, polite pets, Myxomatosis and more...

Welcome to the first edition of Fletcher Veterinary Practice's clinic newsletter! We are very excited to keep you informed and up to date with happenings at our clinic, local events and general pet care advice.

In this issue, we give you a recap on the last few months, letting you know what interesting cases summer brought us, with a focus on a big problem that we have seen recently, orphaned kittens. We have some great tips on puppy nutrition, as well as our behaviourist Claire's special segment, giving you all the info on Polite Pet's Month!

### The Easter killer; Myxomatosis

Unfortunately, Easter is an awful time of year for rabbits, as this is commonly when we see Myxomatosis. This disease is painful, fatal and unfortunately there is no available vaccination in Australia. It kills over 50 percent of wild and domesticated rabbits.

Myxomatosis was introduced to Australia in 1950 to help control the population of wild rabbits and hares. The virus causes painful swelling of the eyes and ears, tumours, fevers, fatigue, and an infected rabbit usually dies within 14 days of contracting the disease. It is contracted through contact with an infected rabbit, but primarily is spread via **mosquitoes** or **fleas** who have previously fed on an infected rabbit.



If you think your rabbit has contracted Myxomatosis, we urge you to have them seen by a vet immediately.

Unfortunately, as this disease ultimately leads to a painful death, humane euthanasia is recommended for a safe and pain free passing for your beloved pet. Prevention is therefore recommended using the following tips:

#### How to stop Myxomatosis

- **Monthly flea prevention:** Revolution is a safe and effective prevention medication to use against fleas. Ask us which size would be best for your rabbit.
- **Mosquito proof the hutch:** Mozzie proof netting is a must if you have an outdoor rabbit, to prevent them from entering or feeding off your rabbit. This can be purchased from local hardware stores.
- **Bring them inside:** At dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are the worst, bring your bunny inside, just to be sure.

### Raising orphaned kittens



Summer always brings a wide range of illnesses and issues to us, from tick and snake bites to heat stroke, but one of the biggest issues this time of the year is the quantity of stray or orphaned kittens, due to cats being left un-desexed.

We do a lot of work with rescue organisations here at our clinic, shown listed below, and Dr. Michaela is one of our expert vets in kitten care and treatment. The volunteer carers for these organisations often have to raise orphans from a critically young age, as well as treat any diseases or illnesses they may have. Here Dr. Michaela explains the basic process of hand rearing orphaned kittens, and what precautions to take.

#### 5 important tips

Kittens may need hand rearing for a number of reasons; rejected by their mother, the mother is sick or has passed away, not producing enough milk for all, or the kitten is unable to compete for milk. Yourselves, as carers, breeders or owners of these babies, therefore need to take over to allow them to develop as best they can. **5 main points** to consider when raising a kitten are:

1. **Thermoregulation.** Kittens need to stay warm (at 36.1°C-37°C). The use of a heating pad with a thermostat, a wrapped hot water bottle or a low wattage bulb is sufficient for a heating device, however be extremely mindful of **thermal burns**.
2. **Feeding.** Never feed a cold kitten, and never use cold milk. Use a *specific* milk replacer (e.g Divetelact, Wombaroo or Biolac). These are proper animal formulas and are NOT kitten or puppy milk from the supermarket. Each kitten will need to eat the equivalent of 200 kcal per 500g of body weight per day, and should be divided into about 8- 10 feeds. Always feed the kitten while they are laying on their stomach, with the neck slightly outstretched. Bottle-feeding is best, using soft plastic bottles, and weaning can begin at 3-4 weeks of age.
3. **Toileting.** Kittens cannot go to the toilet for themselves until they are 3 weeks old. Up until this time they need us to stimulate their perineal area with a warm damp cotton ball after each feed.
4. **Grooming.** A mother cat will usually groom her kittens before and after feeding them. Mimic this by wiping the kittens all over with a warm damp face washer. Make sure to clean their face and genital area thoroughly after every feed. Do not allow faeces or food to build-up on fur as nasty skin infections may occur, some of which can prove fatal.
5. **Weighing.** It will be important to monitor the kitten's weight daily. They should double their birth weight in the first week, and afterwards gain 10-15g a day. By 3 weeks, gaining 100-150g a week can be expected.

#### Local rescue organisations

We work with all these rescue charities, who do wonderful work around the Hunter region. Donations to any are welcome and with much appreciation.



## Ask Claire: Our in-clinic behaviourist

### Breaking boredom

I commonly get asked questions like; Why is my dog barking? Why is my dog chewing everything? Why is my dog digging holes?

The most common answer is - **for mental stimulation**. If you are having these and similar issues, try the following ideas and you should see some improvement:



**1) Daily walks**—Even if it's a 5 minute sniff of the street. Twice daily stimulation from outside the home environment is ideal. Make the experience stimulating—let them sniff!

**2) Provide a rotation of objects to play with**—These can be simple home made toys, but providing something different everyday that they find enjoyable makes a big difference.

**3) Provide a scent trail for alone time**—Use peanut butter, or something else tasty and hide small amounts on rocks, their kennel and corners of bricks, for them to discover during the day.

If you have tried all of these and you are still having problems, the cause may not be boredom. Feel free to contact me at the clinic to talk it through further. The bottom line is the more enjoyment they can get from something other than the barking, digging and chewing, the less those behaviours are likely to occur and you end up with a happy relaxed dog.

*Claire, BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour.*

*Round the Twist Behaviour and Training Solutions*

## March is Polite Pet's Month!

Come to our talk!

Polite Pets Month is about raising awareness in the community about behavioural issues in pets. Anxiety disorders and phobias can be extremely frustrating for owners and can cause distress in pets that leads to soiling around the home, aggression and destruction.

Claire will be hosting her annual talk on dog behaviour, with problems and solutions for anxiety and stress related behaviours. Don't miss this great opportunity to solve your dog's anxiety or problem behaviours.

Call now to book and reserve your seat. By providing us with this tear off coupon, you can receive \$5 off your admission cost!



**Date:** Monday 23rd March 2015

**Time:** 6:30pm—7:30pm

**Cost:** \$20 pp

**Included:** Refreshments, 1 hour talk held at the clinic, take home pack

**BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL**

(02) 4955 6670



# \$5 OFF

Polite Pet's Month Dog Behaviour Talk: 23/03/2015

With special speaker: Claire of Round the Twist Behaviour and Training Solutions



### Puppy diets; What to feed? What *not* to feed?

#### The good stuff

Growing puppies of all shapes and sizes need a high quality and balanced diet. This can easily be achieved by feeding a 'super-premium diet'. This is a high quality *dry* food diet that has been scientifically formulated and tested, ensuring it contains all the essential nutrients and minerals for growing puppies. As they have specific energy requirements, feeding super-premium food is the most guaranteed way to be consistent with their recommended daily intake. We recommend Advance, Royal Canin or Hills Pet Nutrition.

#### The bad stuff

There's lots of things dogs, and particularly little puppies, shouldn't put in their mouths.

Here are a few of the foods to steer clear of and why:

- **Chocolate:** Toxic to dogs! This is because it contains theobromine which causes heart and nervous system complications if ingested in toxic amounts.
- **Macadamia Nuts:** In certain dogs these can cause temporary hind limb paralysis.
- **Grapes:** These have the ability to cause acute renal failure, where the kidneys can begin to shut-down.
- **Fatty meats:** ie, sausages, salami, devon, cabanos-si. These very appetising meats can cause a severe upset tummy. This is when the animal's body cannot cope with the amount of fat ingested, and their pancreas becomes inflamed causing pancreatitis.
- **Onions and Garlic:** These have the ability to cause anaemia in some animals, where the amount of red blood cells decrease or become damaged.



For more on puppy nutrition, and much more advice on training, socialisation and wellness, join our Puppy Preschool class with trainer Jacqui! Classes run on a monthly basis, so call us to book your spot.

## Upcoming community events

We are very community focused here at our Fletcher Vets, and love to be involved in events around Newcastle. Here is a list of upcoming events that you can come along to, and see some of our friendly faces. They are always loads of fun, where we hold give-aways, provide pet care information and have fun activities for you and your pet.

- **Wallsend Football Club**—Fletcher Vets are proudly sponsoring 'The Red Devils' throughout the 2015 season. Come along to a game to support your local team.



- **Hunter Animal Rescue picnic day**- Sunday March 8th, 10am-4pm at Speers Point Park, for a picnic day by the lake, raising funds for this important rescue organisation.



- **RSPCA Million Paws Walk**— Sunday 17th May, 10am—2:30pm at Speers Point Park, for a fun walk with lots of pooches, and to raise funds for RSPCA animal shelters.

