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Veterinary newsletter

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Dental hygiene

Once your pet's teeth display the warning signs of tooth and gum problems, gum disease may already be present.

Warning signs include:

- Bad breath
- A yellow-brown crust of tartar around the gum line
- Bleeding gums



There is a lot that can be done to help your pet retain a full set of healthy teeth into its old age. A healthy mouth is important for the overall health of your pet.

Particularly at risk are small dogs. They are more likely to develop tooth problems because their teeth are crowded into small mouths, creating a haven for plaque build-up.

Cats' problems usually start below the gum-line, which makes it difficult for owners to detect. Your vet can monitor this for you.

Prevention is always better than cure—we recommend regular dental checks by a veterinarian along with the correct nutrition and home teeth care. We can advise you what action may best suit your pet, at the time of consultation.



Removing plaque regularly from your pet's teeth should be part of your pet's routine home dental care routine. Ask your veterinarian about the procedure for brushing your pet's teeth. You can also feed specially formulated foods that help reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar from teeth while the pet is eating.

The family veterinarian needs to monitor the progress of your pet's preventative dental care routine much the same way a dentist monitors your teeth. Regular dental checks are essential.

Approximately 80% of dogs show signs of gum disease by age three.
Periodontal disease has been linked as a risk factor to heart, kidney, and liver problems in dogs.



Stage 1: Gingivitis



Stage 2: Early periodontal disease



Stage 3: Moderate periodontal disease



Stage 4: Advanced periodontal disease

Image credit: southhyland.com

Lice in pigs and chickens

Maybe your pigs and/or chickens aren't looking so good lately – they seem to lose weight – may have gone off the lay - and just seem to constantly scratch themselves as if they are constantly itchy. Have a closer look – you may see little insects crawling all over them – if so your animals probably have a lice infestation.

The lice on pigs and chicken are different. The pig louse is called *Hematopinus suis* - it penetrates the skin and sucks blood from its host. It is larger than the chicken louse but looks similar. The chicken louse is called *Menophon gallinae* and doesn't suck blood but only ingest skin scales. Both types of lice can have a detrimental effect on your pet - or production animal – causing discomfort, weight loss, skin injuries and can lead to secondary problems.

Lice ARE Host specific – so even if you may accidentally find a louse on you – it won't stay there very long

The female louse lays eggs daily and attaches them to the hair shaft. They tend to live for only a few weeks - but by then have multiplied more than a 100 times – quickly increasing the lice infestation.

Lice can be transmitted from animal to animal but also through equipment, machinery, bedding, and even on humans – but lice only survive for a few days without being on their host (pig or chicken) .



Haematopinus suis—pig louse



Menophon gallinae—chicken louse

So if you think one of your animals is infested then the others will be as well. Your single pig/chicken can get them from wild animals or you could have brought them on yourself onto your property.

In Pigs: The lice are grayish-brown with black edges and will most often be located in the following body areas - folds of skin around the neck, jowl, and flanks, along the back and on the inside of the legs. The nits (eggs) may also be observed attached to individual hairs, especially in the areas mentioned above.

In Chickens: The chicken louse thrives on the warmth and moisture of your chicken's vent but also can be found on the breasts and thighs.

Treatment: The little sucking critters can be removed by using an insecticide by injection or a pour on treatment. If you aren't sure if your animal is scratching due to lice or another skin issue then contact us.

When Sharing isn't Caring

Giving your pet scraps of food when you are cooking or having dinner can be tempting, but there are some human foods that can be dangerous for animals so if you want to treat them, use treats made for animals. Some examples of foods that may be dangerous for your pet to eat:

Grapes and Raisins: Even in small amounts, these can cause kidney damage that can be fatal for your pet. Signs of poisoning can include vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, depression, reduced urination or increased small amounts of urine, drinking lots of water and even death. Some animals are more sensitive than others. If you know your pet has eaten grapes, it is worth a vet visit to avoid ongoing problems.

Onions: Although delicious and versatile to cook with, onions can cause anaemia in your pet by rupturing its red blood cells. Signs of poisoning include breathlessness, lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea. It can take 2—4 days after eating for signs to develop. All onion, cooked or raw, is toxic to your pet so if you think it has eaten onion, you should get it to your vet straight away.

Chocolate: This can be very dangerous for your animal with cooking chocolate being the most dangerous. Chocolate poisoning can cause vomiting, diarrhea, muscle tremors, seizures and even death so if you think your pet has eaten chocolate, give us a call straight away.

Chicken bones: Though chicken is a perfectly fine food for you or your pet, chicken bones are very brittle when cooked so can snap and cause damage to the mouth and intestines. This can mean your pet needs surgery to remove or repair their intestines.

These are just a few of the foods to avoid.

If you think your pet has eaten something it shouldn't have

Please call us on 06 858 6555



Ask your vet clinic for the best worming solution for your pet

Treating for worms

You can choose from a range of worming products, including spot-on treatments, such as Advocate® or Profender® for cats and dogs and tablets such as Drontal®, which kill intestinal worms in dogs and cats. Worm your adult pets at least every three months to control intestinal worms and help to prevent human infections.

| | Administration | Frequency ¹ | Min. Age/Weight |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Drontal® |  Oral | 3 Monthly ² |  > 2 weeks (puppies)  > 4 weeks (kittens) |
| advocate® |  Topical | Monthly |  > 7 weeks (puppies)  > 9 weeks (kittens) |
| profender® |  Topical | 3 Monthly ³ |  > 8 weeks (kittens) Available in NZ for cats weighing over 2.5kg |

¹ Frequency is a guide for adult pets only. Ask your vet clinic for a tailored solution to fit your pet's age and lifestyle, and always read the product insert before use.
² With reference to cats and dogs over 6 months of age. ³ With reference to cats over 12 weeks of age.

Cat behaviour—scratch and play

Cats were once described as asocial animals, but this is no longer regarded as true. Although very different from dogs, cats also need interaction and most importantly, your loving attention! When you bring a new kitten or cat into your home you'll have to decide whether your pet will live strictly indoors or will be allowed outside. There are advantages and disadvantages in both cases. Free-roaming cats are prone to more illnesses and have a much shorter life expectancy, as they can be hit by cars, attacked by other animals and exposed to internal and external parasites such as fleas, worms and ear mites. Conversely, if your cat never ventures outside you must provide him or her with physical and mental stimulation, including interaction with you, exercise, scratching posts and a clean toilet area. Whatever decision you make, following a few simple guidelines to direct your cat's behaviour can ensure that harmony reigns in your cat-loving household!

Make sure you have a post that's up to scratch

Scratching just comes naturally to cats. An instinctive activity that begins when kittens are five weeks old, scratching allows cats to leave chemical and visual signals that, among other functions, serve as "messages" to other cats and animals. However, what's entirely normal for your cat can become a big problem for you if they start scratching your carpets and



furniture. If this happens, you should cover or remove the tempting object and provide kitty with a special scratching place, usually a post, of their own. As befits the feline reputation, you may find that your kitten or cat may be slightly picky about what kind of scratching post he or she will agree to use.

Posts that some cats might find acceptable have sisal, cardboard, wood or wool composite surfaces. The most important characteristics of a post are that it be taller than the cat when they stand on their hind legs, sturdy enough not to tip over and located in a prominent, easily accessible area.

Whatever its construction, the scratching post or board should not be changed as long as your cat is still using it. The more scratched and awful looking, the more your cat will love and use it—instead of your furniture!

Playtime helps keep your cat healthy and happy

Make sure your kitten or cat has lots of opportunities for interesting, challenging play that will satisfy their natural instincts and provide them with much-needed activity. Find toys that bounce or flutter—there are many available—that they can pretend to "chase," "hunt" and "capture." You should try to have at least one daily, 15-minute interactive play session with your cat, especially if he or she is often left alone.

