



ST. RUNWALD'S Limited

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 VETS' NO.1 CHOICE
FOR THEIR OWN PETS

NEWS

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Tick-borne diseases

Babesiosis is a global disease and is widespread throughout southern and central continental Europe. It is caused by a tiny parasite – *Babesia canis* – that infects red blood cells, causing anaemia, dark red urine, pale gums, lethargy and fever.

Babesia canis is spread by the Ornate Dog Tick *Dermacentor reticulatus* and poses a significant risk to pets travelling abroad with the Pet Travel Scheme. This is why it is so important to treat your dogs for ticks whilst abroad and before returning home.

Until recently there have only been rare cases of babesiosis in untravelling dogs in the UK. However this changed in Spring 2016 with a cluster of cases in Harlow, Essex. More recently two fresh cases have emerged 20 miles away from the initial outbreak, raising the possibility that this tick-borne disease could become more widespread across the UK and Ireland.

Lyme disease is widespread across the UK and Ireland and spread by the sheep tick – *Ixodes ricinus* (pictured left).

It is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* and can cause recurrent lameness due to inflammation of the joints. Humans can also suffer from Lyme disease.

Take two simple steps to minimise the risk of tick-borne diseases:

- Monitor pets daily for ticks and remove promptly with a tick hook.
- Use chemical tick protection.

If you would like further information on ticks and tick-borne diseases, please ask a member of our team!



Keeping your pet in shape



We are all too aware of the epidemic of obesity facing humans in developed countries, but what about our pets?

With obesity becoming increasingly common, it is a good idea to look objectively at your pets and see if they are overweight or not. Run your hands over their chest – you should be able to easily feel (but not see) their ribs without pressing too hard. They should also have a “waist”, when viewed from both above and the side. By contrast, if you can pinch an inch or more, and if your pet’s stomach sags down and bulges out, then a diet may be in order, or they may have a medical problem so please get him/her examined. Carrying extra weight can lead to a range of health risks including:-

Arthritis: if joints are under constant strain from extra weight, they are more likely to become arthritic and painful. **Diabetes:** for cats, being obese is a huge risk factor for them developing diabetes.

Heart disease: excess body fat puts the heart under increased strain and can hasten the onset of heart failure, especially in ‘at risk’ breeds.

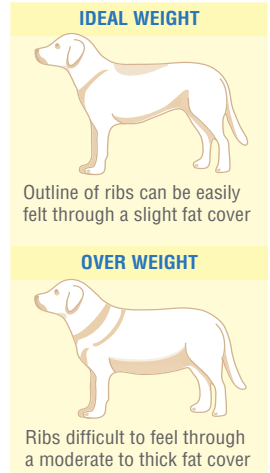
How can you ensure your pet stays at the right weight?

The most important thing is to ensure their diet is one suitable for them and their lifestyle. Neutered pets tend to have a slower metabolism and so can be more prone to weight gain and there are now several foods on the market that are formulated specifically for them. Some breeds are more vulnerable to being overweight, Labradors for example, and both breed and ‘type’ tailored diets are available. Indoor cats will be much more sedentary than outdoor ones and diets exist that take this into account. Also, don’t forget to limit the amount of treats they have!

So - how can you help a pet lose weight?

Firstly, there are many different ‘light’ diets on the market which will keep your pets just as full but lower their calorie intake. Secondly, all pets need regular exercise – and increased walks, more frequent play, or increased access to outdoors are all part of the answer. Additionally make them work for their dinner using puzzle toys and at the same time keep them entertained for hours. The good news is

that as your pet loses weight, the benefits of increased healthiness and vitality are usually seen quite quickly. So, if you think your pet has been piling on the pounds please get in touch – our designated diet nurse, Karen, will help you achieve their target weight.



Cat photo: Warren Photographic.

Some pets will eat anything!



Staying on the subject of things that pets like to eat, some pets unfortunately love snacking on a wide variety of everyday items that end up stuck in their stomach or small intestines.

Cats, and particularly kittens, are very keen on swallowing tinsel at Christmas, wool and other stringy objects (often with needles attached as well!). These almost invariably get stuck in their small intestines and require surgery to remove them.

Dogs seem to delight in eating socks, children’s toys - the list is huge! Unfortunately many of these objects, once swallowed, will require surgery to remove them.

So – as well as trying to ensure your pets don’t eat these objects, we strongly recommend **pet insurance** to cover you against these unexpected eventualities!

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