



Hilton Veterinary Hospital

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Inside this issue:

As we move back in to summer so parasites such as fleas and ticks are going to be more prevalent. These parasites are of great concern to your pet's health. Fleas not only can cause severe itching they also can transmit tapeworm and bacteria that invade the blood stream. Your average flea product takes 3 months to affect flea numbers. So starting once you see fleas may be too late if your pet is flea allergic.

Ticks transmit Babesia or tick bite fever and Ehrlichia or tropical pancytopenia. It is therefore important that appropriate parasite control is applied prophylactically to try and prevent these diseases. Newer products have reached the market. Please make sure you discuss how to safely use these products with us before applying them. We have already had our first few cases of severe and complicated tick bite fever patients.

These are patients who do not recover with a simple anti-babesia injection. They have immune systems that behave inappropriately to the presence of the parasite (akin to a child throwing a tantrum). Unfortunately this inappropriate response does little to get rid of the parasite but a lot to destroy the host's organs. In these cases it is common to see signs related to liver, kidney, heart, muscle, pancreatic or brain damage. In other cases blood breakdown continues after the Babesia parasite is killed. This is called immune mediated haemolytic anaemia. This complication of Babesia is the only indication for cortisone.

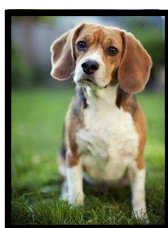
Cats are not immune to tick and flea transmitted diseases with Howick and Hilton being one of the hot spots in South Africa to tick bite fever in cats. Cats are highly susceptible to products that are not made specifically for them. If it does not say safe for cats DO NOT USE IT. This does not only apply to flea and tick products but also other products such as Panado. The line of thinking is that if it is safe for children it must be safe for cats and dogs. Of course this is wrong, these products can severely damage your pets. The significant parasites seen in dogs and cats, some with zoonotic potential, are ticks, fleas, mites, lice, intestinal parasites, blood worms (Dirofilaria repens), oesophageal worm (Spirocercalupi).

Responsible pet ownership requires that these are controlled. Ask our receptionists if you wish to receive monthly reminders for your pets parasite control.

The practice would like to welcome Theresa Paymans to our reception team. She has already fitted in well. She brings a lot of experience with her and her friendly manner is so appreciated. We hope you enjoy your time with us Theresa.

Kind regards Martin de Scally.

Dedicated to the health of your pets.



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After Hours Emergencies:

Please phone
(033) 343 4602

Contact Details:

If your contact details have changed then please inform us .

This month's
theme:
Flea and Tick
Control

The Nurse's Clinic: My Rhino Capture Experience by Jane Lindeque

I recently completed my studies to be a veterinary nurse and as part of my studies I had to do some work with wildlife. I was not quite sure how to go about this and thought about what to do for some-time. As a family our annual holiday was to Kruger Park and I love going there, so I thought why not try and do some work with the vets in Kruger Park.

In December 2009, I emailed the SA National Parks and explained that I needed to do some veterinary work with wildlife in order to complete my diploma. To my amazement and delight I got a reply about 3 weeks later from one of the vets to say that I was welcome to come and work with them for 2 weeks during their capture season which was in June and July 2010. I was delighted and started counting down the months until I went.

I arrived at Skukuza on a beautiful bushveld afternoon. It was hot, so nice after leaving a very cold and frosty Hilton that morning. I was made to feel very welcome by the vets that I would be working with and met another 6 students from around the world that were there for the same thing. We were informed of what was expected of us and that we would be leaving at 4am the next morning. I was so excited and a bit nervous.

I was ready at 4am. We, the students, were to be part of the ground crew on the capture. In our group were 4 students from the University of Georgia in the United States. Their Professor was with them and they were doing a study on rhino. Our job would be to gather samples from them i.e blood, hair and faecal. These samples would also be used by SA National Parks to study DNA etc and keep records of all the rhino captured.

On our first day we captured and got samples from 4 rhino. What an exciting day!! I was amazed at how well the whole operation was run. I timed the one capture we did that day and from the moment the vet in the helicopter darted the rhino to when we had finished doing our sampling and it was loaded in the crate it took all of 20 minutes. This in the African bush, I thought was quite impressive. The whole time the vet teams only concern was about the welfare of the rhino. We, as the students had to be wide awake and get on with getting the samples as fast as possible. . We all took turns doing the different jobs.

I soon found out that getting blood out of a rhino's bulging ear vein was not as easy as it looked and when I had the guy who was head of the ground crew telling me to hurry up as they had to get the rhino up and moving, I was stressed. But as the days went by and I gained confidence it became easier and I enjoyed every moment.

I cannot remember how many rhino we captured and relocated to their new homes in those 2 weeks. Everyday was just an adventure. Knowing that we were helping to get these animals away from the poachers was a great feeling of achievement.

I learnt so much about wildlife veterinary work in that time and gained confidence in my ability to perform my job. I particularly enjoyed learning about the different drugs that are used in a capture and at what stage of the process they are used and why. During my second week there, I met another vet from Onderstepoort who was doing some research on why the crocodile were suddenly dying in the Olifants and Letaba Rivers. He allowed me to go with him and do several post mortems on some of these crocodile. It was interesting and I never knew that the crocodiles carried so many parasites.

I have been back to Kruger and worked with this team again. This time was extra special as they allowed my 9 year old son Sven to come with us on one of the days that we captured rhino. To see his eyes light up with amazement when he got to touch and feel a real wild rhino for the first time was priceless. I might have a vet in the making. I hope to be allowed to go every year for my 2 weeks of soul restoring work with these people. It is only once you have worked behind the scenes in a park of this size that you realise how much work goes into keeping a place like this working properly and how hard the vets and their teams work to protect and look after the wild animals under their care. This is often dangerous work but they do it and I for one will always be grateful for this and hope to pass this on to my children as they grow up. In the next week I will be helping with some buffalo capture and relocation.. I have never worked with buffalo. I will let you all know how it goes in the next newsletter. Until then please do what you can to help stop rhino poaching.

National Flea Week by Dr Martin de Scally and Merial Healthcare

Following the success of the first ever National Flea Week held at the end of November 2011, FRONTLINE® Plus and Certifect aim to reach more pet owners in 2012 with a campaign which encourages pet owners all over South Africa to conduct home flea checks, taking a stand against fleas and the havoc they create. The *National Flea Week 2012* campaign aims to raise awareness of the suffering many family dogs and cats experience when riddled with fleas, to encourage pet owners to adopt a habitual checking regime and to provide pet owners with useful tips and hints on how to keep both their homes and beloved furry friends flea free all year round.

Checking for fleas and ticks on a regular basis is vital for your pet's well-being and crucial to keeping your entire family safe from the constant threat of flea and tick-borne illnesses and diseases, which range from mild skin irritation, itching and scratching to more severe symptoms such as pet hair loss, infected skin sores and anemia due to blood loss caused by large amounts of fleas feeding on the animal. Animals infected with ticks face the far more deadly threat of Biliary if pet owners are not aware and do not actively protect against this.

Theunis de Bruyn, business unit manager at Merial South Africa urges pet owners to carry out regular flea checks and to apply a proven and effective flea and tick treatment every 4 weeks, especially as the South African climate is ideal for creating the perfect breeding environment for fleas and ticks all year round. De Bruyn also advises using a product that target both the adult fleas on your pet as well as flea eggs, larvae and pupae along with regular housekeeping to keep your home flea free.

Pet owners are encouraged to conduct regular flea checks to keep their homes free from fleas and their pets healthy.

Pet Owners are advised to:

- 🐾 Conduct regular flea checks. Fleas are active throughout the year and not only in Summer.
- 🐾 Apply a registered flea and tick treatment every 4-6 weeks.
- 🐾 Use products that work on both the adult fleas as well as flea eggs, larvae and pupae.



- 🐾 Keep your pets' environment clean. Vacuum frequently where your pets like to lounge, especially carpets and soft coverings. Don't forget the inside of your car.
- 🐾 Regularly wash your pets' beds, blankets, toys and other soft items in 60°C water
- 🐾 When going for a walk, avoid tick breeding grounds such as tall grass and brush
- 🐾 Prevention is better than cure. The female flea can lay up to 46 eggs per day and these will hatch within one to 10 days
- 🐾 Visit a vet who can recommend an effective and gentle tick and flea product if pets are already suffering due to a tick or flea infestation.

How do I check for fleas?

- 🐾 Run a metal comb (available from your vet or pet store) through your pet's coat making sure that you touch the skin below. If the comb gathers black specks you may have found flea dirt.
- 🐾 Place a white paper towel beneath your pet and rub your hands across its fur. If black specks fall on the towel, it may be flea dirt.

Some Flea facts:

- 🐾 Fleas date back 40 million years.
- 🐾 Fleas can pull 160,000 times their own weight, which is like you pulling 2,679 double-decker buses.
- 🐾 A flea can jump 30,000 times without stopping.
- 🐾 Female cat fleas can drink 15 times their weight in blood.
- 🐾 Fleas don't have ears and are virtually blind.
- 🐾 Fleas can transmit diseases to humans. Fleas jumping from rats to humans transmitted the cause of the Black Plague in 1664, killing 70,000 people in London.
- 🐾 The average flea is 2-3 mm long and weighs half a grain
- 🐾 Flea larvae don't like the light so they move away from it, deep into carpets, cracks in flooring or any nook or cranny.
- 🐾 When a flea jumps, it accelerates 50 times faster than a space shuttle.
- 🐾 Fleas can lay up to 1,500 eggs in a lifetime.
- 🐾 Flea pupae can live for up to 1 year in homes.
- 🐾 Fleas reverse direction with every jump. They can jump over 150 times their own size (approximately 30cm high) - which is like you jumping over St Paul's Cathedral.
- 🐾 A flea's life cycle can be as short as 14 days or up to 12 months.
- 🐾 95% of flea eggs, larvae and pupae live in beds, rugs, carpets and sofas - not on your pet.



Pet Parenting a Geriatric by Dr Trish Mills

Like people, pets age and although you should continue to provide play, exercise and training - adjustments may have to be made as older pets may have trouble with normal, everyday habits. Many problems arise during the aging process that can and must be properly addressed and managed to ensure a comfortable life for your pet in his/her golden years.

Understanding the age of your pet

The average lifespan of a dog is 8 to 15 years. Cats may live up to 21 years. Generally the larger the dog, the shorter the lifespan. For example, a large dog breed, such as a Great Dane, is considered to be an old dog by the age of 6. Smaller dogs, such as Poodles, may not show signs of aging until they reach 11 or 12 years old. Importantly, though, we must consider our pets as "senior" once they turn **7 years** and adjust their diets appropriately and you need to be on the look out for the signs of aging that are described below and bring them to the attention of your vet.

Changes in hearing

A sign that your pet's hearing is impaired could be that there is little or no response when you call for them. This may be confused with a pet not wanting or not being able to respond - such as a dog suffering from arthritis, or a sick pet. Or you may find that he/she starts barking for no apparent reason and an underlying reason could be reduced hearing ability. Speak to your vet if you are concerned.

Poor eyesight

Your pet's eyesight may become poorer as they get older, due to age-related changes in the eye itself and in the processing of visual images centrally. The most common ocular aging change of all, lenticular sclerosis, in which the pupil of the eye appears grayish, does not significantly affect vision at all. Cataracts, however, which are also more common in elderly dogs, do impair vision. A pet with poor eyesight may bump into doors or furniture and have reduced activity. In time, your pet should be able to adapt to his/her poor eyesight by learning the position of furniture and how to get by in the house or outdoors.

Painful joint problems

Older pets are often handicapped by arthritis or other painful joint problems. If you notice a reluctance to get up, stiffness when walking, a reluctance to jump, or something more subtle like a reduced activity level then your pet may need help. Analgesics, nutritional supplements or prescription food, soft bedding and gentle exercise can bring many pets relief and help manage their discomfort.

Changes in house-training habits

Excessive thirst and frequent or seemingly uncontrolled urination may be a sign of kidney problems, heart problems or diabetes in an older pet. If your old pet starts messing in usual places, he/she may be incontinent or, again, they may be too sore or weak to walk outside and squat because of painful arthritis or illness. Regular checkups are important to check for conditions which may lead to inappropriate elimination. Loss of house training could also be a sign of degenerative brain disease which is associated with ageing.

Changes in behaviour

Behaviour problems can sometimes be attributed to age-related degeneration within the brain known as **Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CDS)** in dogs, but similar problems can arise when changes occur in the household or environment to which it may be difficult for senior pets to adapt. Signs to watch out for are: disorientation (you may notice aimless wandering, monotonous barking or panic attacks), decreased social interaction with humans (delayed recognition or a lack of response to people he/she knows), changes in sleeping patterns, and/or a loss of house-training.

Changes in eating habits

Oral hygiene should be an important consideration at all ages and you need to attend to your pet's **dental health**. If you notice a reluctance to eat, or discomfort while eating, your pet may have tooth and/or gum problems. A change in **weight** may occur in older pets. Older pets may not be as active as they once were and their metabolism may have changed, so they have a tendency to gain weight. If you notice that your dog or cat has been losing

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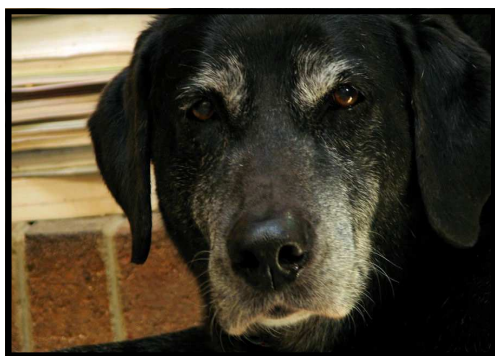
or gaining weight, take him/her to the veterinarian immediately for a checkup. Sometimes it may be difficult to notice weight changes so regular weight checks (at home or at the vets) may help identify any problems

General care

Older pets don't cope as well with changes in **temperature** and so in winter make sure they have warm comfortable bedding and you could even consider putting a jersey on them. Keep up with your **tick and flea control** regimen and remember to keep **deworming** as older pets can be more susceptible to parasites

Easing into those golden years

To help keep your pet healthy for as long as possible it's important that your pet receive **regular veterinary care** and **annual vaccinations** and that he/she is eating a good quality, well-balanced diet.



Nutrition is extremely important to your pet's overall health - make sure his/her diet is correct for size, breed, age and habits. If your pet begins experiencing medical problems he/she may be recommended a specially formulated diet. Always discuss any dietary changes you might make with your veterinarian first.

The final decision

Now, for the hardest decision of all - having the grace, courage and kindness to help your pet die peacefully and pain-free. **Euthanasia** is an act of love towards a pet which is no longer able to enjoy life and if, during his life, your pet has been a cherished member of your family, this is the last, and often most compassionate, duty you can perform for him/her. Spend time discussing this decision with your vet so that you can recognise when it is kinder for your pet to be euthanased to prevent suffering. Also speak to your vet before bringing your pet in to find out what to expect when the procedure is done.



Thinking of getting a pet?

Ask us about our *free*
pre-pet selection counselling.



Me Too Mattresses

Me Too mattresses are used throughout Hilton Vet Hospital in the animal's domicile. So they have been tried and tested for over two and half years with fantastic results. They are foam mattresses sealed in vinyl plastic and come with summer and winter material covers. We carry standard stock but they can be ordered to your specification. Please speak to Lana, Jackson or Theresa, for your requirements.

Staff Profile

Debbie Kleu

Debbie joined the practice in August 2011 . Debbie is one of our very capable and energetic nurses who assists in looking after you precious animals. She always has a friendly smile and is very enthusiastic about their well being.

Debbie is married to John and they have 3 children. Ethan is 8 years old, Sean is 5 years old and Gabby is 2 years old.

Debbie is passionate about doing dentals and is the master behind the clean teeth that your precious pets are sent home with. She enjoys theatre surgery, giving advice to clients and anaesthetics. Debbie is interested in the medical referral cases and in giving clients advice on their puppies. She runs puppy parties at our hospital. Debbie says her motto is to go home dirty because then she knows she has done a good day's work.

In her spare time, Debbie enjoys playing squash, doing crafts and would like to get back on her bicycle and to start running again. (When she has the time.)



A Puppy's Prayer

Now I lay me down to sleep,
The king-size bed is soft and deep..
I sleep right in the centre groove
My human being can hardly move!
I've trapped her legs, she's tucked in tight
And here is where I pass the night
No one disturbs me or dares intrude
Till morning comes and "I want food!"
I sneak up slowly to begin
my nibbles on my human's chin.
She wakes up quickly,
I have sharp teeth-
I'm a puppy, don't you see?
For the morning's here
and it's time to play
I always seem to get my way.
So thank you Lord for giving me
This human person that I see.
The one who hugs and holds me tight
And shares her bed with me at night!

Author Unknown



HILTON VETERINARY PARLOUR

Heather Walters has joined us and is running a parlour at our clinic. This will meet our demand for a personalised service in the area.

Your precious pets will be handled by Heather personally in a caring compassionate manner. We cater to all types and sizes, whether it is a simple wash and dip or a complicated clip.

Bookings can be made at Hilton Vet Hospital reception, or by contacting Heather on 076 2798589.

If you have a story about your pet that you would like to share with us, then please e-mail it to lauren@hiltonvethospital.co.za