



## The Seaforth Howler

### Editorial

**Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

Welcome to yet another edition of the Howler!

A few changes this time around. The Howler is now in full colour. In addition we will try distributing the Howler in PDF format to our client e-mail database. So all of you who have kindly supplied us with your e-mails should receive a copy a good week before the hard copy hits the front desk.

Our web address has changed a little, from www.svh55.com to www.svh55.com.au. We have done this to ensure we are more easily identified as an Australian web site by the major search engines. The old web site

remains active but automatically redirects to the new site.

Norm Blackman, Dr Kersti Seksel's partner, has been given the arduous task of Senior Advisor (Biosecurity) to the federal government! We would like to congratulate him on his new appointment and wish him well.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Howler. As ever we have tried to offer you an interesting mix of articles!

#### Inside this issue:

<i>Editorial</i>	1
<i>Pain relief in pets</i>	1
<i>CJ — a case study</i>	2
<i>Dogs in car accidents...</i>	3
<i>Children and pets</i>	3
<i>Have you ever been bitten...</i>	4
<i>Blood Screening the older pet</i>	4

### Pain Relief In Pets

**By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

One of the hardest things to face is when your loved pet is suffering pain. We often see clients extremely distressed at such times.

Even though a scientist myself I have long deplored the long drawn out scientific debates that often rage as to whether animals experience pain as do humans. These debates are used to validate cruel farming or research practices. All this aside I think it is pretty much common sense and clear to all pet owners that their pets do experience pain similarly to how we humans feel pain. So we should address pain diligently and timely whenever it is present in our patients.

There are many circumstances where our pets experience pain.

Just as with humans, pets can experience pain acutely (sudden onset) or chronically (pain over a long period of time). Examples of these are:

Acute pain:

An accident (broken leg etc)

Post surgical pain

Chronic pain:

Arthritis

Spinal pain from disc disease

Tumours (but not all are painful)

Readers may be horrified to know that as recently as 12 years ago it was not customary to routinely offer pain relief in companion animals. The modern vet is equally disbelieving that this was ever the case. We can all remember back to our student days of seeing practice where this was common practice, under the guise that pain limits the animal and it is thus less likely

#### News Column

- **Georgie...** congratulations to our kennel hand Georgie on getting into med school!
- Congratulations to **Norm Blackman** in his recent promotion to senior advisor to the federal government!



to do further damage. There is a place for this argument in that an animal does need to rest post trauma. However relying upon pain to impose this rest is no longer acceptable to vet or client. The sensible way forward is pain management matched to the animal's needs with concurrent sensible client education on limiting a pet's mobility if this is required.

Over the past 10 years veterinary medicine has come a long way in providing effective pain relief for all degrees of pain. We can now tailor the animal's needs quite accurately to the medicine we choose.

At Seaforth veterinary hospital we take pain seriously and have been ensuring all surgical cases receive routine pain relief pre and post surgically with extended relief when required.

Every one is aware that morphine is used extensively in humans suffering pain in hospitals. In veterinary medicine we use drugs such as buprenorphine, and fentanyl, opiates much stronger than morphine to relieve acute pain. fentanyl comes in patches for extended slow release, long acting effective pain relief following surgery, traffic trauma etc.

Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAID's) pain relievers are very commonly used for less severe post operative pain relief (e.g. post cruciate repair) it is also the most common group of drugs used in chronic pain, as suffered in older arthritic dogs and cats. These days the NSAID's market is very large with a whole range of products available to match to client (e.g. ease of dosing) and patient needs (that offers most comfort and least side effects).

So rest assured, when your pet is treated at Seaforth Vets we take the issue of pain seriously, we want to see them walking out the door as happy as they possibly can be.



CJ- I'm innocent! I never chew anything

## *CJ : A Case Study*

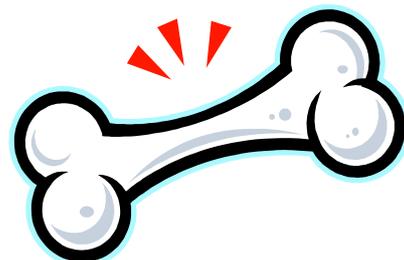
*By Rachel Jackson (Veterinary nurse)*

Puppies do eat the most unusual things! An adorable eight month old Labrador named CJ came into the clinic in early March. She was miserable, off her food and vomiting continuously. CJ, like most puppies, was known to be a serial chewer but the owners couldn't identify anything odd that she might have gulped down. Nevertheless an x-ray indicating gas trapped in the bowel suggested a blockage. It also showed small objects in the colon, but mysteriously these seemed to be too low down to be the cause of the vomiting. A blood sample indicated a localized infection, so CJ was quickly put onto a drip and antibiotics, hoping to cure her by unobtrusive, non-surgical methods.

Unfortunately, as this caused no change in her status the poor, sick darling was made to swallow a dose of radio-opaque barium and undergo a further series of x-rays to establish the point of blockage and perhaps visualize the problem. These showed pockets of gas and a strange, bobby-pin shaped object in the intestines. Depressed and dehydrated, CJ started to vomit bile and the owners' permission was granted to operate.

All of us were curious as to what the foreign body could possibly be but even before the operation we were given a clue. As Dr Jen Nesbitt-Hawes extended CJ's tongue to intubate her for the anaesthetic a thin string was revealed, tightly looped under her tongue and continuing down her oesophagus. On operating we found that this thread was attached to the object seen on x-ray: a tasty scrap of rubber ball! A few hours later CJ was recovering sleepily, next day she was dining on small meals of roast chicken and the following day she went home.

An operation of this nature can have serious complications if there is any contamination of the abdominal cavity by gut contents. On sending her home we warned the owners to be aware of any change in attitude suggestive of infection and implored them to keep her quiet. However this is easier said than done when a young Labrador is sent home to a house of happy, young children and four days later CJ was back with us again to be re-stitched! Much as we love to see our patients, we do love to see them get better so CJ was restricted to lead walks only for two weeks and since then, beyond a scheduled recheck and an appearance to have the stitches out she hasn't needed to come and see us. She is now happy, healthy and bouncy as before her misadventure although we did have to inform the owners that it was most unlikely that this would teach her any dietary sense.



## How to Help a dog in a Car accident

By Belinda Yardley (Receptionist)

Occasionally we receive phone calls from caring people who have witnessed or been involved in a car accident with a dog, asking for advice on what to do.

After a car accident a dog will be frightened and possibly injured. His first instinct will be to protect himself. He will not understand that you are trying to help and may become aggressive, even to people he knows. Despite the difficulty, it is important that you restrain the dog so it can be safely taken to a veterinarian. Do not panic, remaining calm will help reassure the dog.

Start by talking softly to the dog. Approach him slowly. Do not make any sudden movements and if he is not aggressive extend your closed hand slowly knuckles upward. If there is still no aggression, pet him gently to reassure him. If the animal struggles growls or snaps, talk softly for another minute and try again.

Before you can transport the dog you may need to muzzle him. Even a gentle dog, if frightened, can bite you. In an emergency, a muzzle can be made from a piece of gauze, shoelace, pantyhose, a necktie or even a sock. However do not attempt this if the dog is overly aggressive as you may get bitten. With one end of the cloth in each hand, lay it across the dog's nose, as close to the eyes as possible. Wrap the cloth completely around the nose and tie firmly beneath the jaw. Pull the ends back on each side of his neck and make a tie behind the neck.

If you can't get something tied around the muzzle, use a thick towel, jacket or blanket and wrap it around the dog's neck or place it over his head. This way, if he tries to bite you the towel will get in his way. If the dog has a bleeding wound apply firm pressure to the site and bandage as well as possible without moving the dog too much.

If the dog is unconscious, having trouble breathing or unable to get up, **do not** put anything around his muzzle. Use a thick blanket, jacket or sheet of timber as a makeshift stretcher. If you have help, try to lift him on to the stretcher with minimal movement of his spine. Having someone lifting under the shoulders, abdomen and pelvis will help with this. Another option is to lay a blanket down, then gently drag the dog onto the blanket by grasping the skin over his shoulders and pelvis and pulling. Obviously the larger the dog, the harder this is to do. Drag one end at a time if you have to.

Once you get him into the car, put some support around him to keep him from sliding during transport. Cover him to keep him warm as he is almost surely in shock.

If possible, phone your vet hospital to let them know the problem and that you are on your way.

If you cannot transport the animal yourself, please ring the local vet or ranger and let them know that an animal has been injured so they can take appropriate measures to ensure its safety.



## Children and Pets

By Amy Pepper (Final Year Veterinary Student)

Dogs and children have a special bond. Dogs can provide children with companionship and loyal friendship. In return children can provide their dog with affection and endless opportunities for activity and interaction.

A family dog is often a key part of a child's formative years. By living with a dog, children learn about responsibility, patience, empathy and compassion. It has been said that children with pets also generally have higher self esteem and better social skills. However, parents should be 100% committed to looking after the dog as no young child can be capable of fully training or completely caring for a dog.

If you are choosing to bring a new dog into your home, research the type of dog that suits your needs. Choose a breed that is suitable to your lifestyle, environment and has a good reputation with children.

When bringing your new dog home, allow it a few days to adjust before playing with it too much.

Make a set of rules for the children concerning the new dog. Decide where the new dog will sleep (Preferably not in the children's bed) Remember that as well as training your new dog, you will need to train your children on how to treat the dog. The more time you spend training early on will help to avoid behaviour problems in the future.

Always supervise children when they are with dogs as neither can be completely trusted to not injure the other when left unsupervised. Show your child how to introduce themselves to dogs.

Don't allow your children to tease your dog or handle it roughly. Remove your dog from excitable environments. Keep your children away from a sick dog to allow it to recover without interruption.

Ensure your dog has the opportunity to socialise safely with children. Allow your children to look after one important maintenance aspect for the dog such as ensuring the water bowl is full, or feeding it breakfast. Ensure your dog is under your control by properly training it to 'sit', 'stay', 'drop' and 'come'. As your children become older, teach them how to interact reliably with your dog by getting them to teach the dog new tricks, such as 'shake' or 'roll over'.

Dogs and people can live together with a very small risk of infections being transmitted back and forth. Make sure you regularly visit your veterinarian so that you not only look after your dog's health, but also your family's. Children can contract hookworms and roundworms from dog faeces so ensure your dog is dewormed regularly. Always ensure your children wash their hands after playing with the dog and discourage the dog from licking your child's face. Fleas and ticks can also travel from dogs to children so make sure your dog is protected with flea and tick preventatives.

There is no greater relationship than that between a child and their dog. Follow some good common sense precautions and choose the right dog at the right time for your child. A child and a dog require a huge investment of your time. However if you devote the time to both, your rewards will be greater than anything money could ever buy.

**Our Web Page**

www.svh55.com.au

Phone: 02-9949 1288

Fax: 02-9949 6364

e-mail: [vets@svh55.com](mailto:vets@svh55.com)

## Have you ever been bitten...

By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)



I am often asked by clients whether I have ever been bitten by a dog or cat during a consult. It would be an unusual vet who would say “no”. However if you have not seen this article then the Taiwanese Vet, **Chang Po-yu**, can offer a more resounding “Yes” to this question than can I!

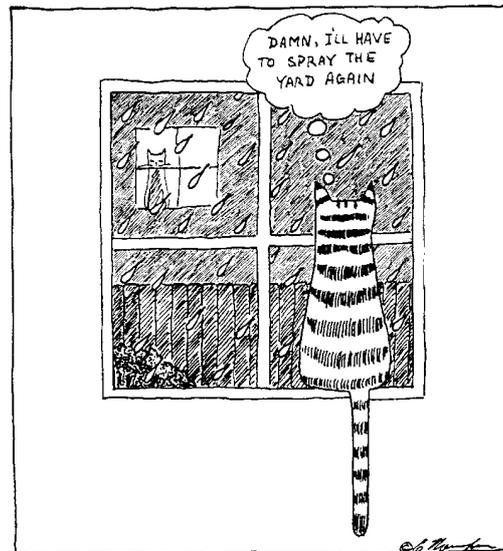
The vet in question darted the croc and when he thought it was safe to do so, tried removing the dart. Oops!

Chang Po-Yu had his hand bitten off at the wrist. The hand remained in the possession of the croc for some time before it was eventually recovered. A policeman fired two live rounds at the croc to get it to release the hand. His hand was subsequently sewn back onto the vet in a 6 hour operation.

By the way, the bullets bounced off the croc and it has also survived the ordeal. Which is probably your immediate worry.



*Fatties... come to Marjorie...*



(Cartoon Courtesy of Dr Libby Thompson)

## As The Seasons Change

By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)

August signals a reduction in the over all flea population that has inundated the Northern Beaches this summer. We seem to say it every year, but this year was **terrible!** Even the most assiduous clients have been reporting “My flea product is not working!” Studies have shown that products such as Frontline do continue to work well, and fleas have not developed a resistance. The problem is that cats and dogs can continually be reinfested in the high season. Fleas you see today would have jumped upon your animal within the last 2 days, any fleas prior to that will have died.

**Frontline** is very effective over a 28 day period. After application, we remind clients not to shampoo animals 48 hours either side of application as this will reduce its effectiveness. Outside this window the product will not wash off. Use of detergent free shampoos also help to maintain product levels for the frequently shampooed pet. We recommend continuing your flea control well into the colder periods, don't stop too soon as you risk a recurrence of the problem just when it was getting under control.

As the seasons change and the weather cools, arthritic pets become more vulnerable to their disease. As we discussed earlier there are many effective products on the market that can help. So if you see your old doggy stiffening up this winter know that we *can* help. Particularly useful in the older pet is **Previcox** because of its excellent safety margins.

Do remember that 50% of the battle in the older dog is weight control. Losing a few kilograms can really benefit your dog. In dogs weight reduction is primarily achieved through diet control not exercise. Indeed increasing the exercise of the older dog is likely to have deleterious effects upon their arthritis.

If you are having difficulties shifting the Kilos from your pooch ask our staff, we have plenty of tasty diets that are very effective. Indeed we have a free weight clinic if you feel you need a helping hand, sort of Fat Busters for pets—but without Marjorie Dawes!

Many thanks to Merial for their newsletter sponsorship!

