



# The Seaforth Howler

## Editorial

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This Howler sees Sam, our Nursing Manager, not only well and truly engaged, but married! We were all invited to her engagement on April 12th, only to find out she had secretly organised to be married that same day. We all had a great time at the wedding. Our sincere congratulations to Sam and Mohit Sharma.

No, we are not showing you how to poison your dog in this issue, it's all about education avoiding disasters, and the "If only I knew..." scenario. We cover Chewing Gum, Rat and Snail bait poisoning. I think you will find them interesting reading.

This year sees Terry 40 years in practice. He takes a walk down memory lane in his article on page two.

Recently all staff were invited to an evening on grief counselling, something that is very important to staff and clients alike. Belinda summarises the main and often surprising finding of this informative and useful evening.

Mrs Jenny Edwards writes a touching memorial article for her beloved and bereaved border collie Jessica.

We wind it all up with media snippets and a client photo!

Best of all I am on time for a change!!! Hope you enjoy a great read in this Howler.

## Chewing gum poisoning in dogs

**By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

As humans we often forget that just because something is fine for us it does not necessarily make it so for our pets.

Unfortunately we often discover the truth of this the hard way, when its too late.

So, did you know that chewing gum can and does kill dogs every year! However it is only chewing gum that is *artificially sweetened with xylitol* that does this. One stick of such chewie contains about 1 gm of Xylitol. This is enough to kill a 10 kg dog. As you can see its quite toxic indeed.

### So what Happens?

The blood sugar levels fall dramatically producing a hypoglycaemia. The dog becomes weak and uncoordinated, it may then go into a coma death can follow. Intravenous glucose must be given, and this must be done at the vet as the hypoglycaemia can continue for some days. Subsequent to the immediate effects the dog can then develop serious hepatic (liver) necrosis and go into irreversible liver failure. I guess we can compare this phase to that seen in humans suffering paracetamol over dosing.

### Prevention better than cure!

A pretty serious toxicity. Because the toxic dose is so low I would recommend anyone with dogs not to keep such chewing gum products in their house! It's sweet and something dogs would gobble up if given half a chance.



### News Column

- **Congratulations to Sam who was Married on Saturday the 12th April!**
- **Good luck to Jenny our nurse who is off to Sri Lanka to help care for elephants!**
- **Similarly to Dr Jenny Nesbitt-Hawes off to save the orang-utans in Indonesia**

***What should you do if this occurs?***

If you have a dog that has ingested xylitol sweetened chewing gum then it makes sense to immediately get the dog to vomit. The most effective way to do this is with apomorphine at your vet. However something you can do at home is make up a saturated salt solution (ie dissolving as much salt as possible in warm water) and pour it down the dog's throat if at all possible. If you have access to Ipecac syrup this is easier to dose.

In any case supportive therapy and blood glucose monitoring is essential at your local vet.

***Aquadent contains xylitol! Should I be worried?***

Aquadent is a dental product by Virbac. It contains chlorhexidine and **xylitol**. It is used as an additive to a dog's drinking water to reduce plaque formation hence tooth and gum disease. A sort of mouth wash for dogs.

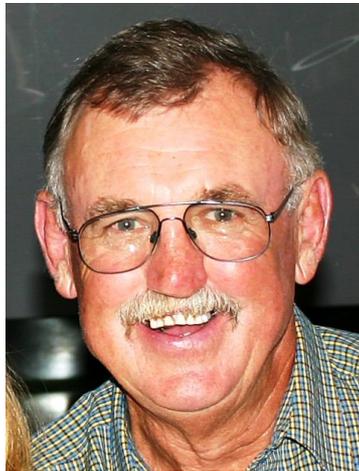
A large bottle of Aquadent if drank at full concentration by a 2.5kg chihuahua could cause toxicity, but as you might expect this would be extremely unlikely. The manufacturers assure us that at the recommended dose it is quite safe.

Play safe if you have dogs, do not keep artificially sweetened chewing gum about the house!

***40 years on when....******By Dr Terry Collins (Veterinarian)***

After graduation in 1965 from Queensland Uni I returned to New Zealand where I worked largely with thoroughbreds and dairy cattle in Hamilton.

Work allowed me time to play some rugby and I represented Waikato in 1967. After 2 years the NZ Government wished to transfer me to the remoteness of Kaitaia in the far north. This did not appeal to me so I returned to Australia. After ringing nearly every Vet in Sydney I obtained a position in Sydney Road Seaforth on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1968, in the building now housing the Trevor Victor Harvey



Gallery. This practice had been run on a part-time basis by George Bystrynsk (later known as Adams) who had the practice in Forestville where our After Hours Clinic is now located. After 10 months I purchased the Seaforth practice (at a grossly inflated price of course) and remained there till 16th November 1982 when I moved to the current Ethel St site. I had purchased the site in August 1980 for \$106,000 which then was a princely sum.

On New Years day 1983 I amalgamated the practice with that of Dr Ken Baker (an old class mate) who had been practicing in Condamine St, Balgowlah near the Freedom Furniture store. Dr Cath Walker who had been working for me came in as a 3<sup>rd</sup> partner. She later returned to academia at Sydney Uni to study the Feline Immuno-deficiency virus.

Later Dr Kersti Seksel, who now runs the Animal Behaviour specialty upstairs at Ethel Street, joined us a 4<sup>th</sup> partner.

In 2002 Dr Hendrika Tegelaar and Dr Rob Miller became partners on the retirement of Ken Baker & Kersti's move into specialty practice.

Then in 2005 my son David became the 4<sup>th</sup> partner although he has currently leave of absence doing an internship at the Veterinary Specialist Centre at Ryde with the aim of becoming a Small Animal Specialist.

What of the future? Mind and body being willing I have no immediate plans for retirement. I enjoy my Tuesdays and Thursdays at work with intermittent weekend work. Golf three days a week is enough. I am as passionate as ever about the animals especially puppies and cats. Growing up on a farm probably started this. Rapport with clients, many of you whom I have known for years through animals, golf, rugby, kids etc. gives me a great buzz. I hope not to let this go for some time.

***Living with Grief******By Belinda Yardley (Receptionist)***

Grief is the normal response to any important loss in life. It occurs regardless of whether death followed a prolonged illness, or a sudden accident. Grieving people experience both physical and emotional traumas as they try to adapt to the upheaval in their lives brought about by the loss.

Most of us form a deep attachment to our pets based on strong emotional bonds. There simply is no substitute for the unique, loving and powerful bond we enjoy with our animal companions. Consequently most people feel intense sorrow when their pet dies and for many people, coping with the death of a pet can be one of the most distressing and difficult experiences of life. For pet owners the grieving process can be especially difficult, as society in general does not validate grief over pets. As a result we can end up feeling alone and embarrassed or even ashamed to express our grief. Luckily, more and more resources are becoming available to help bereaved pet owners realise that they are not alone and that what they are feeling is entirely natural. The experience of grief is deeply personal and depends on a range of factors including circumstances around the death, the significance of your pet in your life, concurrent crises or problems, availability of support and your previous experiences of grief. Initially it can be very difficult just to accept that your pet has died even if it was predictable. These feelings can be particularly intense for the elderly, single people and childless couples. Grief is always an intense experience, a process, not something to be fixed, and is necessary for emotional healing. It can often feel overwhelming just living with the range of emotions that arise. It is important not to minimize or try to suppress these feelings. The nature of grief is unpredictable so you can be all right one minute and distressed and upset the next with seemingly small and irrelevant things triggering you.

The challenges of grief are many from living in such an intense whirlpool of emotions, coping with physical and emotional exhaustion, trying to carry out your normal roles and duties, and adjusting to life without your treasured companion. The foundation of a healthy grieving process lies

in giving expression over time to all of the feelings that arise.

Common reactions to grief are shock and disbelief, intense emotions, disorganisation and despair. The task for the bereaved is to accommodate your grief into your ongoing life one day at a time, not get over it or find closure.

- Given time, healing will occur for you. However, there are several things that a grief-stricken owner can do to help speed up the healing process
- Give yourself permission to grieve, - only you know what your pet meant to you.
- Memorialise your pet, - makes the loss real, helps with acceptance, and allows you to express your feelings, pay tribute and reflect.
- Get lots of rest, good nutrition and exercise.
- Surround yourself with people who understand your loss, let others care for you.
- Learn all you can about the grief process, this helps you realise that what you are experiencing is normal.
- Accept the feelings that come with grief, talk, write, sing or draw.
- Indulge yourself in small pleasures.
- Be patient with yourself.

DON'T let society dictate how long mourning should last, and don't be surprised if holidays, smells, sounds, or words trigger a relapse.

Grief is like waves in the ocean: at first the waves come in fast and hard, but as time passes, the waves become less intense and further apart.

There are staff at Seaforth Vet Hospital whom recently attended a grief seminar to better understand and cope with our own feelings of sadness and to assist our clients at their most vulnerable time. We would like to support you and can make suggestions that may help. If you are struggling to cope please call us.

## *Rat and Snail Bait Poisoning*

**By Dr Libby Thompson (Veterinarian)**

Dogs will eat just about anything...except medicine from the vet; the fact that something is poisonous won't stop a dog. Cats tend to be more finicky, but they will eat a rodent that ate rat bait and can still be poisoned in this manner.

As owners of pets, we must be careful about what and where we leave things that can potentially harm them.

I don't believe dog (or cat) owners should run the risk of leaving snail bait out in the garden, or anywhere, for that matter, that the dog can reach.

Snail bait causes obvious clinical signs fairly soon after eating.

Initially, you may see uncontrollable and continuous muscle tremors and shaking. Depending on how much was eaten seizures may follow, with hyperthermia (overheating) and possible death. The animal may vomit and have diarrhoea as well.

If you see your pet eat snail bait, take them to your vet immediately so vomiting can be induced and so prevent your pet going through signs of toxicity.

If they are already showing signs, your pet may need to be anaesthetised to control the seizures, have their stomach emptied by gastric lavage, given charcoal by stomach tube and have their bowels emptied by enema, all to reduce the amount of toxin available to be absorbed. They may need intravenous fluids to prevent dehydration and blood tests to check for organ damage and other abnormalities. They also need to be cooled because overheating causes organ damage – brain included.

There is an antidote for one type of snail bait but this does not make it safe.

Anticoagulant rodenticides (rat baits) such as warfarin and brodifacoum are the most common types found on the supermarket shelves.

Anticoagulant rat bait, unlike snail bait, does not cause any clinical signs immediately after eating. The poison is absorbed in the first couple of hours after eating but signs of poisoning may not be seen for 3 to 7 days depending on the animal's activity level. There is a delay because the poison depletes the body's Vitamin K which is needed to produce clotting factors, but does not affect the clotting factors already present in the body. Signs of poisoning can be subtle with the animal being a little more quiet than usual. Other signs may be blood in the urine or in their faeces, they may have black tarry motions, they may bruise excessively or start bleeding from a cut, lost tooth or when on heat and just not stop bleeding. They may have trouble breathing if they are bleeding into their lungs or chest cavity or they may just acutely collapse. They will have pale mucous membranes (gums and conjunctiva are easiest to check).

If you see your pet eat rat bait or suspect they've eaten it, take them to your vet so they can make them vomit it up. We can ensure there are no residual effects with a blood test a week later that checks for clotting times and blood levels.

How badly your pet is affected by an anticoagulant rodenticide depends on what type they ate, how much, how frequently and when. Warfarin has a shorter half-life and so needs shorter treatment length than does the second-generation brodifacoum. However the longer it is before they are treated the worse is the prognosis.

If it's too late to induce vomiting, then treatment consists of injections and tablets of Vitamin K, possible hospitalisation (for monitoring of the animals condition and to reduce activity level and hence chance of bleeding), blood tests (to check red blood cell levels and clotting times) and possible blood transfusions. Both dogs and cats can be poisoned in a secondary manner – that is they eat the rodent that ate the rat bait.

Use any poison with care, think ahead for your pet's sake (because they won't) and if they eat it, seek veterinary advice.

## *What are you really feeding your dog?*

**By Shannon Walden (Veterinary Nurse)**

**Why are there small, medium and large breed foods?**

Animals need to have a balanced diet just as we do. As a nurse I try to teach people what and how much they should be feeding their dog.

At Seaforth vets we only stock premium quality food eg Hill's Science Diet and Eukanuba. When buying food for your dog you

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need to take into account your animal's weight, size, breed, activity level and age. Different dogs have different dietary needs, for instance, large breed dogs need a lot more joint support, medium breed dogs need a more balanced diet and small breeds need more protein. All premium foods come in a range from small breed to large breed.

When you purchase a puppy you must feed them puppy food, expressly chosen to suit the size of dog breed. Your puppy needs to stay on a puppy formula for a year before it can change to an adult maintenance food. Some dogs put on a lot of weight after being on the puppy formula as it contains extra nutrients and fats needed by growing dogs. If your puppy has a tendency to become overweight it may as an adult benefit from a light maintenance formula. Senior dogs are classified as being 7 years and over. The senior formulas are again specially formulated. They have for instance an increased amount of glucosamine and chondroitin because the bones and joints of older dogs, just like ours, start to ache and not move as freely as they once did. Large breed dogs often develop joint problems from a younger age, as their greater weight puts a daily stress upon their joints. You can help prevent this by maintaining your large breed dog at a slim, light weight from youth. Premium light diets, small, medium and large, help you do this with the additive L-carnatine that helps convert fat to energy.

There are many other benefits in feeding your dog a premium diet. Not the least of which is the guaranteed top quality protein source provided by the diet – chicken with no beaks or feathers!

It even makes financial sense, if you take the time to do the maths you will see that the daily cost of feeding a premium product is actually LESS than the cheaper supermarket products.

## Media Snippet...

**By Dr Rob Miller (Veterinarian)**

**Watch your P's and Q's when you speak to your cats!**

Recently there is the weird but true story of a 73 year old Welshman who was arrested for murder of a woman Joyce Sutton.

The main evidence for the prosecution took the form of a bugged conversation he had with the victims cats! The police claim he admitted the murder to her cats, Pudsie and Twinkie. However as the recording was of poor quality he was acquitted. He claimed he was simply saying to the cats that if only they could talk they could tell us who killed Joyce!

## Memories will last forever

**By Jenny Edwards  
(Behaviour Staff)**

Jessica was a 13 year old border collie, a loyal and loving companion bestowed with remarkable intelligence and integrity. Most people would say that Jess had a long and good life, but nobody could realize just how much she gave to the world and to me. Once, a neighbour fell in her yard and was calling for help. Jess came and called me out of the laundry by tugging on my jeans.

When she was a young pup she frequently rounded up my godson to keep him out of trouble. Her most recent adventure was to move a young boy out of the surf to safer ground. Her love and loyalty were immeasurable. Her love for her mate Boz our first beagle knew no bounds.

Jess fretted quietly when he died 4 years ago so we got her Zeke, another beagle. Now that Jess has gone Zeke has not fretted quietly. His howls are spine chilling. Jess didn't ask for much in life, her daily walk and swim were her highlight. We loved sharing those times with her. She loved a little chicken and adored pasta.

One recent Thursday Jess walked, swam, ate her tea and slept well but when she woke the next morning we knew it was time for her to join Boz in the sky. My main priority at this stage was to be with her and see her out in comfort. Our vets have played an integral role with all our animals. They have always been on hand with advice and guidance. Jessica continues on with us in our very many fond memories of our very special lady.



## Client's Gallery

Recently Mrs Maria Kogovsek sent us this picture of her wonderful dog Little One! She is a very proud owner.

