

# The Seaforth Howler

## Editorial

*By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)*

**The Great Big Animal Open Day** in October 2005 was a great success. Thank you all for attending and making it such a fun day!

Since the last newsletter Amanda, one of our well liked nurses has left for a new career. We wish her well. You can still see her fluttering about each Saturday morning as she just can't bring herself to go cold turkey and plain leave...

Sharon Leih our erstwhile Head Receptionist sends us another one of her crazy stories from South Africa, don't miss it!

David discusses why it is so important not to

miss your pet's annual health check. Essential reading.

I review our Lost and Found files for 2005, you'd be surprised how much we do here!

Finally a good topic for those post Christmas and New Year months, weight control in our chubby pets. Hendrika reveals some new facts about this perpetual problem.

What a hot summer we are having. This prompted Belinda to write about the dangers of leaving pets in cars, even for a few minutes—be warned!

We wish our readers and their pets a healthy, enjoyable and Safe summer!

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## The Importance of Health Checks

*By Dr David Collins (Veterinarian)*

As we all know, a year in your pet's life is a lot more than a year to them. One human year to a cat is 5 years, and to a dog it's more like 7 years. So that a 10 year old Burmese cat is actually 50, and a 9 year old Labrador is actually 63!

For this reason we need to check them regularly to make sure everything is in working order, and to detect problems as early as possible. If the vet sees them at least once a year, that is still only equivalent to a doctor (and dentist) giving you a check-up once every 5-7 years.

What do we do at the health check?

Most of you should receive a questionnaire from us when it is time to go to the vet. This should jog your memory about your pet's eating, drinking, behaviour etc

When you come in for the check we will go over this form, concentrating on potential problem areas. We will also make sure everything is ok with worm, flea and tick control, and go over the vaccination schedule.

Our comprehensive health check, involves things such as:

**Eyes** – checking for such things as cataracts, which may be amenable to surgery, and the earlier the better if we are going to have a chance to save vision. Cataracts may also indicate internal disease, such as diabetes.

**Ears** – many dogs (and cats) have chronic ear conditions, and the earlier these are picked up, the better the end result. Some ears left unchecked and untreated may require radical surgery to manage.

**Teeth** – many dogs and cats have plaque, gingivitis and even periodontal disease, in which the teeth fall out. Red gums (gingivitis) are painful, and plaque build-up means lots of bacteria. The earlier we can check the teeth, the earlier we can discuss ways of keeping the teeth

### Gossip Column



- **Amanda..** Has left but still works Saturdays..
- **Free Weight Clinics** are now up and running. If you need help in getting weight off your dog or cat please call Sam!

healthy, or advise a timely scale and polish, before extractions are necessary.

**Skin** – we check the skin for signs of fleas, allergies, lumps or infections. We will discuss flea control, allergy control, or any suitable shampoos or nutritional requirements. Sometimes skin problems such as alopecia (hair loss) may indicate more serious internal disease. Some skin lumps, if removed early, may result in a complete cure.

**Lymph Nodes** – these ‘glands’ are located all over the body, localised enlargement may mean a local infection, or generalised enlargement may even indicate neoplasia (cancer).

**Heart and Lungs** – we will listen to your pet’s chest and look for abnormal lung or heart sounds. Abnormal lung sounds may mean bronchitis, asthma or even fluid in the chest. Abnormal heart sounds (murmurs) may indicate a problem with the heart valve, and if this is diagnosed and treatment begun early, *before* your pet starts coughing, your pet should live a longer, more comfortable life.

**Joints** – we will feel your pet’s joints, especially the hips and back, as these are common problem areas. If there is any pain or abnormal movement, x-rays or even surgery may be required.

**Abdomen** – we will thoroughly palpate your pet’s abdomen feeling for any organ enlargement or even abnormal masses. If masses are found there may be a need for blood tests, x-rays, ultrasounds, or even surgery to diagnose and treat.

Older dogs and cats may need blood and urine tests to monitor the function of kidneys, liver, thyroid etc. They may need x-rays to check for DJD (degenerative joint disease, arthritis), or need their blood pressure measured (hypertension is particularly common in old cats).

So please get your best friend checked regularly. It may just save their life.

## Heat Stroke in Dogs

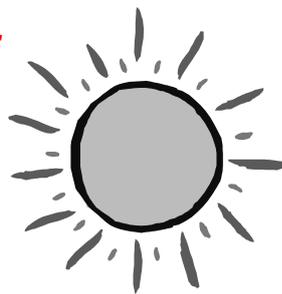
By Belinda Yardley (Receptionist)

### WHAT IS HEAT STROKE?

Heat stroke is a rise in body core temperature induced by exposure to high temperatures and humidity. A dog cools himself by panting, expelling heat. If he cannot expel the air fast enough, body temperature rises. This panting also saturates the air with water vapour making air in confined places warmer and therefore making it more difficult for a dog to cool down.

### THOSE AT RISK

Exercising in hot weather may put your pet at risk. Young and old animals, animals with medical problems, thick coated breeds, certain breeds with short noses or flat faces, overweight animals and pets in restricted spaces with poor



circulating air (car, kennel, crate).

### SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE

High body temperature, salivating, heavy panting, difficulty breathing, diarrhoea, vomiting, staggering, lethargy, red mucous membranes though they may be muddy or pale, unconsciousness, seizures, death.

### HOW TO HELP

Rapidly cooling your pet is essential to bring body temperature back to normal.

If you are outside (park etc.), retreat to the shade and use anything to wet your animal. Place water soaked garments on head, neck, feet, chest and belly then place your dog in the car with air conditioning on high and drive straight to your vet.

If you are at home place your pet under cool running water, not cold or icy. Thoroughly wet the belly and inside of legs. Run water over mouth and tongue, do not force feed water. Place a fan nearby to cause evaporative cooling, being careful not to overcool your pet. If you can, while cooling, take your animals temperature every five minutes and stop cooling when normal temperature is reached (38.5 – 39.2 degrees Celsius). **As soon as possible take your pet to a veterinarian for treatment.** This is most important as other medical problems can arise hours or even days following heat stroke. Simply lowering your dogs body temperature will not address these problems.

## Lost and Found!

By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)

Unless you are a pet owner who has lost a pet you will never understand how much heartache is involved when a loved pet goes missing. Was it killed or is it suffering? Was it stolen? Many such thoughts go through your mind. It can be very stressful. You probably do not realise just how many stray animals come through Seaforth Veterinary Hospital (SVH) on a weekly basis.

From June 6th to Dec 24th we have been running a database free of charge on the web (Go to [www.svh55.com](http://www.svh55.com) and click on the top side bar link **Lost and Found**). To the right are some interesting figures.



As you can see dogs are by far the worst offenders, but cats are not too far behind.

We have about 30 reports each month, that’s about one a day.

Most of the animals handed in are reunited with their owners thanks to microchipping!

Initially most clients treated compulsory chipping, as adopted in NSW, with scepticism but it has proved a wonderful system!

Species	Lost	Found
Dogs	54	64
Cats	35	10
Birds	7	8
Rabbits	1	3
Ferrets	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>85</b>

When an animal is brought to us we immediately scan then for a chip and search our local database for the owner. If not found there, we then perform an Internet search where we generally find the owner.

Some of these animals are seriously ill and it is important we can identify the owner as soon as possible for obvious reasons.

Of course compulsory microchipping means that your pet must be registered with the NSW Companion Animal Registry. Most breeders comply with this, however many times these animals are not also registered with the Australasian Animal Registry (AAR) and the client is completely unaware of this. When such pets are lost it leads to unnecessary *delays* in locating the owner! If you are unsure if your pet is on the AAR just call our reception and they can do a search for you and ensure they are there. If not then we strongly recommend you register with the AAR. Lifetime registration is cheap and it offers peace of mind. Besides it ensures that *wherever* in Australia your pet is lost (or stolen!) it can quickly be reunited with you.

You can contact the AAR via Tel 9704 1450 or Fax 9704 1006.

## *The Call of nature!*

*By Sharon Leih (Erstwhile Receptionist / South African Correspondent)*

I just cannot help myself. I was born with this very strong bond with creatures great and small, furry and feathered, tame and wild. I would much rather spend my holidays observing animals in the wilds of Africa, than sunning my body (which is getting on, let's face it and doesn't like - a) being exposed to sun - or in fact - b) being exposed at all) on a beautiful tropical island.

I will leap out of bed at 5am and spend hours in a game tracker's vehicle watching and learning all about those fascinating creatures. You cannot beat walking through the bush in the fierce midday sun (when those of big teeth and sharp claws and an eye for a meaty steak are snoozing) behind a game ranger, learning all about the flora and fauna and (believe it or not) the difference in animal faeces (quite fascinating actually and definitely a survival technique). Hence, my family and friends fondly regard me as being somewhat "potty" and sometimes "embarrassing" as was demonstrated the other morning...

I awoke at 5am, firstly because of an alarm clock announcing that it was "cram-time-before- another-'Varsity-exam" and secondly because I could hear some very anxious "honking" outside in our road. And I knew who the "honkers" were. There is a pair of Egyptian geese, who, with impeccable taste, have chosen to nest once again, in the most beautiful garden in our street.

Egyptian geese are handsome large birds with reddish orange to brown backs, black tails and a chest which is primarily white, with a large chestnut patch in the centre. They have a beautiful iridescent green under their wings and chestnut coloured feathers around each yellow eye giving them a "spectacled" appearance. They were considered sacred by the Egyptians and range through the Nile valley and deep into Africa south of the equator. They are 63 - 73cm long and weigh approx 1.5 - 2.3kg, the males being slightly larger than the females. They are normally reserved and

quiet, however during mating season in spring, their behaviour changes completely. The males perform a noisy and elaborate courtship (aah aren't males all the same, no matter the species?) 5-12 eggs are incubated for 28-30 days and the young fledge in approx 70 days. These geese perch easily in trees and on rooftops and are very pugnacious and aggressive, especially in the breeding season. (This is when those "spectacled" eyes look more like "black" eyes) Although quarrelsome and bad tempered by nature, they form strong pair bonds and are excellent parents. (They are considered to be the most aggressive waterfowl in Africa)

Anyway, this particular breeding pair have returned to their "love nest" three years in a row and every year we phone the local bird protection society, and every year they collect the feathered family and relocate them to a local wetland.

Last year I donated a lilo to the family, as the goslings were too little to clamber out of the glamorous, sparkling, salt-water swimming pool located in this beautiful garden and the owners of said beautiful property were a bit nervous as to what to do.

The reason for the anxious honking was once again, that one of the more adventurous goslings had clambered out under the garden gate and was taking an early morning stroll around our neighbourhood, but walking in the

middle of the road. Now this is a very busy neighbourhood from the point of view that we have a school at the bottom of our road and we are not far from the freeway that leads to town, and from about 6.45am, the traffic starts to build.

The distraught geese were therefore marching alongside their

delinquent offspring, honking loudly - firstly to warn anyone to stay away and secondly - judging by the tone and let's face it, any parent would recognize that tone - giving junior a severe reprimand!

Without a thought, I rushed outside, clad in my fluffy pyjamas, wearing my unglamorous sleepy hairdo into the early morning drizzle and tried to guide them back to their "home".

Last year when the same thing happened, I managed to catch the gosling quite easily and popped it back under the garden gate and the parents then flew over the wall and were happily reunited with the entire family. This gosling however was extremely fleet of foot and this time the parents did not welcome my attentions at all. As I walked nonchalantly behind them, a chap in a fancy white BMW drove past, slowed down and opened his window to remark that he had said plenty of dog-walkers in the area, but never a goose family being exercised. (Very funny). Anyway, mom and dad became so annoyed with me, they moved onto a building site across the road. As traffic was starting to build and my daughter, on being collected early to go to 'Varsity, remarked that a shower and change of



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clothing would be a REALLY good idea and did I know what an embarrassment I was - I rushed indoors to get decent. (Not that I needed a shower, I was completely drenched by rain anyway)  
I was concerned that the builders might view the geese as a meal, so returned armed with some bread to entice them back to their home. This worked rather well until I tried to grab junior and both parents turned on me, hissing, and with wings outspread, chased me down the road! By now, cars had slowed down and I was definitely the object of great mirth of various passers-by. I waited a while and once the family had indignantly strutted off again (still in the middle of the road), I closed in and managed to grab the little one and pop him back under the garden gate. We had had quite a severe storm the night before, so I grabbed armfuls of twigs and small branches and blocked the bottom of the gate to avert any further escapes. (Not thinking, as my family pointed out, that the owners of said property may trip over my blockade on their departure - anyway, they didn't - so there)  
Needless to say, a swift phone call to the correct authorities and the feathered family was relocated to a safer environment. I've just got to be sure to be around here this time next year, to make sure they're all ok.....

**MY PET'S NOT FAT...JUST BIG-BONED!**

**By Dr Hendrika Tegelaar (Veterinarian)**

MY PETS NOT FAT...JUST BIG-BONED!

I CAN'T RESIST HIS/HER EYES!

IT'S BECAUSE HE'S .SHE'S DESEXED! ETC

We hear it all the time and know you all love your pets.. maybe too *much*?

Here is a test for obesity...

Can you feel your pet's ribs EASILY?

Does he/she have a waist?

Does he/she have a pendulous abdomen...apron?

Does he/she waddle?

Find it difficult to move?

Short of breath with only minimal exertion?

Bad tempered?

Most of us can answer yes to at least some of these questions....even me!!

Fat pets may be cute and cuddly but as in humans extra weight is detrimental to health and can reduce life expectancy. They become vulnerable to diseases such as DIABETES, HEART DISEASE,



FELINE FASHION ACCESSORIES

(Cartoon Courtesy of Dr Libby Thompson)

**RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS, REPRODUCTIVE DISORDERS, ARTHRITIS.**

Obesity is now the most common form of malnutrition in pets (An RSPCA study shows more than 40% of dogs and 33% of cats are overweight or obese). Only a 1% calorie excess on a daily basis can produce obesity by middle age. Fat puppies grow into fat adults because they produce more fat cells. The risk of obesity actually increases as the animal ages (although for cats it actually decreases after 6 years of age.. as long as it isn't fat beforehand) Some breeds and female desexed animals have increased risk of obesity but this must not be used as an excuse. It only means it must be controlled through sensible feeding and regular exercise.



Hills prescription diets have a special formulation to help reduce weight and get back on track. SVH also runs a special weight watchers for pets to help achieve goals and maintain a healthy weight. We are here to help so please take advantage of our services. Hills R/D comes in dry and tinned formulations for dogs and cats. It has reduced caloric density and increased fibre to provide bulk and also added enzymes to help convert the fat into muscle.

Hill's Diet are a well known and extremely well respected product within the veterinary profession. We stock a wide variety of Hills products for aid in dealing with a number of health issues such as kidney disease, arthritis, bladder stones, gastrointestinal upsets, diabetes, senility and allergies. When used properly it is a very cost effective adjunct in treating and maintaining the well being of your much loved four-legged member of your family.



**Leaders in Pet Nutrition...**

**Did you know that Seaforth Veterinary Hospital runs a Free Weight Clinic!?**

**Hill's R/D Diet is their no. 1 choice of diet for weight reduction.**

**Contact Sam (head nurse) for your free Weight Consult and enrolment!**