



# CHB VETS LTD

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Veterinary newsletter

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## Importance of Mental and Physical Stimulation for Your Dog (Part 2)

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One of the best ways to tire out your dog is through mental stimulation, which works much faster than any form of physical stimulation. For example, police dogs can run all day, however, if we do a solid hour of obedience or some other form of training with them, they are pretty worn out. Again, comparing dogs to people, what tires you more, walking one or two miles or doing complex math problems for one to two hours straight? With the math problems, your head hurts, you feel drained, you just want to put down the books and shut your eyes. That's how mental stimulation works with dogs, as well. Constant thinking creates a lot of mental stimulation, which tires the entire body.



One of the most basic things you can do to keep your dog mentally stimulated is to practise obedience training with him or her—not only practise stuff already mastered, but find new things to teach. Learning completely new concepts will really wear out your dog fast.

Another fun thing you can do is make your dog really use his nose. A simple game; put three plastic cups upside down on the floor and hide a treat under one of them. Make your dog sniff out the one with the treat. Once he is sniffing on the right box, make him sit, then lift the cup and reward with the treat. This will teach your dog to use his nose. Soon he will sit on his own once he finds where the treat is hidden. You can start using a keyword such as “find the treat.” As your dog gets better and better at this game, make it more complex by adding more cups, different locations and different treats.

Another good game is playing what we refer to as the tug game. If your dog is motivated to play tug, you can combine obedience with playing tug. We will have them down, sit, heel, etc., then give a verbal marker such as “Yes,” and activate playing. Meaning, play tug with them for approximately 15 or 20 seconds, have them “out” the tug, give one or two more obedience commands, and once they complete them, we will give another verbal marker that engages the tug game again. You can repeat this for 15 minutes, doing this combines mental stimulation (obedience training) with physical stimulation (the tug game). By combining both forms of stimulation, you really wear down your dog much faster.

Remember, anything can be taught to your dog as a game; you do not have to find training ways to teach, just make them up as you go. You can put a treat in one hand but display both hands in a fist to your dog and try to make them sniff out which hand holds the treat. Take a couple pairs of old shoes and line them up, putting a treat in one of them, and make your dog find which shoe its in. These types of drills really make the dogs use their senses extra hard, which is good not only for scent development, but it is good for mental stimulation, as well. Games are fun for you and your dog and you will bond while playing. There are no limits to the things you can come up with to keep your dog stimulated. Also, it keeps you stimulated by making you think of new, fun, and creative things to do.

## Lambing time:

When do you need to intervene and help a lambing ewe deliver her (hopefully) live lamb? Lambing ewes will choose a lambing spot up to several days before they go into labour, so moving ewes around at lambing time can disrupt this and lead to problems. Once a ewe has chosen a spot, which is often away from other sheep so she can have some privacy, she will return to it as she feels labour starting.



Keep an eye on ewes coming up to the start of lambing. You will notice the udders of the ewes closest to lambing will swell up as they fill with milk for their lambs, and the vulva swells and reddens. The early contractions are involved in getting the lamb/s into position for birthing and the cervix open and is known as 1st stage labour. 2nd stage is when the cervix is open and the uterine contractions are becoming more forceful with abdominal effort put in as well ('pushing') causing the water bag to come out and the lamb to be born. Once a ewe enters 2nd stage labour, a lamb should be born within an hour. If she is having multiple lambs there can be a gap of up to half an hour between the birth of each lamb. 3rd stage labour is when the placenta delivered.

There are no hard and fast rules for when to intervene and it is important to allow the ewe to lamb by herself if she can. If a ewe is straining, getting up and down and no lamb appears after half an hour, then intervention may be needed. It is important to have good hygiene standards when putting your hand inside a ewe as it is easy to introduce infection and maybe affect her chances of getting back in lamb in the future. It is also very important to be gentle as you are dealing with living tissue. The normal presentation of a lamb is with both front legs and the head presented as in the picture below. A breech or backwards presentation does happen and, as long as the lamb is born without unnecessary delay, should still produce a live lamb.

If you have assisted a ewe to give birth following good hygiene standards and she has been vaccinated with 5in1 before lambing, and the lamb is alive, then you shouldn't need any antibiotic coverage after lambing. If you aren't sure, ask your vet for advice. The best case is to let the ewe lamb by herself but sometimes you may need to help to ensure it goes well.

Lambing is a great time of year and is the time when everything comes together to produce our next year's income. Enjoy it.



# Senior cats

Cats are living much longer now than was the case 20 years ago, thanks to better nutritional, veterinary and home care. In recent years, feline ages and life-stages have been redefined, cats are considered to be elderly once they reach 11 years with senior cats defined as those aged between 11-14 years and super-senior cats 15 years and upwards. When caring for older cats it sometimes helps to appreciate their age in human terms. The formula for calculating the equivalent age is fairly simple:

*the first two years of a cat's life equate to 24 human years and every year thereafter is equivalent to 4 human years. For example, a 16-year-old cat would be equivalent to an 80-year-old human.*

## The effects of ageing

With increasing age, there are many changes to a cat's physiology, behaviour and vulnerability to particular illnesses. Physiological changes include reduced ability to smell and taste food, reduced ability to digest fat and protein, reduced hearing, immune function, skin elasticity and stress tolerance.

## Behavioural changes

As cats age, their behaviour alters too, often as a direct result of the physiological changes taking place. The elderly cat adapts gradually to these changes and it may not be apparent unless you are specifically looking for signs of ageing. Older cats hunt less, spend less time outside, are generally less active and sleep for longer periods. They can have a reduced or fussy appetite, be less keen to play or groom and be more vocal. They also tend to become more insecure and therefore potentially more dependent on you.

Other behavioural changes can be seen as a direct result of disease, for example, increased thirst or appetite or aggression associated with pain.

## Did You Know?



One female dog can produce 2 litters of 6-10 puppies per year. This means one unspayed female and her offspring can produce 67,000 dogs in 6 years.

An estimated 80% of the dogs will be euthanized in shelters

Why Spay?  
Do you know 67,000 people who want a new dog?



# Keeping your pet warm this

## Winter

As the weather becomes colder and we start turning on the heating inside, spare a thought for our pets that live outside. Many households have rabbits or guinea pigs as pets and, as we tend to spend less time in the garden during winter, it is important to regularly check on them. In the wild, rabbits rely on their burrows to stay warm, whereas we house them above ground and expose them to extremes of temperature and wind and rain. Guinea pigs originated from much warmer South American climates.

Check which way the hutch is facing so the cold wind doesn't blow straight in. On cold nights, you can cover them with a blanket or tarpaulin to reduce draughts. Provide extra bedding such as hay or straw, and there are heat pads available that will stay warm for up to 8 hours. If you have more than one rabbit or guinea pig then they will snuggle together to keep warm. Make sure your hutches are in a state of good repair and are waterproof.

A good diet during the winter months is essential as extra calories are needed to keep warm. Check regularly to make sure your pets are maintaining their body weight. Water bottles should also be checked regularly and cover if they are freezing.



The most important thing is that these small pets are warm and dry during the winter months. They do not hibernate, and any signs of being unwell should be checked out immediately.

Make sure your rabbits are up to date with their vaccinations, as winter is a time that wild rabbits may come close looking for food and pass on infectious disease.



Don't forget to still play with your furry friends during the colder months. They will appreciate a visit on a cold day and the exercise and play time will help them stay warm and healthy.