Brachycephalic airway syndrome is a common condition affecting a number of popular dog and cat breeds causing breathing difficulty and higher risk of respiratory disease. The literal definition of brachycephalic is ‘short head’ and the term is used to describe breeds of dogs and cats with broad skulls and shortened muzzles giving a ‘flat’ faced appearance. Breeds most commonly known for this conformation include Pugs, Bulldogs, Boxers, Exotic Shorthairs and Persians. As a consequence of this type of conformation there is compression and narrowing of the sinuses and upper airways. However the most concerning anatomical changes associated with this conformation are an elongated soft palate, stenotic nares, eversion of the laryngeal saccules and a hypoplastic trachea. An individual demonstrating one or a number of these features is considered to have brachycephalic airway syndrome. The presence and severity of these changes can vary greatly between individuals. Genetics and breeding play the biggest role in the development of these anatomical features.

- The soft palate extends from the roof of the mouth back towards the larynx. When elongated the soft palate can encroach into the larynx and partially occlude the airway causing turbulent airflow and increased resistance during breathing.
- Stenotic nares suggests that the nostrils are significantly narrowed. This can cause them to collapse inward on inhalation again causing loud breathing.
- The laryngeal saccules are soft tissue structures located between the vocal cords of the larynx. When everted the laryngeal saccules can partially occlude the airways and also increase airway resistance. Eversion can occur secondary to increased resistance within the upper airways and is commonly seen when there is severely stenotic nares or an elongated soft palate.
- Hypoplastic trachea is considered a congenital defect. Not all brachycephalic dogs present with this.

However those that do have a markedly narrower than normal trachea (windpipe). This narrowing can result in breathing difficulty.

Brachycephalic airway syndrome often results in noisy breathing. These dogs often snore, retch or gag. They can have poor exercise tolerance especially in hot or humid weather. Breathing difficulty in brachycephalic dogs can be significantly exacerbated by over-activity/excitement, heat and obesity. Brachycephalic airways are more prone to upper respiratory infection and have a greater risk of aspiration resulting in pneumonia.

Diagnosis of brachycephalic airway syndrome is often based on physical exam of the conscious patient and also examination of the larynx under anaesthesia. X-rays of the trachea and chest can also help determine the severity and affect that the upper respiratory changes are having on the lower respiratory tract (lungs). There are specialist surgical procedures for individuals severely affected by brachycephalic airway disease. These procedures should be considered when the noisy breathing is also causing distress, exercise intolerance, gagging, coughing or breathing difficulty.

In milder cases this condition does not require specific treatment or surgery. However, owners should be aware of the lifestyle factors which could potentially exacerbate the syndrome. These include: moderating exercise, preventing obesity, avoiding heat distress and ensuring food and toys are of low choking risk.
Cryptorchidism is a condition of male dogs which is the result of one or both testes not descending before the inguinal canal closes. As a foetus the testes are located within the abdomen, high up near the kidneys. However shortly after birth they start to descend towards the scrotum. To reach their final destination they must pass through the inguinal canal, a passage through the abdominal oblique muscles in the groin. With age this passage becomes narrower and eventually ‘closes’. This is considered the case for dogs 6 months of age and older. If the testes have not passed through the canal by this time they will never reach the scrotum, resulting in them being trapped either in the abdomen (if they have failed to descend at all) or within the inguinal area (if they just did not descend quickly enough). The testes are designed to be situated within the scrotum. When within the inguinal canal or abdomen the testes are subjected to a higher temperature compared to the scrotum and this is believed to affect the function. It also increases the risk of testicular torsion and cancer in these individuals. Cryptorchidism is considered a genetic trait so animals with this condition should not be bred as they are likely to pass it on to future generations. It is recommended that dogs with this condition are surgically castrated to reduce the health risks associated with this condition and also prevent propagation of the trait.

In this instance there is no discharge from the vulva and in the early stages sometimes no indication of anything being wrong. Early signs are often vague such as poor appetite, lethargy, intermittent vomiting and weight loss. These signs usually occur several weeks after the last season has finished. Owner awareness is crucial in identifying these cases early before they become life threatening. As the infection becomes more severe and the uterus more distended with pus, there can be translocation of the bacteria into the blood stream resulting in sepsis. This is a life threatening condition which needs immediate and intensive veterinary attention. Pyometra is best treated surgically by ovariohysterectomy. However, unlike a routine ovariohysterectomy the procedure carries much higher risk due to the presence of infection and the fragility of the uterine tissue. Batman had surgery the same day as diagnosis was made and made a full recovery post operatively. Unlike other conditions with successful surgery the condition is cured. Routine ovariohysterectomy (removal of the uterus and ovaries) of female dogs not used for breeding is the best and recommended way to prevent pyometra from occurring.

However, Batman’s owner had noticed that Batman was just not her usual self. She seemed to be more clingy and also had a poorer appetite than usual. When weighed it was evident that Batman had lost a significant amount of weight since the last visit. On physical examination Batman was found to have normal vital signs, a low grade heart murmur and some dental disease as the only clinical abnormalities. Being an entire female she had some mammary development and her vulva was slightly swollen. The owner reported that Batman had recently had a season. On palpation of the abdomen Batman was comfortable and there was no indication of a mass although there was a soft thickening in the caudal abdomen. To further investigate the cause of Batman’s ill health a blood test was performed. The only significant finding on the bloods was an elevation in the white blood cells (particularly neutrophils) which are a type of white blood cell employed by the body to fight bacterial infection. There was also elevation in the globulins which is one of the blood proteins that, when elevated, can be suggestive of inflammation, infection or neoplasia.

The white blood cell count is a much more specific indicator for infection or inflammation in the body. The white blood cell elevation on Batman’s blood test warranted further investigation, despite Batman not having a fever. An ultrasound of the abdomen was performed to investigate the area of thickening palpated on exam and the cause of Batman’s ill health. The ultrasound revealed a moderate volume of cellular fluid within the lumen of the uterine horns and a thickened wall of the uterus. The regional lymph nodes were also mildly enlarged. These changes are consistent with a condition called pyometra.

Pyometra is a relatively common problem of entire female dogs. The risk increases with every season (oestrus) and is the result of bacteria entering the uterus while the cervix is open during oestrus. Once the cervix closes after oestrus has finished the bacteria create local infection within the uterus. As infection builds the uterus becomes distended from the pus that is forming as a consequence of the fight between the bacteria and the body’s immune response.

Batman the eight-year-old female entire maltese terrier cross, presented two months after her annual health check and vaccination. She had previously been very healthy and no concerns were found at time of vaccination.

MEET BATMAN
OUR STAR OF THE SEASON

Paws for thought
Storage and Dust Mites
Allergies in Pets

Storage mites and dust mites are one of the most common allergens to dogs and cats. On exposure to the mite the animal’s immune system becomes sensitized and with subsequent exposure an allergy develops. Allergies to these sorts of mites often cause inflammation, itchiness and infection of the skin. The paws and ears may also be affected and it is often non-seasonal in nature as they exist in the environment all year around. Investigation including skin scrapes, anti-parasitic treatment trials and diet trials are useful in ruling out other common causes of allergies and intradermal skin testing will give a definitive diagnosis.

These mites are microscopic and both the mite and the mite faeces act as allergens. Storage mites are often found in dry food which is open or inappropriately stored. They are attracted to grains and cereals in particular but can be found in any type of dry dog food, in pantries and cupboards. Dust mites live in upholstery, carpet and fabric bedding. They often increase in number when the environment is warm and damp. Elimination of the mites completely from the environment is difficult although there are ways in which to reduce their numbers.

Always keep food in its airtight packaging or a container.
Store food in a cool dry environment, ideally inside the house.
Frequently wash food storage containers, especially before re-filling.
Keep food bowls clean.
Do not bulk buy/store pet foods.

Freeze biscuits then thaw before feeding to reduce mite numbers.
Discard food that becomes dusty or mouldy or is past its expiry.
Regularly clean pet bedding and furniture that pets come in contact with.
Vacuum regularly.
Wash thoroughly or replace old bedding and toys that have become wet or dirty.

SENIOR SEASON

It's that time of year again when we like to highlight the needs of our senior pets. Dogs and cats older than 7 years of age are classed as senior pets. Once passing into this life stage pets will have more specific dietary and care requirements. Keeping them healthy as the body succumbs to the effects of aging is very important in ensuring good quantity and quality of life. Elderly pets are at higher incidence of suffering from both medical and degenerative ailments which may require long term treatment or management. Often detecting disease early aids in initiation of treatment which leads to resolution or slowing of the progression of the disease.

The Doubleview Vet Centre will host seniors season from the 1st of June to 31st August 2016. As part of senior season we will be offering a number of packages aimed at early detection or monitoring of chronic disease like kidney disease, liver disease, thyroid disease as well as diabetes. Packages include blood and urine tests, the addition of blood pressure and intra-ocular pressure checks are also available in the gold package. The senior pet consultation includes a thorough physical exam, discussion of any concerns and also advice regarding senior diet, arthritis management and dental care.

GOLD – ideal for those dogs and cats that have chronic health issues or are on long term medication. This package includes; Consultation, major profile, urinalysis with cytology, blood pressure measurement, intraocular pressure measurement for $400 (SAVING OF $135)

SILVER – ideal for those dogs and cats that perhaps have just entered the senior years of their life and have never had routine blood or urine tests previously. This package includes; Consultation, major blood profile, urinalysis for $300 (SAVING OF $125)

BRONZE – ideal for dogs and cats that have had routine monitoring and are otherwise healthy. This package includes; Consultation, minor blood profile, urinalysis for $200 (SAVING OF $135)

All senior pets that take out a package during senior season receive a 20% OFF voucher for any DENTAL PROCEDURES which is subsequently booked during Senior Season (1st June to 31st August 2016), and also go into the running to WIN a senior pet hamper. Call now to enquire more about these packages or to book your senior pet in for its annual health check now.
Friendly Felines

Here at Doubleview Vet Centre we have been working hard over the last 2 years to improve the clinic environment for our feline friends. We understand that visiting the vets can be very stressful for both pets and their owners. Particularly for cats the ordeal of being placed in a carrier, the car and then examined on the consult room table can be more than a little overwhelming. We care for the welfare of our patients and want them to have the most positive experience possible. So, with a few small changes we are proud to have achieved our Gold Standard Cat Friendly Accreditation.

Our friendly feline policy includes;

- Designated cat waiting area and where possible, cats will be taken through to the consult room to avoid them having to wait in the waiting area.
- Cat friendly waiting area separate to dog waiting area with bench seating to sit your cat carrier on while you wait.
- Cat only consulting times; Whiskas Only Wednesdays every second Wednesday from 11am to 3pm.
- Designated cat consult room and cat ward with specially designed cat condos.
- Use of Feliway throughout the clinic including the cat consult room and cat ward.
- Qualified veterinary staff that are trained in low stress handling techniques.

We hope that this helps make you and your cats experience at the vets a little stressful.

NATIVE NEWS – Black Cockatoo

There are five types, or species, of black cockatoo that are native to Australia and they are all endemic species, meaning they are only found in Australia and on some of Australia’s close surrounding islands. Black cockatoos make their home in a diverse number of habitats across the country, from rainforests to woodlands, shrublands, and plantations. The plight of the black cockatoo has been ongoing, as the clearing of land for agriculture and logging of old growth forests has decimated the natural feeding and breeding grounds of these birds. Competition from non-native species as well as poaching and predation by invasive species such as foxes and domestic cats have caused cockatoo numbers to rapidly decline.

Of the 5 species of black cockatoo, the most endangered are the Baudins and Carnaby’s white-tailed black cockatoo. These two are especially unique as they are only found in the south west and wheatbelt region of Western Australia and in the last 45 years it is believed that their numbers in the wild have dwindled. They will travel up to 12 kilometres from nests in search of foods such as seeds from native plants like banksias, eucalypts and grevilleas. Females will produce only 2 eggs a year, and often only 1 of the chicks survives. During incubation of the egg males are relied upon to forage enough food for the females and, once hatched, the young hatchlings as well. Once reared, the young will join the parents in the flock, often then migrating to coastal areas in search of new food sources and higher rainfalls. There is some concern that most of the population of birds that remain in the wild are beyond breeding age. With fewer young birds to replace the aging population, and more of their breeding grounds being destroyed every day, the threat of losing these magnificent birds forever is very real.

Preservation of these beautiful birds in the wild is reliant on our awareness and protection of their natural habitat into the future.

To learn more about how to help please visit:
- http://www.blackcockatoo recovery.com/

For any more information on any of the articles seen in this seasons’ issue of ‘Paws For Thought’ contact the clinic on 9341 1200

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admin@doubleviewvet.com.au

Let us know your email address so we can send reminders and newsletters direct to you via email in the future!