



# Hilton Veterinary Hospital

Website: [www.hiltonvethospital.co.za](http://www.hiltonvethospital.co.za)

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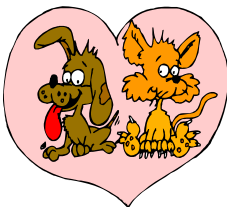
Free Small Animal Veterinary Advice e-mail: [martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za](mailto:martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za)

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### "Love is in the air"

It is Valentine's Day on the 14th February which means that you should remember to show your loved one/s affection and shower them with gifts, cards and flowers. Why not also use this occasion to return some of the unconditional love that your pets constantly show you, with a special treat for them. Come in on Valentine's Day and receive a small gift for you and your pet from the hospital.



We are happy to welcome Dr Derek Clover who has joined the team at Hilton Vet Hospital. After practising in the UK, Derek moved back to the Midlands where he has been working as a small animal vet for the last 3 years. Derek will be a small animal general practitioner and looks forward to providing quality care for your pets. Derek has a particular interest in surgery and small animals including dogs, cats, mice, rats, rabbits and guinea pigs.

With the extreme heat that we have been experiencing the snakes are out in force. Many times our pets act as sentinels warning us of their activity. Whilst we all have a right to peek out our existence on earth, including

child become a victim of in venomation. Dr Trish Mills has taken the trouble of introducing you to some of the possibilities available for the treatment of snake bites in pets.

The heat also brings damaging ultraviolet radiation. Just like children, animals and especially white cats and dogs need to be protected from these damaging rays. Squamous cell carcinoma is a common disease seen on the ear pinnae, nasal planum, and oral mucosa in white cats and the ventral abdomen in white dogs. Early prevention of sunburn is the best treatment. Once cancer is established, the options are anti cancer creams, cryotherapy, photodynamic therapy, chemotherapy, radiation therapy or surgery. Combinations of the above are also possible. To keep them out of the sunlight, try screening their favourite window basking site to filter out ultraviolet rays. If they are constantly sunbathed, they will pay the price later on.

As always please feel free to contact me on [martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za](mailto:martin@hiltonvethospital.co.za) or 0827845537.

Regards

Martin de Scally  
Dedicated to the health of animals



### After Hours

#### Emergencies:

Please phone  
(033) 343 4602

### Contact Details:

If your contact details have changed then please inform us .

### This month's theme:

Love your Pet.



## The Nurse's Clinic: Grubs up

Sr Nicky Rose-Innes

We know for our pets, meal times are the best part of the day and we're sure it's the same for many of us. Something we really love is watching an animal dive into his/her food with enthusiasm, oblivious to the world whilst enjoying their spoils.

Unfortunately illness often affects one's appetite. Many of you have experienced this yourself so can understand what our furry friends go through in these cases. So we're sure you'll find it easy to understand why we say how important it is that a sick animal is fed correctly, even if it is too weak or nauseous to do so itself. Proper nutrition is a vital part of a patient's treatment. Your pet needs a certain amount of energy to maintain its normal healthy state and will need extra to fight any infections in the body. If they are not eating, the body will break down its own cells to obtain the energy required, worsening the health of the animal. This is especially important for the intestine which can lose 25% of its mass after just 24 hours of starvation, predisposing the patient to ulcers and bacterial invasion from the intestine into the body. This is called sepsis and is a major cause of death in critically ill patients.

Obviously if a patient is nauseous from its illness they will be placed on a course of anti-emetics but sometimes that is not quite enough to bring the appetite straight back, so then we have to look at options such as syringe or tube feeding. Syringe feeding can be done when the patient will lap up food put into their mouth, but won't eat of their own accord.

This method is usually avoided in cats, as it can cause an aversion to the food used. Tube feeding is used in critically ill patients or patients who for certain reasons are unable to eat properly. (ie: broken jaw, chewing or swallowing problems) The method we most commonly use is called a nasogastric tube. This is done by passing a tube down the nasal passages into the oesophagus until a point just before the stomach. As this could cause some discomfort to the patient, a local anaesthetic is dropped down its nostrils before the procedure is begun. If the patient senses more discomfort or pain during the procedure we administer a slight sedation and pain-killers to calm them and relieve any pain they would be feeling. From there, the placement of the tube is checked, by a negative pressure test and often by

radiograph to ensure the tube is in the correct place and has not wandered its way into the trachea. All tubes are thoroughly checked before feeding is started. Each animal in hospital will have their own special dietary requirements, depending on illness, age etc. This is worked out per patient and they are fed accordingly.

Some people may ask whether the nasogastric tubes cause pain or discomfort whilst it is in the animal. This is a very good question and it is always good to have these concerns for your pets. We do sometimes have to place collars on the animals to stop them from pulling the tubes out, as they seem to cause an itchy type of irritation for some animals. Many however, are not phased by the tubes at all. Our happiest moment is of course when one of your darling pets decides to take their first mouthful on their own, excitement and celebration throughout the hospital because we know our patient is making a positive step toward recovery!



## Gastric and splenic torsions. A killer Disease?

By Dr Martin de Scally

A Gastric torsion is a medical emergency and is seen mostly in large breed dogs. Most cases take place after hours and even an hour's delay can mean the difference between life and death for your pet. The common symptoms and signs are discomfort, difficulty breathing, bloating, vomiting and collapse (shock).

No one really knows why and how the torsions take place but they do appear to be associated with activity at night after a full meal. Once the dogs stomach twists around it blocks the passage of food and gas out and blocks the blood supply to and from the stomach. Sometimes it also involves the spleen. This is similar to placing a tourniquet on the stomach and it rapidly begins to turn black in colour as it dies. The prognosis is extremely poor for severe cases with massive distension and long standing cases (more than 30-60 minutes). Partial torsions and early torsions < 30 minutes carry a good prognosis. There is no one test that will determine outcome but very high lactate levels indicate that gastric wall death is already advancing. The treatment involves pain control, treatment for shock, treatment for sepsis, treatment of secondary cardiac damage, treatment of clotting dis-

and fixing of the stomach into its anatomically correct position.

The operation requires urgency, advanced medical and surgical equipment and expertise in order to be as successful as possible. Any delay or procrastination can be fatal. We do not believe that passing a stomach tube to allow some gas out and hospitalisation overnight, especially un-monitored constitutes adequate treatment. The veterinarians at Hilton Vet Hospital follow the techniques prescribed by Dr Dan Smeak from Colorado State University. Dr de Scally was fortunate to attend Dr Smeak's workshop on gastric torsions in 2009. In one month alone 6 such operations were performed by our after-hours clinic.

So common (up to 36% occurrence) and dangerous is this emergency in large breeds such as Boerboels German Shepherds and Great Danes that some people are choosing to have a preventative procedure done to eliminate the chance of it occurring. Such a procedure is called a gastro plexy. This procedure can easily be performed at the time of sterilisation or as a stand-alone procedure.



### 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 a year and a half, 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 Jackson or Jane for your requirements.

## Snake Bites

By Dr Trish Mills

Due to the outdoor "African" lifestyle many of us lead we run the risk of putting ourselves and our pets in situations where we may stumble upon a snake. Only about 10 percent of snakes in South Africa are venomous but most of us would be unable to accurately identify a snake that happened to slither across our path, especially in times of crisis, such as when a pet or child has been bitten. It is important to remember that the treatment of a snake bite differs according to the type of snake. A bite from a venomous snake is an emergency and is treated very differently from a bite from a non-venomous snake but we must also keep in mind that a bite from a venomous snake is not necessarily lead to envenomation. Some snakes can voluntarily withhold venom. The best way to identify a poisonous snake is to take photographs of it, trying to kill it can end up increasing the victim count.

For most snakes their first line of defence is to retreat or remain undetected. Unfortunately, our dogs are often too inquisitive for their own good and will go ahead and actively pursue a snake that is trying to avoid contact with them. If harassed, a snake will issue warning signals such as hissing and mock strikes. If these warning signs are not heeded, the by now stressed snake, will bite in self-defence. If your mischievous hound has now been bitten, quick action on your part will be necessary. Firstly, get your dog away from the snake. Get an accurate description of the snake or if possible take the photos. Then, call ahead to your vet as many do not routinely stock antivenom. Hilton Vet does stock sufficient antivenom and we have already saved many lives with it. Antibiotics and cortisone are not considered effective treatment for snake bites. Your dog's chance of survival depends on many things such as the type of venom, the amount of venom injected, the site and depth of the bite and the health and size of your dog. Venom is actually modified saliva which is produced to enable a snake to kill and digest its prey.

Venom is generally classed into 3 types according to the effects we see in a patient with snake bite

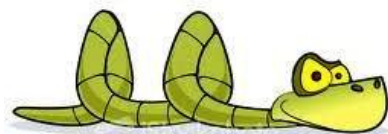
envenomation, but some venom can cause a combination of effects:

**Cytotoxic** venom causes death of the tissues surrounding the bite

**Haemotoxic** venom which can result in severe internal bleeding

**Neurotoxic** venom which causes symptoms such as drowsiness and vomiting and may lead to difficulty swallowing and respiratory paralysis.

Supportive treatment: Although the timeous administration of antivenom dramatically reduces symptoms the treatment of shock, with intravenous fluids, ventilation while respiratory muscles are paralysed or intubation to allow breathing when there is massive swelling around the neck, pain control and blood transfusions may still be necessary to decrease the risk of poor outcome. Once stable reconstructive surgery may be necessary following large areas of tissue death from a cytotoxic snake bite. The body's ability to heal these lesions should never be under estimated. As much as we dread the thought of the trauma of having our pets bitten by a snake, snakes do play an essential role in maintaining the delicate balance required for a healthy ecosystem. They are a source of food for predators higher up the food chain, such as snake eagles, and they ensure their own prey species, such as rodents or frogs, do not become too numerous. A venomous snake isn't necessarily dangerous. The danger a snake poses depends on the size, location and their behaviour patterns, of the venomous snakes only the Black mamba is known to be aggressive. So if we are aware, and cautious, and avoid contact with snakes as much as they avoid contact with us I'm sure harmonious living is possible! Our dogs, especially Jack Russell's, act as sentinels protecting out children.



## Staff Profile

### Jane Lindeque

Jane joined the practice in April 2010. She has been doing reception work at various veterinary practices for 15 years. Jane has completed her nursing diploma via correspondence, through an American college. Jane will be writing her exams at Onderstepoort in September. As part of her diploma she has had to do practical work and she has learned so much by doing this at the Kruger National Park. Jane has a special interest in emergency cases. In her spare time she enjoys mountain biking with her husband and 2 sons. She also enjoys working in her garden. Jane has 5 dogs, 4 cats and a guinea pig.



## Lost and Found

A pair of glasses was left in one of our consulting rooms a while ago. If you have lost a pair or might know the owner please enquire at reception. We think they may belong to a child. Thank you.



## Valentine's Day



### Love your Pet



If dogs could teach us we would learn things such as:

- 🐾 When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
- 🐾 Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride
- 🐾 Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy
- 🐾 When it is in your best interest, practice obedience
- 🐾 Let others know when they have invaded your territory
- 🐾 Take naps and stretch before rising
- 🐾 Run, romp and play daily
- 🐾 Thrive on attention and let people touch you
- 🐾 Avoid biting, when a simple growl will do
- 🐾 On warm days, stop to lie on your back on the grass
- 🐾 On hot days, drink lots of water and lay under a shady tree
- 🐾 When you are happy, dance and wag your entire body
- 🐾 No matter how often you are scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout...run right back and make friends
- 🐾 Delight in the simple joy of a long walk
- 🐾 Eat with gusto and enthusiasm, stop when you have had enough
- 🐾 Be loyal
- 🐾 Never pretend to be something you are not
- 🐾 If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it
- 🐾 When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

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](mailto:lauren@hiltonvethospital.co.za)