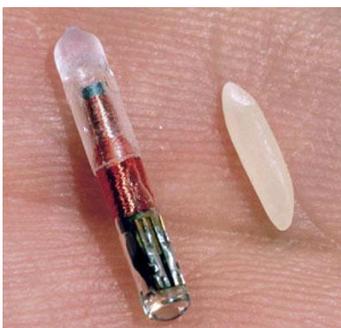


The importance of micro chipping....

Millions of dogs go missing each year. Tragically, few are reunited with their owners. Many lost dogs end up in shelters where they are adopted out to new homes or even euthanased. It is important that your dog has identification at all times. Technology has made it possible to equip your pet with a microchip for permanent identification. A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice. It consists of a tiny computer chip housed in a type of glass. The microchip is implanted between the dog's shoulder blades under the skin with a needle and special syringe. Each microchip contains a unique code, which, together with information about your pet and your contact details are maintained on a central computer database. This chip can be read with special scanners found in vet practices, shelters etc. allowing you to be reunited with your pet should he go missing. Contact us now to find out about the cost involved, it is surprisingly economical, especially when all the benefits are considered!



Sounds can be Scary too.....

Firework stress affects almost 50% of dogs and many cats also. Fireworks are no longer just a 5th November event and are heard throughout the autumn and often for many other celebrations and even birthdays and weddings.

This stress manifests itself in many ways – many dogs will run around and vocalise, some even become destructive and may harm themselves. However, sometimes the signs of stress can be much more subtle. This is especially true for cats – they will often 'withdraw' and hide, meaning that their stress is not always recognised.

If stress associated with fireworks is not dealt with, it often progresses to other sounds like thunder and gunshots and eventually can include every day noises such as car doors slamming. It is therefore important that we address this problem promptly and effectively to improve the welfare of our pets.

Managing firework stress needs an approach in both the short and long term. In the short term we must manage our pets on the night when the firework noise is occurring. Long term we need to change the feelings our pets associate with fireworks in order that they do not become stressed.



Short Term Management

Short term management helps our pets cope during the firework season. Below are some useful tips to help your pet.

- Provide a den or hiding place – ideally where your pet would normally seek refuge
- Muffle the sound of the fireworks – radio, television, close the curtains
- Keep your pet inside – close the cat flap and ensure your dog is not able to access the garden
- Do not fuss over them, or tell them off, if they are stressed
- Reward quiet, calm behaviour

The most important change that must be made is for **you** to change your behaviour. It is completely natural to want to reassure your pet when it is stressed – however all this does is reinforce the unwanted behaviour and unfortunately makes matters worse. Your pet will also come to rely on you for support which can be problematic if you are not with your pet every time it hears fireworks.

Long Term Management

Sound desensitisation is a technique which can address the underlying problem by altering your pet's reaction to the sounds. It works by exposing your pet to the scary sounds under controlled conditions whilst it is doing something enjoyable such as chewing a favourite toy or treat. This then breaks the negative association that your pet has learned with respect to fireworks and makes the association more positive. The most common method uses CDs produced specifically for this purpose which are played initially for a very short amount of time at low volume. The length of time and volume is gradually increased as your pet progresses through the programme. Sound Desensitisation takes time – usually weeks to months and you must be guided by your pet as to how quickly you can progress through the programme. It should not be performed when fireworks are likely to be heard

What is Zylkène and how can it help?

Zylkène is a novel natural product derived from milk protein which has relaxing properties and is proven to help manage stress in cats and dogs.

Zylkène comes in capsules and is given once a day, either in a treat or the capsule can be opened up and sprinkled on food. The powder is palatable and so administration is usually fairly straightforward.

There are no known side effects and it doesn't cause problems such as sedation or memory loss.

Zylkène can be used for both the short and long term management of firework stress.

In the short term – start Zylkène 1-2 days prior to the anticipated stress of fireworks and continue throughout fireworks time. It can then be stopped once fireworks are no longer heard.

For long term management, Zylkène can also help your pet during the desensitisation programme as stress influences learning. Don't worry if the programme takes months for your pet – you can give Zylkène throughout this time.

Zylkène is available from the practice so please come and ask us for more information.



Dog Dementia

Does your older dog have any of the following signs?

Disorientation or confusion. Staring at walls, going to the wrong side of the door, losing his/her way?

Personality changes. Change in play behaviour or affection levels, increased irritability?

Change in sleeping habits. Pacing at night, sleeping more during the day and less at night?

Loss of learned behaviour such as house training. Changes in activity levels. Less interested in exploration or decreased self grooming. Aimless wandering, compulsive behaviours like excessive licking or fly-catching. Sadly, canine cognitive dysfunction syndrome (or doggy dementia) can occur as early as 7 years and in as many as 50% of dogs older than 11 years. The disease is one of brain aging and is similar to Alzheimer's in people.

Can we help?

Yes! We cannot cure brain aging but we can often help slow the progression of the disease and help with the symptoms.

At home, maintain regular mental and physical stimulation for your elderly friend. Regular exercise, work or ongoing training as appropriate does help. Seek veterinary advice sooner rather than later. We perform a thorough examination to check for physical abnormalities. We may also recommend a blood or urine test to rule out other problems. There may be other physical problems causing the symptoms which could be treated. Special diets are available to help combat brain aging, and in many patients medication that improve blood flow to the brain can also make a great difference to quality of life. Ask us if you have any concerns regarding your elderly pet.

Rabbit vaccinations- is your pet protected?

Myxomatosis and Haemorrhagic Viral Disease are two serious infectious diseases which affect pet rabbits, almost always resulting in death. Myxomatosis is spread by blood sucking insects, such as fleas. The disease causes puffy swellings around the eyes and genitals and death usually occurs about 12 days later. Vaccines exist for both conditions and are the main means of providing your rabbit with protection.

Vaccinations are usually recommended annually, but may be required more often; your vet will advise the most appropriate booster interval for your rabbit. In addition to getting your rabbit vaccinated, it's a good idea to view this visit to the veterinary practitioner as an opportunity for your rabbit to be given a full health check.

